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Everything is Something: Why the Stoic ontology is principled, coherent and comprehensive

Introduction

Jacques Brunschwig has argued elegantly and convincingly¹ that the Stoics developed their ontology by following the path not taken in Plato's *Sophist*. The famous battle of Gods and Giants in that dialogue sketches a debate between friends of the Forms and materialists, both of whom make fatal concessions to the other. Given the agreed-upon definition of being as what can act or be acted upon,² the Gods must concede that Forms (antithetically) are changeable after all; while the Giants must concede (antithetically) that there are non-corporeal realities.

The Stoic solution is to forge two criteria of reality instead of one: a strong, corporeal criterion for reality as existence, and a second, weaker criterion of non-existing reality. Working in relative independence,³ these two criteria determine what counts as Something (*ti*), the Stoics' highest genus of reality. Yet the genus Something is no mere patchwork of the Gods and Giants. Rather, it is a principled analysis of objective reality on materialist terms.

The Existence Criterion

What can act or be acted upon is always a body for the Stoics, as for Plato's Giants.⁴ Cicero testifies that Zeno differed from the Platonists and Peripatetics in that "only a body was

¹ "La théorie stoïcienne du genre suprême," in Jonathan Barnes and Mario Miguñuci (eds.) *Matter and metaphysics*, Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum, Bibliopolis: Naples (1988), pp. 20-127.

² Properly, "whatever by nature has the capacity either to do whatever thing to something else or to undergo even the smallest thing by the most insignificant thing, even if only once" (247d9-e2); also, "whenever the capacity to do or undergo even to the smallest degree is present in something" (248c4-5). The capacity to do or undergo, to act or be acted upon are interchangeable translations for the Greek *he tou paschein e dran dunamis* and *eite eis to poiein...eite eis to pathein*, which I will sometimes also call the action/passion principle.

³ Relative, because the non-existent Somethings for which the Stoics are so well known owe their reality to the bodies that underlie or give rise to them. More on this as the chapter unfolds.

⁴ Though body is not defined as what can act or be acted upon. Body is strictly speaking solid three-dimensional body (Diogenes Laertius 7.135 (45E)) with resistance (Galen *In. incorp. qual.* 19.483,13-16 (45F), as A.A. Long & D.N. Sedley point out in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vols. 1 and 2, Cambridge University Press (1987) (hereon

capable of acting or of being acted upon.”⁵ Similarly, the Giants are introduced in the *Sophist* as insisting “that only what offers tangible contact is (*einai*), since they define substance (*ousian*) to be the same as body.”⁶ This is the Giants’ strong materialist position from which the more neutral action/passion principle is extracted as a starting point for both sides; so it’s clear the Giants agree with the Stoics that the action/passion principle is satisfied only by bodies.

The Stoics and Giants also agree that the corporeal action/passion principle is the criterion of existence. The Giants’ position was rendered above as: “only what offers tangible contact *is*.” Though it is perfectly correct to render the infinitive *einai* in this neutral way (as *is*), the fact that there is no predicate complement implies an existential reading of the verb and licenses translation as “only what offers tangible contact *exists*.” Furthermore, the nature of existence is precisely what’s at issue in the battle between Gods and Giants (as in Plato generally).⁷ The fact that the infinitive *einai*, the participial phrase *to on* and the noun *ousia* are used interchangeably demonstrates that for Plato and his characters existence is not the highest genus of reality, but the only one. Hence for the Giants “anything they can’t squeeze in their hands is absolutely nothing.”⁸ And the Gods “insist violently that true being is certain non-bodily forms that can be thought about. They take the bodies of the other group, and also what they call the truth, and they break them up verbally into little bits and call them a process of coming-to-be instead of being.”⁹ Because the Gods agree that existence is the only battleground, the only way for Forms to lay their claim to true being is to banish the other candidate out of reality by calling the corporeal world coming-to-be instead of being.

Now, the Stoics are in complete agreement with the Giants that only bodies exist, and that these are the most real of beings¹⁰— “‘what exists’ is said only of bodies.”¹¹ However, this

L&S); unless otherwise noted, translations are from L&S; parenthetical citations like 45E and 45F refer to passages in L&S by their chapter and order therein. On the existence criterion, see also p. 81 of Andreas Graeser, “The Stoic Theory of Meaning,” in J.M. Rist (ed.) *The Stoics*, UC Press (1978), pp. 77-100.

⁵ From Cicero, *Academica* 1.39 (45A part). See also Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 10.3-4 (49B); Plutarch, *De comm. not.* 30, 1073E=SVF II, 525; Diogenes Laertius 7.134 (44B); Stobaeus *Ecl.* I, 138, 23 W = SVF I2.363.

⁶ 246a8-b

⁷ At 246a the battle is introduced as *peri tes ousias*.

⁸ 248c5-7

⁹ 246b8-c2

¹⁰ *ontos einai* (247e3); and Marcus Aurelius, *Communings with Himself*, 9.1

¹¹ Alexander, *In Ar. Top.* 301,21-22 (27B part); Sextus Empiricus *M.* 10.3-4 (49B)

robust existential criterion picks out much more for the Stoics than for the Giants, marking the Stoics' first ontological innovation. Concerning "justice, intelligence and the rest of virtue" the Giants are "ashamed and don't dare either to agree that they are not beings or to insist that everything is a body."¹² Having agreed that virtues and the other paradigm cases of Forms are not visible, the Giants are stuck between denying that there are such things as the virtues (an obvious absurdity) and the apparently absurd option of saying these invisible qualities are bodies. The Stoics, however, deny the absurdity of the second option and eagerly confirm that the virtues are corporeal and even perceptible¹³; virtue for the Stoics is the body disposed in a certain way. Just as the fragility of glass is a material disposition to behave a certain way under certain circumstances, so too being virtuous is a matter of having a body (and soul, itself a body) disposed to behave in a certain way under certain circumstances. Take Seneca, for example:

One could say, 'The virtues are not a plurality of living beings, and yet they are living beings. For just as someone is both a poet and an orator but still one person, so the virtues are living beings but not a plurality of these. The same mind is both moderate and just and prudent and brave, being disposed in a certain way with respect to the individual virtues.'¹⁴

The Stoics' treatment of the virtues as corporeal qualities is well attested, and worked out in considerable detail.¹⁵ Though there is some debate as to whether the Stoics' third and fourth genera (being disposed and being relatively disposed) are genuinely corporeal,¹⁶ it is at least clear that corporeal existence encompasses an unusually broad swath of reality for the Stoics. Whereas the Giants were stymied by the virtues, the Stoics embrace them as corporeal and set off down the path not taken in the *Sophist*.

¹² 247b1-c2

¹³ Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1042E-F (60R)

¹⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 113.24 (61E); see also Sextus Empiricus *PH* 2.81-3 (33P)

¹⁵ Diogenes Laertius 7.89 (61A); Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 440E-441D (61B) part; Simplicius, *In Ar. Cat.*, 217,32 (28L part); Simplicius, *In Ar. Cat.*, 212,12-213,1 (28N); Seneca *Ep.* 113.2 (29B); Galen, *Plac.* 7.1.12-15 (29E)

¹⁶ Long & Sedley take the four genera to be corporeal, see chapters 27-29. Pasquale Pasquino argues for their incorporeality in "Le Statut Ontologique des Incorporels dans l'ancien Stoicisme," in J. Brunschwig (ed.) *Les Stoiciens et leur logique*, Actes du Colloque de Chantilly, 18-22 septembre 1976, Vrin (1978).

The Something Criterion

But the Stoics are not just Giants of broader scope, making more of the world corporeal and leaving it at that. The Stoics' second ontological innovation and bigger departure from the Giants is the denial that "anything they can't squeeze in their hands is absolutely nothing."¹⁷ In this one move, the Stoics' thoroughgoing materialism takes on a new and controversial dimension. By saying that what fails the corporeal test can still be Something, the Stoics reject their predecessors' shared assumption that existence is the only kind of reality. Instead, they say, nature includes not only the many existents they have countenanced but also certain non-existent entities that are not corporeal. Though these entities do not exist, canonically they nonetheless have a derivative kind of reality the Stoics term subsistence (*hupostasis*).

Again, the Stoic position is not just a conjunction of the Gods' and Giants' views. It might seem that countenancing non-existent entities undoes the Stoics' hard-won progress toward a purely materialist analysis of the world; after all, what do the friends of the Forms advocate if not the reality of the intangible? Galen, for one, mocks the Stoics' distinction between existence and subsistence as "linguistic quibbling"¹⁸ (*ten micrologian ton onomaton*). But a closer look reveals that the Stoics are not just recasting Forms under another name.¹⁹ In fact, subsistents are also subject to a materialist analysis that shows their reality depends entirely on existents. So while Stoic subsistents cannot be squeezed in the hand, they still have a certain objective reality thanks to those things that can be squeezed. As Marcus Aurelius puts it: "the nature of the whole is the nature of existents."²⁰

The difficulty is in pinpointing what it means to be Something non-existent. If Jacques Brunschwig is right that the concept of non-existent Somethings was a principled response to the *Sophist*, there must be some criterion that delineates such a genus prior to its species.²¹ Unfortunately, the weaker Something criterion is much less well attested than the corporeal. It is

¹⁷ 248c5-7

¹⁸ *Meth. Med.*, 10.155,1-8 (27G)

¹⁹ See Victor Caston, "Something and Nothing: The Stoics on Concepts and Universals," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1999), pp. 145–213, for an excellent argument that the Stoics are eliminativists, not reductionists, about Forms.

²⁰ *Communings with Himself*, 9.1

²¹ As he points out, *op. cit.*, p. 26

generally agreed that there are four canonical incorporeals (*asomata*)—time, place, void and *lekta*, or sayables. However, there is debate as to whether there are other kinds of non-existent Somethings beside the incorporeals, possibly figments and limits considered neither corporeal nor incorporeal, or even an additional class of entities called Not-Somethings (*outina*) intermediate between Somethings and nothing at all. My first objective is to develop the Something criterion from the admittedly meager resources available, then examine its application to the canonical incorporeals to open a clear window on the derivative reality of non-existent Somethings. Only then can the so-called problem cases, like figments, limits and concepts, be addressed.

Proper Objects of Thought

The first element of the Something criterion is being “a proper subject of thought and discourse.”²² One piece of evidence for this is from Sextus Empiricus:

If something is taught, either it will be taught through not-somethings or through somethings. But it cannot be taught through not-somethings; for these have no subsistence for the mind, according to the Stoics.²³

There are several things to notice in this passage. First, being Something is a yes or no question, not a matter of degree; and this yes or no question is exhaustive of the matter—otherwise the Stoics could not divide the issue so neatly between Somethings and *outina*.²⁴ My point is contentious since many scholars take the Stoics to have posited not only Somethings but also a distinct category of Not-Somethings that do not equate to nothing at all. I will address the false category of Not-Somethings once I have prepared the necessary ground. My initial focus is positive, to establish what the Stoics did say; then my project will become negative, to refute mistaken interpretations of the ontology; finally, I will offer a positive synthesis of the uncontroversial and recalcitrant texts together for a complete account of Stoic metaphysics. For

²² L&S, p. 164

²³ *M.* 1.17 (27C)

²⁴ I will use the Greek *outi* or *outina* to indicate the neutral position, prior to its interpretation as nothing at all vs. the intermediate class of Not-Somethings.

the time being, then, I will assume that *outina* are really nothing at all for the Stoics, as Victor Caston has argued at length.²⁵

The second thing to notice in the Sextus passage is that whatever we make of *outina* (whether nothing at all or failing to be Something in a weaker way, as Not-Somethings), it is clear that they are not proper subjects of thought. To say that they have no subsistence for the mind is just to say that they cannot be thought. Therefore and thirdly, if *outina* cannot be thought, it follows that whatever can be thought won't be *outi*. Even for those who posit an intermediate category of Not-Somethings, denying that *outina* can be thought amounts to a positive criterion for being Something. The negation of *outi* can be read only two ways if you posit the category Not-Something: either it's equivalent to Something or to nothing at all (*quartum non datur*). But taking the negation of *outi* in the second way would yield the absurd result that whatever can be thought is nothing at all. So even the advocate of Not-Somethings must admit that having subsistence for the mind is criterial for being Something.

But what does it mean to have subsistence for the mind? For all that's been said about the criterion, just about anything counts as Something—even the individual sheep I count to go to sleep. Or worse: Plato's Forms. To exacerbate matters, the other key passage that supports the thinkability criterion, so to speak, seems to support such a result.²⁶

The Stoics want to place above this [the existent] yet another, more primary genus...some Stoics see "Something" as the primary genus; and I will suggest why they see it so. In nature, they say, some things exist and some things do not exist. However nature includes even those things that do not exist, things that enter the mind (*animo succurrunt*), such as Centaurs, Giants and whatever else falsely formed by thought takes on some image (*habere aliquam imaginem coepit*), despite not having substance.²⁷

²⁵ *op. cit.*

²⁶ As Dorothea Frede also notes, on page 214 of "Fatalism and Future Truth," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. VI (1990), p. 195-239.

²⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 58, 13-15

The criterion needs to be refined. It's not that any and everything we can entertain counts as Something; only *proper* subjects of thought will count as Something.²⁸ Of course, now the challenge is to determine the force of *proper* implied by the two texts. In the Sextus passage above, what does the notion of *subsisting for the mind* tell us about the criterion? In the Seneca passage, what does it mean to be the sort of thing that *enters the mind* and *takes on some image*? The answers to these questions will reveal that a *proper* subject of thought is *objective*, at least in being equally available to multiple thinkers. "Intersubjectivity is at least a step toward objectivity," as Brunschwig says.²⁹ My sheep do not count as Something because I can't share them with others;³⁰ they are not sufficiently objective.³¹

The Nature of Subsistence

I begin with Sextus' testimony that what is subsistent for the mind (*hupostata tei dianoiai*, dative) is Something. Being subsistent for the mind is a special way of being available to thought; what's distinctive about its availability is its intersubjectivity. The Stoic criterion that Something is always a proper subject of thought is thus not a point about mind-dependence, but in fact the contrary. It may seem odd to say that thinkability points to objectivity since one might think of thinkability as inherently subjective. But being subsistent *for* the mind does not imply any special subsistence *on* the mind,³² just intersubjective availability. Sextus does not make a special or qualified use of the term *subsistence* in saying that *outina* are not subsistent *for the mind*; he employs the standard use that implies objective reality dependent on body. Being subsistent for the mind is being sufficiently real for us to think and talk about together. It remains for me to support this being the standard use of *subsistence*. Following is a review of passages where some form of the verb *huphistasthai* is used (or implied, as in b. and f.).

²⁸ In this respect the Stoics, like Plato, are in conversation with father Parmenides, who handed down the challenge that only what can be spoken or thought is.

²⁹ On p. 218 in "Stoic Metaphysics" in Brad Inwood (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, Cambridge University Press (2003), pp. 206-233.

³⁰ In the spirit of Wittgenstein: "No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle." (*Philosophical Investigations*, section 293, part)

³¹ Plato's Forms may yet count as Something since so many people have succeeded in thinking and having discourse about them. If they do, however, it will be in the way that Centaurs and Giants have reality, as fictions that gain their objectivity through convention. More on this later.

³² ...which would be conveyed by the preposition *kata*, as in passages c. and k. below.

- a. It is over-refined linguistic quibbling to divide the existent (*to on*) and the subsistent (*to huphestos*) according to kind.³³

Galen mocks the Stoics' ontological distinctions as mere word play, which indicates at least that the Stoics took their distinctions seriously (after all, who would pursue their distinctions for the sake of mere word-play?). Furthermore, Galen's testimony points to the fact that there is a standard usage of the term that marks subsistence in contradistinction to existence.

We can see that subsistence for the Stoics, though not full-fledged existence, still implies a certain objectivity. The following famous passage does not use the verb *huphistasthai* but it is safe to assume that having a nature like the *lekta* entails subsistence, since the *lekta* are well attested subsistents (see j. and k. below). What we have, then, is a characterization of two kinds of impressors, i.e. two kinds of objective reality corresponding to the existent and the subsistent. The fact that the drill sergeant's motions considered as a model are the subsistent impressors, not something in the boy's head, illustrates the objectivity of subsistence.

- b. Just as the drill-sergeant sometimes stands at a distance and moves to a certain drill, to provide himself as a model for the boy — so too some impressors have a nature like that of the *lekta*, and the commanding faculty is impressed *in relation to them* (*epi autois*), not *by* them.³⁴

Again, it's not the drill sergeant's motions themselves that are the subsistent impressors (since those are perfectly corporeal existents), but something intangible that subsists on those motions; hence the use of the pronoun *epi* instead of the full-blown *hupo*, which would imply corporeal agency. Here the Stoics take a page from the Gods of the *Sophist*, in positing intelligible impressors. But just as the Stoics are not simply Giants of broader scope, since they make room for intangible realities, so too they are not just Gods of a narrower scope (narrower because they posit only a handful of non-existent Somethings, as opposed to the Gods' sea of Forms).

³³ Paraphrase of Galen, *Meth. Med.* 10.155,1-8 (27G); see also SVF 2.518, where Chrysippus is criticized by Plutarch for his excessive subtlety (*philotechnein*)

³⁴ Partial paraphrase of Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 8.409 (27E)

What's different about the Stoics' intangible realities is that they are on the one hand dependent on the corporeal world for their reality, and on the other hand stripped of their causal efficacy. And this is no mere linguistic quibble. The Stoics identify a derivative segment of reality that is objective, invisible and intelligible yet still subject to a physical analysis. The objective reality of Stoic subsistents is grounded in the bodies on which they depend. For example, in the following passage we have a coming-to-be (*genesis*) whose subsistence depends on the particular arrangement of a body. As in the drill sergeant case, it's not the qualified thing that subsists (since that's perfectly corporeal, like the drill sergeant's motions), but the coming-to-be (*genesis*) of a qualified thing.

- c. The coming-to-be of a qualified thing subsists (*poiou huphistatai genesis*) according to a thing's intrinsic suchness³⁵.

It should be clear already that what subsists depends for its reality on what exists: in one case on the drill sergeant and his motions, in the other on the thing's intrinsic suchness. But these two cases do not demonstrate by themselves that the standard use of subsistence implies a derivative yet objective reality dependent on body. For this we must turn to the canonical incorporeals—*lekton*, void, place and time,³⁶ which are also the canonical subsistents. Void is in a way the incorporeal par excellence³⁷ being defined purely in terms of lacking body.

- d. There must be a certain subsistence to void (*tina hupostasin kenou*)...simply being able to receive body.³⁸
- e. "For according to its own subsistence (*hupostasis*) [void] is infinite; and this is made finite by being filled; but once that which fills it has been removed, a limit to it cannot be conceived."³⁹

Our inability to conceive of an outside limit to void is not a cognitive shortcoming, but due to the fact that the void is infinite, and thus testament to the thinkability criterion as measure of objective reality. If there were an outside limit to void it (the limit) would be a proper subject of thought; since there isn't one we can't conceive of it. The phrase *according to its own*

³⁵ Paraphrase of Simplicius, *In Ar. Cat.*, 222,32-3 (28H); *intrinsic suchness* translates *tei ex autes toioutoteti*, which refers to the unique and fully determinate qualities of an individual.

³⁶ Sextus Empiricus *M.* 10, 218 (27D)

³⁷ To borrow Brunschwig's phrase in "Stoic Metaphysics," p. 213

³⁸ Paraphrase of Cleomedes 8,10-14 (49C)

³⁹ Stobaeus 1.161, 23-26 (49A, part)

subsistence also conveys the objective reality of void—it is infinite *per se*. Note also that void and place go hand in glove—as in f. where void is *what can be* occupied and place is *what is* occupied. In both cases their reality depends explicitly on body.

- f. “The Stoics say that void (*kenon*) is what can be occupied by an existent (*ontos*) but is not occupied, or an interval empty of body, or an interval unoccupied by body. Place is what is occupied by an existent and made equal to what occupies it (by ‘existent’ they now mean body, as is clear from the interchange of names).”⁴⁰
- g. Place subsists alongside (*paruphistatai*) bodies.⁴¹

The text attesting that time subsists for the Stoics is vexed in its account of incorporeals and subsistence. In fact, it looks as though Proclus must have made the mistake I warned against in reading Sextus’ testimony: making subsistence for the mind criterial for Something is not to make everything a mere thought. Talk of subsistence in mere thought notwithstanding, it’s clear enough from passage h. that making time a subsistent incorporeal implies a certain objective reality, albeit “very close” to non-existent. Passage i. further confirms this derivative aspect of reality implied by subsistence. Add to this the ample testimony that time owes its reality to the motion of the world,⁴² and it’s clear that the derivative yet objective reality of time is dependent on body.

- h. “The Stoics make [time] a mere thought, insubstantial and very close to non-existent. For in their view time was one of the incorporeals, which they disparage as inactive and non-existent (*ouk onta*) and subsisting merely in thoughts (*en epinoias huphistamena psilais*).”⁴³
- i. The past and future subsist (*huphestekenai, huphestanai*) but are not the case/do not hold (*ouch huparchein*).⁴⁴

Finally, the *lekton*:

- j. “The topic of what is signified is analyzed into the topic of impressions and the Sayable subsisting out of them [i.e., impressions] (*ton ek touton huphistamenon lekton*).”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 10.3-4 (49B), part

⁴¹ SVF 2.507

⁴² Simplicius, *In Ar. Cat.*, 350,15-16 (L&S 51A); Stobaeus 1.105, 8-1.106,4 (51DE), 1.106,5-23 (51B)

⁴³ Proclus, *In Plat. Tim.* 271D (51F)

⁴⁴ Paraphrase Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1081C-1082A (51C) part

⁴⁵ Diogenes Laertius 7.43 (31A part)

- k. The *lekton* is what subsists according to a rational impression (*to kata logiken phantasian huphistamenon*).⁴⁶

That the *lekton* subsists is immediately clear from the texts; that the *lekton* owes its subsistence to body like the other three canonical incorporeals, is less obvious but equally clear upon consideration. Just as place is defined by the bodies that occupy it, void by the bodies that don't, and time by the motion of the entire material world, so the *lekton* owes its reality to the corporeal impression it brings forth. The point is most explicit in passage j., where the *lekta* are said to subsist *out of* impressions; the *out of (ek)* locution in Greek indicates a compositional relation, therefore a straightforward and strong dependence of incorporeal Sayables on body.

In addition, the prepositional phrase *kata logiken phantasian* conveys this dependence in two ways: first, it is embedded in the substantive participial phrase *to huphistamenon* (what subsists), establishing that *kata logiken phantasian* indicates something essential to the manner of the *lekton*'s subsistence; second, the preposition *kata* of itself implies a dependence relation, as captured by the conventional translation *according to*.⁴⁷ So, the force of saying the *lekton* subsists *according to* a rational impression is that it conveys all at once the objectivity, derivative reality and mind-dependence that characterize this novel Stoic entity. The mind-dependence lies in the fact that *lekta* get their reality from impressions according to which they subsist, and impressions are clearly mental.

Here too my point is contentious. There is a long-standing debate between those who Platonize the *lekta* and those who make them mind-dependent. Somewhere in between Long & Sedley have suggested that *hupostasis* is most like Meinong's *behestin*, which Russell rendered by *subsist*.⁴⁸ Victor Caston points out that there is only a limited sense in which Stoic subsistents are Meinongian: "Meinong does distinguish *bestehen* and *existieren* in a way that closely parallels this distinction, but it is not the distinction for which he is famous... What distinguishes Meinongian objects... is *not* a certain kind of being, whether existence, subsistence, or some

⁴⁶ Paraphrase of Diogenes Laertius 7.63 (33F), part; Sextus Empiricus *M.* 8.70 (33C); and *M.* 8.11-12 (33B) where the *lekton* is said to subsist alongside (*parhuphistamenou dianoia*) the rational impression, the same verb used in passage g. about place.

⁴⁷ See Smyth's *Greek Grammar*, Harvard University Press (1920), section 1690 for further detail.

⁴⁸ L&S, p. 164; see also A.A. Long, "Language and Thought in Stoicism," in A.A. Long (ed.) *Problems in Stoicism*, The Athlone Press (1971), pp. 75-113.

other kind (should there be any)...A true Meinongian is thus prepared to say that objects have certain attributes or characteristics, even if they lack being entirely.”⁴⁹ My own view is that the standard translation of *hupostasis* as *subsistence* is perfectly felicitous without the complicated detour through Meinong.

The focus on passages featuring the verb *huphistasthai* has made my review of the canonical incorporeals too brief to convey the nature of subsistence adequately. But it has been sufficient, I hope, to show that subsistence for the Stoics implied objectivity and reality dependent on body, though not necessarily mind-dependence. There was one recalcitrant text above, h., which made time a mental construct, to which I now add the following in the interest of thoroughness.⁵⁰

- l. Posidonius retains surface both in thought and as subsistent (*kat' epinoian kai kath' hupostasin*).⁵¹
- m. "...we should not hold that such limits, I mean those of bodies, subsist in mere thought (*kat' epinoian psilen huphestanai*), as the Stoics supposed..."⁵²
- n. "It is there [in your mind] that your evil and harm have the whole of their subsistence (*hupostasin*)."⁵³
- o. "The interplication of causes was from eternity weaving together your subsistence (*hupostasin*) and this outcome."⁵⁴

I will return to the incorporeals in detail and address these recalcitrant passages once more ground has been cleared. My goal is to establish what it is to be a *proper* subject of thought. I began with the Sextus passage on teachability that makes subsistence criterial for being Something, which I have argued consistently implies objectivity, albeit derivative. So Sextus' drill sergeant passage tells us that being a *proper* subject of thought implies objective availability to the mind, but not necessarily mind-dependence. I will now move on to the Seneca passage.

⁴⁹ op. cit., p. 153

⁵⁰ I leave to the side Diogenes Laertius 7.50 (39A) and the first sentence of 7.57 (33A), which use the verb *huphistasthai* in the alternate sense of setting forth or suggesting.

⁵¹ Paraphrase of Diogenes Laertius 7.135 (50E), part

⁵² Proclus, *In. Eucl. El.* I 89,15-21 (50D)

⁵³ Marcus Aurelius, op. cit., 9.42,2

⁵⁴ op. cit., 10.5

Insubstantial yet objective

The Stoics want to place above this [the existent] yet another, more primary genus...some Stoics see “Something” as the primary genus; and I will suggest why they see it so. In nature, they say, some things exist and some things do not exist. However nature includes even those things that do not exist, things that enter the mind (*animo succurro*), such as Centaurs, Giants and whatever else falsely formed by thought takes on some image (*habere aliquam imaginem coepit*), despite not having substance (*substantiam*).⁵⁵

Epistle 58 has been the subject of much and varied scholarly attention. The chief difficulty with this text is that in dividing nature into what exists and what does not exist, which is standard Stoic doctrine, Seneca cites non-standard examples of non-existent entities. Where one would expect a list of incorporeals we get instead Centaurs and Giants. Long & Sedley take the letter as evidence that in addition to incorporeals, figments are also non-existent Somethings for the Stoics.⁵⁶ Others take it as evidence that the Stoics countenance *outina* as non-subsistent entities,⁵⁷ either by saying Seneca made a mistake in his list⁵⁸ or by tendentious translation. For example, Anna Ju argues that we should read the passage as saying that nature includes even those things like Centaurs and Giants that lack *subsistence*, thereby showing the Stoics countenanced non-subsistent Somethings.

But *substantia* is properly translated *substance* and corresponds to the Greek *ousia*, thereby implying corporeal existence⁵⁹—not some derivative subsistence.⁶⁰ The problem is that Ju misaligns subsistence with existence, and divides Something into the subsistent and the non-subsistent; the subsistent then divides into the existent, i.e., corporeals, and the merely subsistent, i.e., incorporeals, as in Fig. 1.

⁵⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 58, 13-15

⁵⁶ *op. cit.*, p. 164; also J.M. Rist, “Categories and their Uses,” in A.A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism*, The Athlone Press (1971), pp. 38-57

⁵⁷ For example, Anna Ju, “The Stoic Ontology of Geometrical Limits,” *Phronesis* 54 (2009), pp. 371-389; Pasquale Pasquino, “Le Statut Ootologique des Incorporels dans l’Ancien Stoicisme,” in Jacques Brunschwig (ed.), *Les Stoiciens et Leur Logique*, Vrin (2006), pp. 333-346.

⁵⁸ As Pasquino says, endorsing Hadot.

⁵⁹ Proclus, *In Tim.* 138E (SVF 2.533)

⁶⁰ I also disagree that *quaedam sunt* corresponds to *tina huparchei*, though they are closely related concepts for the Stoics. The Latin *quaedam sunt* corresponds to the Greek *to on*, what exists.

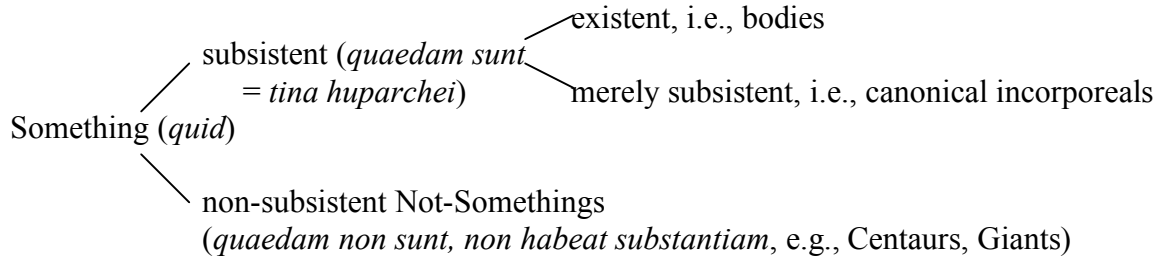


Fig. 1 — Ju’s ontology

Brunschwig, on the other hand, argues that Seneca puts forth fictitious individuals as non-existents because incorporeals have been made quasi-existents, thus a species of existent; and Seneca couldn’t call himself a Stoic, even an unorthodox one, if he did not countenance non-existent Somethings.⁶¹

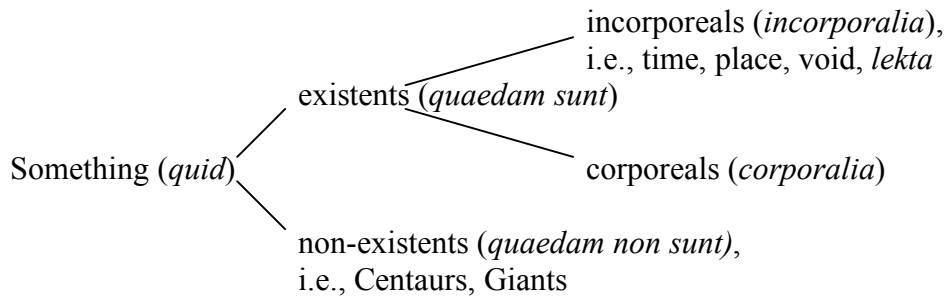


Fig. 2 —Brunschwig’s account of Seneca and the Stoics

The problem with Brunschwig’s reading is that Seneca explicitly disowns the Stoic schema, so it is out of place to say he is motivated to fill the non-existent Something slot. The structure of Seneca’s letter is as follows:

- i. Preamble on the poverty of Latin, where Seneca offers *essentia* as a translation of the Greek *ousia*, and aligns *quod est* with the Greek *on*, i.e., corporeal existence. Promise to enumerate the six ways Plato expresses the idea of *quod est* (1-8).
- ii. An introduction to his own genera of being, reckoning from particulars to the primary notion, i.e., from Socrates up to the highest and most general, *quod est* (8-12).
- iii. Forecast of an additional, higher genus of being for the Stoics (13).

⁶¹ “Genre supreme,” p. 51 ff.; “Stoic Metaphysics,” p. 220 ff.

- iv. “Proof” that the genus *quod est* has rightly been placed first, a top-down reckoning of the ontology as he sees it; see Fig. 3 below (14).
- v. Introduction of Something (*quid*) as the highest Stoic genus; see Fig. 4 below (15).
- vi. Six ways Plato expresses the idea of *quod est*, delivery of Promise made in 8 (16-22).
- vii. Defense of the relevance of such distinctions to living the good life (22-37).

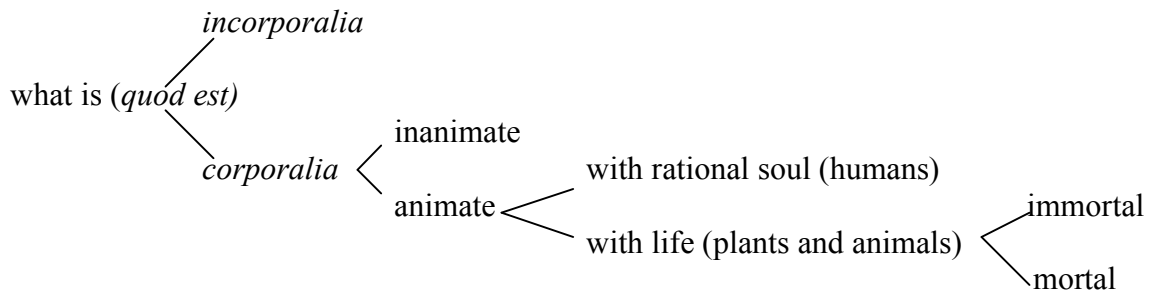


Fig. 3 — Seneca’s own ontology

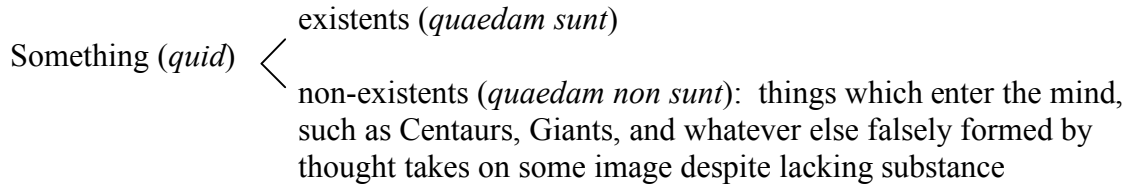


Fig. 4 — Seneca’s account of Stoic ontology

Fig. 3 illustrates the ontology Seneca endorses for himself in section 14. Then, he flags the fact that the Stoics would set above *quod est* another, more primary genus. But for Seneca to say the Stoics place *quid* above *quod est* is not to attribute to them the division of *quod est* into corporeals and incorporeals as in Fig. 3, nor to accept for himself the Stoic division he gives of *quid* into *quaedam sunt* and *non sunt*, as in Fig. 4. Brunschwig must be assuming both to argue that the combined view (Fig. 2) represents the considered Stoic position. Clear of these unlicensed assumptions, *Epistle 58* tells us just what we find in Fig. 4—as Pasquale Pasquino says, “on ne peut pas y trouver d’avantage.”⁶²

Still, there is much to learn from Seneca’s brief description of non-existent Somethings. Victor Caston finds in it the primary evidence that being an object of thought is a criterion of

⁶² “Statut Ontologique,” p. 336

reality for the Stoics, since “*Anything we can think of* falls ‘within the nature things’ and thus is something.”⁶³ I agree with Caston, of course, since he endorses the thinkability criterion. But I am making the further and distinct point that only *proper* subjects of thought are something, and that proper subjects of thought are available to thought in a certain way, i.e., intersubjectively.

[SEE “STOICIZING” FOR UPDATED TREATMENT OF SENECA PASSAGE]

So the question is whether (and in what sense) Seneca’s text gives reason to take what can be thought as objectively real. First of all, what does it mean for things to *enter the mind* (*animo succurrunt*)? Secondly, what does it mean to *take on an image* (*habere aliquam imaginem coepit*)? I’ll start with the verb *succurro*, which echoes the derivative yet objective reality implied by *huphistasthai*.

Lewis & Short⁶⁴ give the following definitions of *succurro*:

1. Lie under or behind
2. Help, aid, assist
3. Be useful for, good against
4. Encounter
5. Come into the mind, occur to one

First of all, the grammar and senses of *succurro* and *huphistasthai* are parallel in that both prefixes, *hupo-* and *succ-*, convey *under*, which implies derivative reality, as in definition 1. Secondly, both verbs convey objectivity, not mind-dependence. In the Greek phrase *subsistent for the mind*, *for the mind* was inert in the subsistence of the canonical incorporeals. Being available to (subsisting for) thought does not indicate any causal role for the mind, but a logical measure of objective reality. If it’s there for me to think about, then it’s something real—but not *because* I’m thinking about it. That’s why passage e., which said no limit to void can be conceived, supports thinkability as a criterion of objective reality. In the Seneca passage *animo* is similarly inert; it’s *succurro* that does the work, indicating that whatever is *available* for thought is objectively real.

But it’s clear that the mind *does* bear the ontological load in this passage, someone might object. After all, nature includes Centaurs, Giants and *whatever else falsely formed by thought*

⁶³ “Something and Nothing,” section 2.2

⁶⁴ “*succurro*,” *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford University Press (1879)

enters the mind, as in Definition 5. So it looks like if we take Seneca at his word, the Stoics are offering an excessively broad criterion of reality, one that lets in my bedtime sheep and Plato's Forms. The response to this concern is that mind-dependent items can subsist, but that subsistence of itself does not imply mind-dependence—only dependence on body (of which mind-dependence is one kind). The place where Socrates drank the hemlock is objective, incorporeal and not mind-dependent: the place subsists according to Socrates, the hemlock and the earth, whether anyone thinks about it or not. Now it just so happens that entities like Centaurs and Giants do owe their subsistence to the mind. But mind-dependence is not sufficient for objective reality; my sheep are not Somethings. So what this tells us is that the kind of objective availability to the mind implied by *huphistasthai* and *succurro* is not secured just by being falsely formed by thought.

Which leads to the second question concerning Seneca's testimony, what does it mean to take on some image (*habere aliquam imaginem coepit*)? Seneca does not report that the Stoics countenance *anything* that occurs to the mind as Something; only those things that are *both* falsely formed by thought and take on some image despite not having substance. This latter clause is what's operative in making *proper* subjects of thought objective. The literal translation of the Latin *habere aliquam imaginem coepit* is *begins to have a certain image*. The active verb, *coepit*, can be translated begins, undertakes, originates. The subject of the verb is *whatever has been falsely formed by thought*. The complement of the active verb is the infinitive *habere*, which implies a certain realism about the predication that follows; it's not that what is falsely formed by thought *is* just some image, but that it's a proper subject of predication, something that can *have* or take on properties. And what the product of false thought takes on in this case is *aliquam imaginem*, which might be translated some, or a certain: image, appearance, likeness, imitation, representation, or even imagistic consistency (as Brunschwig puts it⁶⁵). To be sure, Centaurs don't have properties the way corporeal horses and men do, but there is still the very real sense in which Centaurs are consistently *characterized by* certain attributes.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ "consistence d' image," "Genre supreme," p.54

⁶⁶ In the sense that Victor Caston argues in "Something and Nothing" that concepts are characterized or defined by their attributes. And in the sense of subsistence given by Merriam-Webster earlier: "the character possessed by whatever is logically conceivable."

So, while it's true that figments like Centaurs and Giants are products of thought, and false thought at that, it's their being conventionally characterized a certain way that makes them subsistent Somethings. Some one person dreamed up the first Centaur, but what makes Centaurs Somethings is that they have taken on a representational or imagistic consistency through the texts and illustrations that portray them. There are now certain properties that characterize the Centaur, being half man-half-horse, for example. Similarly, wearing red pants characterizes Mickey Mouse. This is no ordinary predication, of course, since Mickey Mouse doesn't exist and can't actually wear pants. It is a derivative kind of predication but predication nonetheless. It's true that Mickey wears red shorts; he is in fact defined by his red shorts, big ears, etc. One might put the point by saying that fictitious Somethings have taken on a certain persona or profile such that we can say true and false things about them; they are both available to be referred to and objectively characterized by certain attributes. So being a *proper* subject of thought implies not just availability to the mind, but a level of mind-independence and objectivity that makes its reality independent of any one token thought. As Brunschwig puts it, to be Something is to have *extra-mental reality*.⁶⁷ Thus figments that count as Something have in some sense taken on a life of their own. From token images, texts and illustrations emerges a determinate type, objectively available for us to discuss and say true and false things about.

This objectivity, I have argued, is conveyed by the verbs *huphistasthai* and *succurro*. Jacques Brunschwig's translation captures the spirit of Stoic figments nicely: "those things that present themselves to the mind, such as Centaurs, Giants and everything that, being the result of false thought, ends up taking on some imagistic consistency, though lacking existence."⁶⁸ To say that figments *present themselves* to the mind highlights their objective availability, as does their treatment as the *product* ("issu") of thought; and to say that they *end up* taking on some imagistic consistency signals that the path is from token subjective images to an objective type defined or characterized by certain attributes. The objectivity of the type is reminiscent of the drill sergeant passage above (b.). Just as the token motions of the drill sergeant standing at a distance to provide himself as a model give rise to an incorporeal impressor with a nature like that of the *lekta* (i.e., the pattern of his motions), so too the token mental images, stories and illustrations

⁶⁷ "Genre supreme," e.g., p. 77, p. 79

⁶⁸ "les choses qui se présentent à l'esprit, comme les Centaures, les Géants, et tout ce qui, issu d'une pensée fausse, a fini par prendre quelque consistance d'image, tout en n'ayant pas d'existence," loc. cit.

give rise to the Centaur, Something with derivative but objective reality. There is an important disanalogy as well: the pattern of the drill sergeant's motions subsists according to a body that really moves in such a way; figments, on the other hand, do not correspond to any such reality. But the fact that there are no actual (corporeal) centaurs does not impugn the reality of the fictitious entity, which subsists according to token thoughts, texts and illustrations (which are corporeal).

Long & Sedley's tripartite ontology, which divides Something into the corporeal, the incorporeal, and what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal,⁶⁹ is in a unique position to capture this analogy (complete with disanalogy). Fictional entities have reality analogous to the pattern that emerges from the drill sergeant's motions, which is captured by saying they all have a certain derivative reality, or subsistence. The disanalogy is captured by the distinction between being an incorporeal as opposed to that which is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. An incorporeal is literally what's left over once you bracket the corporeal. Take away the drill sergeant, and what's left over is the pattern of his motions. Now, while it's true that if you bracket the ink, paper and token mental image of Centaurs, what's left over is the image or persona of the Centaur as a figment, there is an important difference between the two cases. Incorporeals are grounded in the way things are: to the pattern of the drill sergeant's motions there correspond all his token motions; but no actual horse-man corresponds to the Centaur. Hence, as to the reality of the Centaur, the question whether it's corporeal or incorporeal does not apply; it's neither an actual horse-man nor what's left over when you bracket all the actual horse men (since there aren't any). Nonetheless, we can say true and false things about Centaurs, because they are indeed characterized by certain attributes. In this respect, they merit a place in the Stoic ontology as *proper* subjects of thought, intersubjectively available in a way that my bedtime sheep are not. Hence we can see that being a thought construct is perfectly compatible with having objective reality.

Furthermore, Long & Sedley's tripartite schema is the only one that takes Seneca at his word (that Centaurs and Giants are non-existent Somethings for the Stoics) and maintains a coherent Stoic ontology. Those who posit the category of Not-Somethings make the Stoic ontology downright incoherent: Something is and is not the highest genus of reality because

⁶⁹ op. cit., Chapter 27

between Something and nothing at all there are intermediate Not-Somethings. This result strikes me as uncharitable to an extreme, and so is to be avoided—especially when there are perfectly good alternatives at hand.

Finally, another virtue of the Long & Sedley ontology is that the division into existents and subsistents (which includes both incorporeals and figments) fits seamlessly with the idea that the Stoics were operating with two criteria of reality instead of one. The strong corporeal criterion delineates existence, while the minimal Something criterion identifies a derivative mode of reality, namely subsistence. I have been arguing that the first element of the Something criterion is being a *proper* subject of thought, and that this element conveys objective availability to the mind. If I am right, then figments show that mind-dependence is no *per se* barrier to being real. I will now turn my attention from objectivity to the second element of the Something criterion: particularity.

Particularity

That the Stoics countenance an ontology of particulars is a commonplace by now. There is good textual evidence for it,⁷⁰ and a long scholarly tradition.⁷¹ Jacques Brunschwig has suggested that the Stoics' famous not-someone argument against Platonic Forms is a test for reality, one that screens for particularity.

(1) Indeed, Chrysippus too raises problems as to whether the Idea is to be called a “this Something” (*tode ti*). (2) One must also take into account the Stoics' custom concerning generically qualified things—how according to them cases are expressed, in their school how universals (*ta koina*) are called not-somethings (*outina*), and how their ignorance of the fact that not every substance signifies a “this Something” gives rise to the not-Someone sophism, which relies on the form of expression. (3) Namely, “if someone is in Athens, he is not in Megara; <but man is in Athens; therefore man is not in Megara.>” (4) For, man is not Someone (*ou tis*); for the universal is not Something; but we took him as Something (*hos tina*) in the argument, and that is why the argument has this name, being called the Not-someone argument.⁷²

⁷⁰ Syrianus, *In. Ar. Met.* 104, 21 (30G); Alexander, *In. Ar. Top.* 359, 12-16 (30D); Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 11.8-11 (30I)

⁷¹ e.g., Brunschwig, “Genre supreme” and “Stoic Metaphysics;” Caston, op. cit., et al. in his footnote 1, p. 145; L&S p. 164; Gerard Watson, *The Stoic Theory of Knowledge*, Belfast (1966)

⁷² Simplicius, *In. Ar. Cat.* 105,8-16 (30E)

Here, as with thinkability, the criterion is logical and not causal. Our ability to think about Something is not constitutive of its objectivity, but it is an excellent measure. Likewise, passing the *outis* test is not explanatory of an entity's particularity, but indicative of it. Now, it's obvious how individuals like Socrates pass the *outis* test, especially in contradistinction to a universal like Man. But the particularity of non-existent Somethings remains unclear, especially in the case of Sayables. Yet, as Brunschwig says, "That *lekta* are particulars is beyond the shadow of a doubt, even if it is quite difficult to grasp that in which their particularity consists."⁷³ Though he goes on to sketch the landscape of the question, Brunschwig does not pursue an answer; he is content knowing that the particularity of *lekta* can be adjudicated in principle.

I am going to make explicit the way in which the Stoics' non-existent Somethings are objective particulars. I will pick up where I left off in the previous section and examine how each of the canonical incorporeals is a proper subject of thought, the nature of their subsistence on body, and how they pass the *outis* test for reality. In so doing, I will elucidate the Something criterion itself to arrive at the principles of Stoic ontology and an articulated account of subsistence. Having thus made the Stoics' two criteria of reality explicit, I will go on to address problem cases, such as concepts, limits and the treatment of *outina*, to reveal a coherent and comprehensive Stoic ontology.

I should add, however, that Caston is pessimistic on the matter: "Attempts to extract a criterion for 'not-somethings' from this argument have failed," he says in reference to Brunschwig.⁷⁴ Caston argues that the need for *ad hoc* restrictions in application to the incorporeals shows that the test is not a genuine criterion. But it is important to note that Brunschwig does not put the *outis* test forth as a criterion for Not-Somethings (*outina*), but as a positive criterion for Somethings. I will therefore persevere and aim to apply the test without *ad hoc* restrictions. The way in which each incorporeal gets its objective particularity will be unique, since each subsists according to something different. But if Brunschwig is right that the Something criterion was developed in direct principled response to the *Sophist*, the test should apply in all cases while the nature of subsistence on body varies from case to case.

⁷³ "Que les *lekta* soient particuliers, cela ne fait pas l'ombre d'un doute, encore qu'il soit assez difficile de saisir en quoi consiste leur particularite," op. cit., p. 92

⁷⁴ "Something and Nothing," p. 159

Place

We saw before that place and void go hand in glove as model incorporeals, each being defined by the bodies that do or do not occupy them. Void that gets filled becomes place, though it is not necessarily the case that place becomes void when its defining body departs. So I will treat them separately, starting with place. Again, “Chrysippus declared place to be what is occupied (*to katechomenon*) through and through (*dia holou*) by an existent (*hupo ontos*), or what can be occupied by an existent and is through and through occupied whether by one thing or several things.”⁷⁵

It has been well noted that the Stoic definition of place is disjunctive, *what is* or *can be* occupied by a body. I have urged that all Stoic incorporeals get their reality by subsisting according to body. So it’s important to consider the details of the disjunctive definition in those terms. Place considered as what is actually occupied by body will subsist according to the occupying body or bodies. For example, the place where I keep my keys is objectively real in virtue of the table and my keys. The place where Socrates drank the hemlock has objective reality in virtue of Socrates and the hemlock. There are such places whether we think about them or not, which is captured by saying they have reality according to subsistence (*kath’ hupostasin*). In particular, they have incorporeal or body-less reality—what’s left over when you bracket the table and keys, or Socrates and the hemlock.

The second disjunct, place considered as what *can* be occupied by a body is not as cut-and-dried. Are we to define such a place by possible objects? Is there a subsistent parking place for my possible dream car? How would one decide which possible object should be the one to define a place? These questions are rhetorical of course, since this would be the wrong way to take the second disjunct. The subsistence of possible place will not be on the bodies that *could* fill it, but on the bodies that actually determine its boundaries. So the parking space for my dream car is not defined by a non-actual car, but by the actual cars that do carve the outside

⁷⁵ Stobaeus, 1.161, 8-14 (49A part)

edges of the place. Put this way the incorporeal subsistence of place on body is apparent in both disjuncts.

Nothing is to stop me from referring to that place in terms of my possible dream car, but the reality that licenses my reference to such a place is *kath' hupostasin* and depends on the cars around it. By calling it my dream car's space I do not invent a new reality so much as view what is already subsistent through a different lens. The fact that I can do so does not alter the subsistence of the place, or make its reality any less objective. So, for example, if I were to go on a pilgrimage to find the place where Socrates drank the hemlock, I could no longer rely on Socrates and the hemlock to identify the place. I might try looking for the jail instead. Finding it gone, I might have to reconstruct the scene and identify the location by longitude and latitude. Whatever "lens" I might use does not alter the subsistent entity itself whose reality was established by Socrates and the hemlock (and the earth). Places are not mental constructs, though we can think and talk about them in different ways. The different ways in which we think of them *are* mental constructs *kat' epinoian* (according to thought). What makes place a proper subject of thought, though, is its reality *kath' hupostasin* — subsistence according to the bodies that occupy or delimit it.

To determine the particularity of place I will apply the *outis* test: If the place Socrates drank the hemlock is in Athens, then it is not in Megara. Sounds good—no absurdity results from plugging in places because they are particular, thanks to their subsistence on particular bodies. In fact place and void are even three-dimensional (i.e., having length, breadth and depth) for the Stoics.⁷⁶ Galen sees absurdity in the result, but a three-dimensional incorporeal is not absurd considered as subsisting on the three corporeal dimensions. Take the following report: "Place is what is occupied by an existent and made equal to what occupies it (by existent they now mean body, as is clear from the interchange of names)."⁷⁷ One could generate several false paradoxes for the Stoics; for example, that incorporeals become corporeal, or that the Stoics define the subsistence of place out of reality by making it equal to body. But by the Stoics' own lights place remains three-dimensional as it subsists according to three corporeal dimensions;

⁷⁶ Galen, *Qual. inc.*, 19.464,10-14 (49E)

⁷⁷ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 10.3-4 (49B)

place lacks body but not extension because extension is a physical though not necessarily material quality. Hence the point of specifying that body is *solid* extension.⁷⁸

The essence of Stoic incorporeals lies in their being body-less, not a-corporeal but something corporeal considered *sans* body. For example, the flow of traffic has objective reality insofar as we can observe and talk about it, but it is a byproduct of cars without which it would have no reality whatsoever. Bracketing the cars, what's left over is the particular incorporeal flow of traffic. Eliminating the cars entirely, what's left over is nothing at all. On this model, places are *bona fide* objective particulars for the Stoics: determinate extension is what's left over when you bracket body. Therefore places are both objectively available to thought and particular in virtue of their subsistence on bodies that occupy or delimit them.

Void

So far we have seen two modes of subsistence: place according to bodies that actually fill it, subsisting from the inside out, as it were; and place according to the bodies that create its external boundaries or finite endpoints, subsisting from the outside in. Void offers a third mode, from the outside out, one might say.

(1) The Stoics want there to be a void outside the world and prove it through the following assumption. (2) Let someone stand at the edge of the fixed sphere and stretch out his hand upwards. (3) If he does stretch it out, they take it that something exists outside the world into which he has stretched it, and if he cannot stretch it out, there will still be something outside which prevents him from doing so. (4) And if he should next stand at the limit of this and stretch out his hand, a similar question will arise. For something which is also outside that point will have been shown to exist.⁷⁹

The only boundary of void is the outside limit or edge of the corporeal universe itself, the starting point according to which the infinite void beyond subsists. It is infinite in being unbounded on one end.⁸⁰ But this is no slight to the objective reality of void, as evidenced by the

⁷⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7.135 (45E)

⁷⁹ Simplicius, *In Ar. De caelo* 284,28-285,2 (49F)

⁸⁰ Thus I am with most commentators and against Brad Inwood's suggestion that void is unfilled extension...best "distinguished as unlimitedness in the simplest sense, absence of limits or boundaries...thus a rather negative conception [that] makes no positive assertion about spatial extent, as the atomistic conception of infinity does"

Stoics' realist language: "For as nothing is no limit, so there is no limit of nothing, as is the case with void. *In respect of its own subsistence* it is infinite; it is made finite by being filled, but once that which fills it has been removed, a limit to it cannot be thought of."⁸¹ As I said before, the fact that such a limit cannot be thought is testament to the real infinity of void.

So void is technically whatever is outside the corporeal world.⁸² There is some evidence to the contrary from Sextus: "The Stoics say that void is what can be occupied by an existent but is not occupied, or an interval empty of body or an interval unoccupied by body," which comes just before he reports that place is what is occupied and made equal to it and that *room* is a partly occupied interval.⁸³ What this passage tells us is that there may have been some debate as to whether unoccupied spaces in the world should be called void, while defining place as what is actually occupied; or whether such pockets should be classified as place that can be occupied, as in the disjunctive report. There might even be a third class beside place and void, perhaps room or something without a name.⁸⁴ The debate over how to characterize unoccupied intervals in the world emphasizes that void is strictly speaking unoccupied space outside the world, place is strictly speaking occupied space in the world, and these pockets are yet a third phenomenon. Whatever the classification for these pockets, their reality is uncontroversially dependent on the bodies that determine the pockets' outside boundaries (and not on the classification that we give).

We already saw in the last section that these pockets, unoccupied intervals considered from the outside in *qua* place, are objective particulars according to the *outis* test. If there is an unoccupied interval between two cars in Athens, it can't be in Megara; the pockets in Athens are not the ones in Megara. The next question is whether extra-cosmic void, being infinite, passes

("Chrysippus on Extension and the Void," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vol. 45, No. 178, (3/1991), p. 245-266). I also disagree with Inwood that incorporeals are infinite by nature; the *lekton* is a direct counterexample, not divisible to infinity, as Brunschwig observes in "Genre Supreme," p. 90; and conspicuously absent from Stobaeus' list of things divisible to infinity, which includes bodies and things comparable to bodies like surface, line, place, void and time (1.142,2-6 (50A)). Furthermore, it's not clear how place can be considered unlimited according to Inwood's interpretation. If unlimited extension is limited when occupied, then place is strictly speaking not an unlimited incorporeal except insofar as it is extension. If so, Stobaeus' report that what is incorporeal is infinite (see the next note below) is no longer taken to apply to all incorporeals, just time and void.

⁸¹ Stobaeus, 1.161,8-26 (49A), my italics

⁸² See also Galen, *Diff. puls.* 8.674, 13-14 (49D); and *Qual. inc.* 19.464,10-14 (49E)

⁸³ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 10.3-4 (49B)

⁸⁴ See loc. cit., and Stobaeus loc. cit, untranslated portion of 49A

the *outis* test: if void is in Athens, then it is not in Megara. As stated, the result is unclear. If treated as a mass term, it would be false to say that if there is some void in Athens then there is no void in Megara; just as it would be false to say that if there is some honey in Athens, there is none in Megara. On this interpretation, Brunschwig says the *outis* test is powerless to justify the extra-cosmic void as Something.⁸⁵ His solution is to say that void, properly speaking, refers to the unified and continuous extra-cosmic void, which does pass the *outis* test. If (*per impossibile*) the extra-cosmic void is in Athens, then it can't be in Megara. So far Brunschwig is exactly right—namely, that Stoic void is the extra-cosmic void as described above, and that *qua* particular it cannot be in two places at once. But the unfortunate assumption that void acts as a mass term sends Brunschwig in circles to address the pockets.

[T]he term “void,” while remaining a mass term, applicable in the same sense to the whole and its parts, designates nothing more, when it applies to the whole, than a continuous whole of a single tenor, with the exception of the enclave of the world that limits it on the interior as a hole limits the continuity of a gruyere; and when the term *void* applies to the parts of the whole, it designates nothing more than parts arbitrarily lifted from the continuous whole.⁸⁶

Brunschwig's result is that the extra-cosmic void has cosmic parts, the absurdity of which he hedges by making the parts somehow arbitrary. Now, there is an important sense in which the Stoics do make parts of the whole arbitrary and of a lesser reality, as in the case of continuum, which I will address momentarily. But in making the void correspond to the gruyere, and the world to the holes, Brunschwig is reduced to absurdity because the void is no longer extra-cosmic. Treating the parts as arbitrary is therefore too little too late; as well as running afoul of the principle that mass terms are applicable *in the same sense* to whole and parts.

The problem is Brunschwig's assumption that void is a mass term, which blinds him to the fact that the so-called intra-cosmic void and extra-cosmic void are just two different phenomena, i.e. two different kinds of reality. Void, strictly speaking is extra-cosmic: it begins at the edge of the material world and extends indefinitely. As a single, continuous entity determined by a particular (the world) it is itself a particular that passes the *outis* test. The Stoics also recognized that there are pockets of space in the material world, able to receive body. That

⁸⁵ op. cit., p. 97

⁸⁶ op. cit., pp. 98-9

there was internal debate as to whether these should be classified as a kind of place, void, room, or something else is testament to the fact that the Stoics recognized the pockets as a third kind of subsistent. There is on the one hand place as defined by the body that occupies it, from the inside out; on the other hand void as defined by the edge or limit of the material world, from the outside out; and then there is a third phenomenon where bodies define a space from the outside in. What we have is three different ways in which extension can be conceived without body.

It is only natural that there be an active debate as to how to characterize this third kind of subsistence. Being in the world, these pockets are akin to place and so warrant the disjunctive definition of place attested by Stobaeus. On the other hand, being what *can* receive body makes the pockets akin to void—but not proper parts or the same thing as void. Brunschwig's error is in the way he deploys the Swiss cheese metaphor. He makes the cheese correspond to void, and body to the holes (such an egregious role reversal might have been a clue that something was amiss). But it's the perfectly intuitive sense of Swiss cheese that captures the phenomena: the cheese corresponds to the material world, the holes to the pockets of relative space in the material world, and everything outside the cheese to the extra-cosmic void.

Extra-cosmic void is thus an objective particular. It subsists according to the material world, from which it inherits its particularity and objective reality. As such, it passes the *outis* test straightforwardly, without the need for *ad hoc* restrictions. The debate over whether to classify the (proper) Swiss cheese holes as place or void does, however, illustrate that there is a distinction to be made between the brute fact, or natural joint, and the frameworks that we choose to apply. On the model of the temperature outside as brute fact, and the choice between Celsius and Fahrenheit (or any other measure we might invent and apply) as the framework, the Stoics may well have been aware of such a distinction.

Semantic Interlude

The innovation of the *lekton* as what is signified by our words, i.e., meaning, is already a good reason to think the Stoics saw the difference between brute fact and framework. As Seneca

reports: “There’s a very great difference between naming *it* and speaking *about* it.”⁸⁷ But there are other good reasons to think so as well. The issue of the Swiss cheese holes is one: it was not a debate over whether to posit such pockets, but over how to classify them. Their availability to the mind is thus testament to their objectivity, while the frameworks that can be constructed and modified around the natural joints show their reality according to thought, or *kat’ epinoian*.

Texts I bracketed earlier as recalcitrant give more good reasons to think the Stoics were aware of a distinction between reality *kath’ hupostasin* (brute fact) and *kat’ epinoian* (framework). The following passage from Diogenes makes the distinction explicit:

A surface is the limit of a body, or that which has only length and breadth without depth. This Posidonius in his *On celestial phenomena* book 5 retains both in thought and as subsistent (*kat’ epinoian kai kath’ hupostasin*). A line is the limit of a surface, or length without breadth, or what has length alone. A point is the limit of a line – the smallest marker.⁸⁸

The reality of surface as brute fact, *kath’ hupostasin*, is due to the body of which it is the limit; it is a fourth kind of incorporeal subsistence in addition to place, void and the pockets. Defining surface as length and breadth without depth just is bracketing the corporeal, leaving body-less extension as the objective particular left over. That a body has determinate boundaries is a natural joint of the corporeal world, from which the incorporeal inherits its objectivity and particularity. The reality of surface *kat’ epinoian* on the other hand, is illustrated by the progression from surface to line to point indicating it is in some sense up to us to carve the world as we see fit. The surface of my kitchen counter is perfectly real, and we can talk about its real corporeal limits but this does not imply that there are individual lines and points somehow in the counter to which I refer when I speak that way. The reality of surface *kat’ epinoian* is the reality of the framework that we apply, like the reality of Fahrenheit and Celsius relative to the brute temperature.

So it’s not that we have conflicting evidence about the nature of subsistence (or that the Stoics were incoherent thinkers, as their critics would have it), it’s that there seems to be a systematic distinction to the incorporeals as between their reality according to subsistence (*kath’*

⁸⁷ *Ep.* 117.13 (33E)

⁸⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7.135 (50E), paraphrased in passage p. above.

hupostasin) and according to thought (*kat' epinoian*). If the Stoics did recognize the distinction, it would be easy enough to misunderstand or misrepresent their views as Proclus (a staunch Platonist) does in another recalcitrant passage: "...we should not hold that such limits, I mean those of bodies, subsist in mere thought, as the Stoics supposed."⁸⁹ Indeed, the best criticism is a true observation presented in a negative light. Polemical testimony about the Stoics should therefore not be written off as unreliable but diagnosed for the elements of truth that license the criticism, as well as the critical bias or omission that makes the result uncharitable. So Proclus is not wrong in noting the reality of limits *kat' epinoian* but not accurate either in leaving out their reality *kath' hupostasin*. Bending the truth is an age-old practice.

That the Stoics were onto this distinction can also be seen in the testimony and puzzles concerning continuum. The Stoics famously make reality divisible to infinity without consisting of infinitely many bodies.⁹⁰ While such a thesis makes an easy target for ridicule, it is not inherently incoherent because of the distinction between reality *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*, as Plutarch himself betrays in a characteristic attack:

Chrysippus says that when asked if we have parts, and how many, and of what and how many parts they consist, we will operate a distinction. With regard to the inexact question we will reply that we consist of head, trunk and limbs—for that was all that the problem put to us amounted to. But if they extend their questions to the ultimate parts, we must not, he says, in reply concede any such things, but must say neither of what parts we consist, nor, likewise, of how many, either finite or infinite. I have, I think, quoted his actual words, so that you may see how he conserved the common conceptions, urging us to think of each body as consisting neither of certain parts nor of some number of them, either infinite or finite.⁹¹

Considered as a material whole, the world has no proper or ultimate parts.⁹² And this is perfectly compatible with a strong realism about the world's natural joints, like the head, trunk and limbs. According to thought, however, the world can be divided into infinitely many parts; there is no limit to the distinctions we can apply. As Long & Sedley put the point: "there are only as many dividing points on a runner's journey as anyone may choose to mark off in thought.

⁸⁹ Proclus, *In. Eucl. El.* I 89,15-21 (50D)

⁹⁰ Stobaeus 1.142,2-6 (50A); Diogenes Laertius 7.150-1 (50B)

⁹¹ Plutarch *Comm. not.* 1078E-1080E (50C)

⁹² Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1054E-1055A (29D); Philo *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim* 2.4 (47R)

At some point our mental power to mark further divisions will fail us, and we will be left with an undivided, although divisible, portion of distance.”⁹³ Chrysippus rejects the question about our ultimate parts because, although what is *kat’ epinoian* is made true by what is *kath’ hupostasin*, it is not in virtue of a one–one correspondence of parts. It may be true that it is 70 degrees Fahrenheit in the room, but not because there are 70 Fahrenheits making it so. Nonetheless, the fact that it is 70 degrees (which is *kat’ epinoian*) is true because of the brute temperature *kath’ hupostasin*. “There is no non-arbitrary answer to the question how many parts [something] has.”⁹⁴

Someone might object that a few passages concerning surface and continuum are hardly sufficient to establish a systematic distinction in Stoic doctrine. Surface is not even a canonical incorporeal. In fact, it is characterized as a limit, and limits are a troubled category—many scholars take limits as evidence that the Stoics countenance Not-Somethings between Something and nothing at all. The first response to this objection is that the canon is not exclusive. In fact, one would expect to find variations in the list of incorporeals if the Something criterion is indeed prior to its species, as Brunschwig points out. Ironically, Brunschwig finds no such variation, dismissing passages from Cleomedes, Diogenes and Stobaeus to argue against a result he would welcome, namely that the Stoics operated with an open list of incorporeals.⁹⁵ But the passages Brunschwig dismisses provide perfectly good evidence of variations on the theme of incorporeality.

- m. Cleomedes, considering whether an incorporeal could be the limit of void, wonders what incorporeal it would be: “time, surface or something else like them?”⁹⁶

Brunschwig assumes Cleomedes has listed surface instead of place and takes it that even if not, the open-ended “something else like them” must refer to other canonical incorporeals or Seneca’s figments.⁹⁷ But these assumptions are unfounded; “something else like them” could

⁹³ op. cit., p. 303-4; see also Inwood op. cit., p. 256: “what is possible is that the process of division (*tome*) is unceasing, goes on for as long as one cares to do so;” and Andreas Graeser, op. cit., p. 80

⁹⁴ Long & Sedley, p. 303; see also p. 178 regarding the perfection of the world itself vs. the imperfection of its parts qua dependent for their characterization to extrinsic relations.

⁹⁵ “Genre supreme,” p. 28-9

⁹⁶ *De mot. circul.* 16,2-5

⁹⁷ op. cit., p. 29

just as well refer to their common mode of reality as incorporeals, and not some pre-established list.

- n. Diogenes reports limits, place and void as one of the five topics into which the Stoics divide physics.⁹⁸

Brunschwig finds no implication of a common ontological status among the group,⁹⁹ but why not? What limits, place and void have in common *qua* topic in the study of nature is precisely their subsistence according to body.¹⁰⁰

- o. Stobaeus reports “Chrysippus said that bodies are divided to infinity, and likewise things comparable to bodies (*ta tois somasi prosoikota*), such as (*hoion*) surface, line, place, void and time.”¹⁰¹

Here the derivative reality according to body is explicit (comparable to bodies), as is the openness of the list (things...such as). We saw this kind of talk before in the case of the drill sergeant.¹⁰² We saw there that the pattern of the drill sergeant’s motions has a reality *like* that of the *lekta*, i.e., objectively subsistent. The pattern is what’s left over when we bracket the token motions of his body. The fact that the pattern is described as having a nature like that of the *lekta* indicates that the Stoics were prepared to recognize incorporeality throughout the physical world—they identified a distinctive mode of reality dependent on body, not a finite list.¹⁰³ But the canon of incorporeals is still perfectly legitimate insofar as there is a core set of cases; that the Stoics might have tacked on an *et cetera* at the end of the list does not diminish the canon. So the fact that surface is not a canonical incorporeal does not bar the extension of Diogenes’ testimony on surface to incorporeals generally.

The second response (this time to the point that surface *qua* limit is inherently troubled) is that Long & Sedley’s tripartite ontology is strengthened by the distinction between reality *kath’ hupostasin* and *kat’ epinoian* so that limit is not inherently troubled. In fact, one finds in

⁹⁸ 7.132 (43B)

⁹⁹ loc. cit.

¹⁰⁰ The more interesting question would be why we don’t see time or *lekta* on the list. One possible reply would be that time is included as the limit of motion, and *lekta* are not strictly speaking part of the account of nature, though they are a natural phenomenon.

¹⁰¹ 1.142,2-6 (50A)

¹⁰² Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 8.409 (27E), passage b. above

¹⁰³ Brad Inwood even argues for body-less extension as a Stoic incorporeal, which in a sense it is, op. cit., p. 254

the distinction between brute fact and framework the principled difference between incorporeals and what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. The subsistence of incorporeals, *qua* body-less entities, is directly dependent on body and indifferent to whether anyone does in fact think of them; this is why being a proper subject of thought is a criterion of objectivity. In addition, the incorporeals have reality *kat' epinoian*, which is dependent on thought like the Fahrenheit scale. The subsistence of what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, however, does not reduce to bodies in the same way. As we saw before, Mickey Mouse owes his reality to the mind of Walt Disney. There is no actual Mickey Mouse to which his reality *kat' epinoian* can be referred, the way there is with the incorporeals. What is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, only has reality *kat' epinoian*; it is falsely formed full stop. So where does it get its objectivity?

The account of fictitious entities I gave in analyzing Seneca's *Epistle 58* was that they take on some imagistic consistency, a certain life of their own independent of any token thought taken singly but making them still ultimately a mental construct. Fictitious Somethings, are neither corporeal nor incorporeal, but they are still objective particulars in virtue of the token images, texts and illustrations according to which they subsist. Mickey Mouse began in the mind of Walt Disney but he is the character we know because of Fantasia, the Mickey Mouse Club and the marketing empire that Disney has become. There is, of course, no flesh-and-blood rodent to which Mickey's reality can be referred.

Mathematical limits also cannot be referred back to bodies, which is why they are properly classified as what is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. Herein lies the difference between surface and mathematical limits. The surface of my kitchen counter, considered as the limit of a solid extension, is an incorporeal. But mathematical limits are not analogously grounded in body. Take for example Chrysippus' response to Democritus, "who in the vivid manner of a natural philosopher raised the following puzzle. If a cone were cut along a plane parallel to its base, what should we hold the surfaces of the segments to be, equal or unequal?"¹⁰⁴ Chrysippus' response is that the surfaces are neither equal nor unequal, which is because they're not really surfaces (not being corporeal), like Mickey doesn't really wear pants—the question of equality does not arise because you do not have two actual (physical) surfaces, or even a cone for that matter. Likewise with line: considered as the body-less limit of a solid it's incorporeal;

¹⁰⁴ Plutarch, *De com. not.* 1078E-1080E (50C5)

considered as a mathematical construct, it's neither corporeal nor incorporeal; there is no such thing as the perfect triangle, infinitely extending parallel lines, or the single point. The reality of mathematical constructs is in their imagistic consistency. Again, it's a matter of distinguishing the phenomena. Just as with the proper Swiss cheese holes and extra-cosmic void, surface and mathematical limits are two different phenomena, even though surface is a sort of limit and limit a sort of surface. It is, of course, precisely on this ambiguity that critics' paradoxes trade.

With the phenomena properly in focus, what some scholars take to be conflicting passages can be explained so that the available evidence is coherent and consistent. For example, Anna Ju takes the following set of passages to be incompatible.

- Simplicius' report that the Stoics "say that shapes too, like other qualified things, are bodies."¹⁰⁵
- Proclus' report that the limits of bodies subsist in mere thought.¹⁰⁶
- Diogenes' report that the Stoics retained surface both in thought and as subsistent.¹⁰⁷
- Plutarch's treatment of the limit between two bodies as incorporeal¹⁰⁸; and Cleomedes' unusual list of incorporeals including surface, time and sayable.¹⁰⁹

I suppose at first blush this testimony does make the Stoics look hopelessly confused; limits are called everything from bodies to my bedtime sheep. But it need not. Considered the right way, these passages are quite compatible—without rendering Stoic doctrine incoherent or dismissing any of the testimony.

- There is a sense in which shapes are bodies for the Stoics, as Simplicius reports. "This is a globe," I say, handing a child a model of the earth. The globe shape is in this case perfectly corporeal, as shape that has not had its material element bracketed—body-full shape, if you will.

¹⁰⁵ Paraphrase of Simplicius, *In Ar. Cat.*, 271,20-2 (28K)

¹⁰⁶ *In Eucl. def.* 1.189,15-21 (50D), passage m. above

¹⁰⁷ Diogenes Laertius 7.135 (50E), passage l. above

¹⁰⁸ Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1078E-1080E (50C)

¹⁰⁹ Cleomedes, *De motu* 1.1.139-44, 1.1.113-20

- There is also a sense in which the limits of bodies (their shapes) do subsist in (mere) thought. For example, when we describe the moon as round or spherical or some other term we might coin (say, to capture differences in the smoothness of the surface), the reality of the description is *kat' epinoian*, though what we talk about is corporeal. Also in the background is the notion of a mathematical limit, which is purely *kat' epinoian*. So Proclus puts the point contentiously but not inaccurately when he says that the limits of bodies subsist in mere thought. Proclus exploits the semantic ambiguity between limit *qua* limit of a body, which is incorporeal and thus has reality both *kath' hupostasin* as well as *kat' epinoian*, and limit *qua* mathematical limits whose reality is purely *kat' epinoian*.
- Diogenes makes the distinction between surface *kat' epinoian* and *kath' hupostasin* explicit; since other passages exploit the distinction, this testimony is not just compatible with, but explanatory of the others. Also, as a neutral commentator, Diogenes is more likely to report the Stoic view accurately.
- Finally, in describing surface and limit as incorporeal Plutarch and Cleomedes capture reality *kath' hupostasin*. Plutarch, in a fit of paradox mongering, says that bodies touch by means of a limit, then equivocates between incorporeal limit *kath' hupostasin* and limit *kat' epinoian* to imply that the Stoics posited tiny little limits between bodies, on a par with positing 70 Fahrenheits if its 70 degrees is the temperature in room. The sense in which surface is genuinely incorporeal, as Cleomedes reports, has been well rehearsed by now: *qua* limit of a body, it is body-less and has reality *kath' hupostasin*. But this phenomenon is not to be confused with mathematical limits, which are neither corporeal nor incorporeal.

So there is no barrier to taking Diogenes' report on Posidonius at face value, and extending his testimony that surface was both *kat' epinoian* and *kath' hupostasin* to incorporeals generally. Not only is there no barrier, the distinction explains previously recalcitrant texts, makes our scarce evidence coherent, and squeezes the most out of polemical texts whose narrators are not so much unreliable as uncharitable.

Finally, to the objection that canonical incorporeals do not display the distinction, the response is that they do. Testimony concerning place and void gave rise to the distinction, and showed the Stoics keeping a fixed eye on reality *kath' hupostasin* while adjusting their frameworks *kat' epinoian* as needed. The place where Socrates drank the hemlock subsists according to Socrates, the hemlock and the earth—it is a natural joint. But the fact that we were able to identify the place in other terms (e.g., by the jailhouse, by longitude and latitude) is due to its reality *kat' epinoian*. Void, too, displays both kinds of reality. It is subsistent according the edge of the material world, itself infinite and without proper parts. But if it served us, we could create a scale to measure the void. One might even say that the void already has two realities *kat' epinoian*: one considering it from the outside out, and another as a component of the all (*to pan*).¹¹⁰

As we will now see, the Stoics recognized the distinction in their analysis of time as well. The goal of my “semantic interlude” was to call attention to the fact that the Stoics were alive to the distinction between reality *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*. It’s a semantic matter because, for example, “limit” can signify an incorporeal limit of body or a mathematical construct that is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. While it may be impossible to demonstrate with certainty that the Stoics consciously exploited the distinction, it is at least sure that it bubbled beneath the surface. The further point is that subsistence remains a reliable indicator of objective reality, though there is also a sense in which the Stoics did hold incorporeals to be *kat' epinoian*.

Time

Time is defined as the dimension of the world’s motion, which is of course corporeal¹¹¹. Its subsistence for thought, as in the other cases, is not an indication of mind-dependence but of objective reality.¹¹² It’s true that the hare runs faster than the tortoise, a fact that is independent of our measuring it. There are also natural joints in the world’s motion, such as sunrise and

¹¹⁰ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 9.332 (44A); see also Diogenes Laertius 7.137 (43F), where the Stoics are reported to use the word *kosmos* in three ways. Each refers to a different reality *kath' hupostasin* but is itself *kat' epinoian*.

¹¹¹ Simplicius, *In Ar. Cat.*, 350,15-16 (51A); Stobaeus 1.106,5-23 (51B); 1.105,8-16 (51D); Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 10.121-6, 139-42 (50F)

¹¹² As Long & Sedley observe, *op. cit.*, p. 307

sunset, the monthly lunar cycle¹¹³ and the year as measured relative to the sun¹¹⁴ all of which are indifferent to our thinking about them. Thus the seasons, too, subsist according to the material world: Diogenes reports that winter is air above the earth made cold by the sun's being further from the earth.¹¹⁵

Like void, time is infinite, but does not have infinitely many individual parts. For the Stoics there is no beginning or end to the world's motion, just an everlasting recurrence punctuated by periods of conflagration when the world turns into fire and then starts over. Void was infinite but bounded on one end, while time is unbounded in both directions. So the infinite linear subsistence of time marks a fifth kind of subsistence¹¹⁶, as the dimension of eternal motion.

It is infinite in just the way that the whole of number is said to be infinite. Some of it is past (*pareleluthos*), some present (*enestekos*), and some future (*mellon*). But the whole of time is present, as we say the year is present on a larger compass. Also, the whole of time is said to belong (*huparchein*), though none of its parts belongs exactly (*huparchontos apartizontos*).¹¹⁷

As with void, Brunschwig approaches time as a mass term, asking whether the Stoics' making time a non-existent Something is "motivated primarily by an analysis of time as a whole ("en son ensemble"), and derivatively extended to its parts or quite the contrary is it attributed primordially to the parts (or certain specified parts) of time, and from there extrapolated to its totality."¹¹⁸ As before, this is the wrong way to approach the problem, which Brunschwig ultimately recognizes.¹¹⁹ According to its own subsistence, time is an infinite continuum with no proper parts. In fact the Little by Little argument,¹²⁰ hostile to the Stoics, trades on the same erroneous assumption of proper parts. The Stoics say that the whole of time is incorporeal but identify night and day with body. The Little by Little Argument is then generated in pursuit of some point at which the corporeal parts of time (night and day) become incorporeal—a month, a

¹¹³ Stobaeus reports that a month is the moon turning its brilliant part toward us, Ecl. 1.219.24

¹¹⁴ Plutarch *Comm. not.*, 1084C-D (50G); Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 9.182-4 (70E3)

¹¹⁵ 7.151

¹¹⁶ In addition to place, void, pockets, and surface.

¹¹⁷ Stobaeus 1.105,8-16 (51D); see also Stobaeus 1.106,5-23 (51B); Stobaeus 1.105,17-106,4 (51E)

¹¹⁸ "Genre Supreme," pp. 99-100

¹¹⁹ *op. cit.* p. 108

¹²⁰ Plutarch *Comm. not.* 10874 C-D (51G)

year, this day, that day? But if night and day are not parts of time, the argument does not get started.

Again we have two different phenomena. On the one hand time considered as the dimension of the world's motion is a continuous whole, *kath' hupostasin*; considered *kat' epinoian*, it has distinct parts—seconds, minutes, hours, etc. And again, there is no denial of the world's natural joints; a day, a month and a year reflect the motion of the sun and moon. But the choice of minutes, seconds and hours is like the choice between Celsius and Fahrenheit in being *kat' epinoian* and, to a certain extent, arbitrary. So one can easily see how the Platonist Proclus could allow himself to characterize time as “a mere thought” for the Stoics;¹²¹ it's not true, but not without foundation either. There is also the testimony of Stobaeus that “now and the like are thought of broadly and not exactly,” again indicating the distinction between what we talk about and how we talk about it, and the awareness that parts are not proper parts but frameworks we develop and apply inexactly. So, as Brad Inwood puts it: “Time is indefinitely divisible just in the (rather Aristotelian) sense that one can go on mentally subdividing temporal moments of change, without ever reaching an atomic limit. But the parts of time limited by such a mental process are not true component parts.”¹²²

The Stoic account of time is complicated by the notion of belonging, or being the case (*huparxis*). Several passages attest to the subsistence of past and future in contrast to the belonging of the present,¹²³ which looks like evidence of a different mode of reality; not surprisingly, a parts interpretation of time embraces this interpretation and spins paradox after paradox. But the *huparxis* of the now does not undo the subsistence of time as a continuous whole. The same verb, *huparchein* describes true *lekta* as opposed to false ones. But there is no corresponding suspicion that true *lekta* have a different mode of reality from the false ones.¹²⁴ All *lekta* subsist, in addition some are the case; for example that Barack Obama is president of the United States subsists and is the case now; that John McCain is president subsists (since I say

¹²¹ *In Plat. Tim.*, 271D (51F)

¹²² Brad Inwood, *op.cit.*, n. 60, p. 265

¹²³ Stobaeus 1.106,5-23 (51B4); Plutarch *Comm. not.* 1081C-1082A (51C5)

¹²⁴ Unless one assumes that true *lekta qua* facts are a different kind of entity from false *lekta*, an exceedingly unnecessary distortion of Stoic doctrine. I cannot enter this difficult problem now, so I will just note that *lekta* and time have a parallel puzzle in regards to *huparxis*. The truth of a *lekton* will be explained in some way parallel to the “nowness” of the present.

it and you understand it) but is not the case. Likewise, the present has the same mode of existence as the whole of time, namely subsistence. Though it is useful to speak of the now in privileged terms, *huparchein* cannot signal that time has heterogeneous parts. Rather, as Long & Sedley put it, the verb *huparchein* “seems to specify the temporal conditions for truly predicating an attribute of a subject. ‘Walking’ belongs to (can be truly predicated of) me just when I am (present) walking... At the time of my lying down or sitting, it may be true that I have walked or that I shall walk, but those walkings do not belong to me at that time, and so they only subsist.”¹²⁵

Furthermore, taking a proper parts view of time makes the present a higher mode of reality than what subsists. But if anything, for the Stoics the present is a lower class of reality than time considered as a whole. Plutarch recognizes this when he says the Stoics destroy time by making it part future and part past, even though he turns the point into absurdity by taking the proper parts view.¹²⁶ The specious present is so called because it is a lower class of reality, merely *kat’ epinoian* (like fictions). No time is present exactly because *kath’ hupostasin* time is continuous and in constant flux, while *kat’ epinoian* it is broad and inexact.¹²⁷ Hence “the Stoics do not admit a minimal time or [they] wish the now to be partless.”¹²⁸

The reality of time *kat’ epinoian* also explains reports of now as a limit.¹²⁹ If the now is where the past and present meet, as Plutarch reports, the reality of the present is like the imaginary surface in the cone puzzle. So are we to say the present is a mathematical limit (neither corporeal nor incorporeal) or an incorporeal *kat’ epinoian*? The latter, because it describes reality *kath’ hupostasin*, which mathematical limits do not. That’s why the present is said to be *point-like*; considered as a limit of time the present is the reality *kat’ epinoian* of an incorporeal reality *kath’ hupostasin*. Mathematical limits, on the other hand, exist only in thought and cannot be referred to bodies in the same way: there is no such thing as a perfect triangle.

¹²⁵ op. cit., p. 308

¹²⁶ *Comm. not.*, 1081C-1082A (51C)

¹²⁷ See Stobaeus 1.106,5-32 (51B) and 1.105,8-16 (51D), where it is practically equivalent to say that all of time present or that none of time is present.

¹²⁸ loc. cit.

¹²⁹ loc. cit.; “the division is point-like,” Stobaeus 1.105,17-106,4 (51E)

The Little by Little argument is also disarmed by the distinction between the reality of time *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*. Plutarch says that if night is a body, then so must evening, dawn, December, Spring, and March 15th be bodies. But there is no longer a question of threshold *between* corporeal and incorporeal, since it's a matter of the phenomenon in focus. The Stoics are perfectly happy with a *modus tollens* or a *modus ponens* interpretation of the conditional: if night is a body, in that same respect the others are too; if night is not a body, the others also will not be in the same respect. The fact that the parts of time stand or fall together (as corporeal or incorporeal), demonstrates that the proper parts view is incorrect, and poses no threat to the coherence of Stoic theory.

David Sedley has made the interesting suggestion that portions of time (like yesterday) are the true incorporeals while time as a whole (*qua* species of incorporeal) is a universal concept, i.e., an *ennoema* like Man.¹³⁰ One problem with this view is that all four incorporeals must be reduced to a concept by the same token, since each is a species. Such a literal interpretation of the incorporeals *qua* species is not justified, though. First, it swims upstream against strong evidence that time subsists as a continuous and infinite whole according to the motion of the world. Secondly, it's a conflation of object and meta languages. In the object language time is an incorporeal subsisting according to the world's motion; in the meta-language time is a species of incorporeal. But its mode of reality is not properly described as a species in the object language (the way the universal Man would be), which is what it takes to argue that time as a whole is an *ennoema*. My account, on the other hand, makes time consistent with the other incorporeals in its mode of subsistence, accounts for its reliance on natural joints, reconciles the specious present with *huparxis*, and neutralizes critical paradoxes.

So subsistence for the mind is an indication of objective reality in the case of time as with place and void. Will time be particular and pass the *outis* test as well? It is certainly not obvious that the time in Athens is different from the time in Megara, or that having time in one place means there isn't any elsewhere. But, again, those cases take parts of time rather than the whole, which is the only proper subsistent. The infinite sequence of time that subsists according the

¹³⁰ Sedley, op. cit., n. 5, p. 91

world's motion is unique, like extra-cosmic void. Since Athens and Megara are both in this world, to apply the *outis* test properly we will have to ask instead whether it's true that if time subsists according to this world, it cannot subsist according to another one. Thus we can preserve the general form of the *outis* test: If Something is here, it is not there. Given that time is defined as the dimension of this world's motion, it seems perfectly true that if there ever were two materially distinct universes in motion that their sequences of time would be correspondingly particular and therefore distinct. After all, the particularity of the corporeal makes the subsistent incorporeals particular as well. Time is therefore an objective particular because it is a single infinite sequence subsisting according to the infinite motion of the world; what's left over when you bracket the world and its motion is body-less time. The reality of the parts of time, on the other hand, is *kat' epinoian*. The framework of seconds, minutes and hours is as arbitrary as Celsius and Fahrenheit and equally dependent on thought for reality.

Someone might interject at this point: what is this reality *kat' epinoian* anyway? If it's subsistent reality that we refer to, what is the status of our descriptions according to thought? What is the reality of the frameworks like Fahrenheit and Celsius, seconds and minutes? Their reality is *lekton*, to which I now turn.

The Sayable, or *lekton*

I will proceed in the order that I have with the other three canonical incorporeals: first with their subsistence as measure of objective reality, then to their status as particulars.

The signification (*to semainomenon*) is the actual state of affairs (*to pragma*) revealed by an utterance, and which we apprehend as it subsists alongside our thought (*te hemetera paruphistamenou dianoia*)...[it] is incorporeal—as the state of affairs signified, i.e., sayable, which comes to be true or false.¹³¹

Here the *lekton* is described as *subsisting alongside* thought, by the same verb used to describe the reality of place according to bodies. Other passages are more specific in stating that *lekta* subsist according to the rational impression (*to kata logiken phantasian huphistamenon*).¹³²

¹³¹ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 8.11-12 (33B)

¹³² Diogenes Laertius 7.63 (33F), part; Sextus Empiricus *M.* 8.70 (33C)

Unfortunately, the nature of the *lekton*'s subsistence is not elucidated much by these passages. We can infer that it will be something akin to the subsistence of the other incorporeals,¹³³ but each has been a bit different and the *lekton* is surely more so. We can start by saying that if we bracket the impression, what's left over is what's sayable; then add the testimony from Sextus that "a rational impression is one in which the content of the impression can be exhibited in language."¹³⁴ From these two elements we can establish that it's the content, or meaning of the impression that's left over when we bracket the mind itself; sayability comes from the rational impression, so what's left over is what is said.

The reading is substantiated by Diogenes, who says "the impression arises first, and then thought, which has the power of talking, expresses in language what it experiences by the agency of the impression."¹³⁵ It's the rational impression that imbues language with its meaning. In fact, *lekton* is the difference between the noises that we emit and those of animals: "An animal's utterance is air that has been struck by an impulse, but that of a man is articulated and issues from thought."¹³⁶ What's left over from our corporeal thoughts and enunciations about bodies is *lekton*, i.e., significant, because we have the unique ability to say things about the world.¹³⁷ We are the semantic animal,¹³⁸ and what we say depends for its incorporeal being and content on the corporeal thoughts we express.

But the challenge immediately arises as to how the content of my thoughts could be sufficiently objective to subsist like the other incorporeals. After all, the main claim about subsistents was that they are objectively available for thought, and indifferent to whether they are thought about. It's not clear how the *lekton* is to meet this challenge if its reality and content is due to individual impressions; they are like my bedtime sheep again. On this basis many scholars argue that the *lekton* should be thought of along Fregean lines, as subsisting independently of thought¹³⁹. Rather than seeing the *lekton* as coming out of the impression, they

¹³³ As Inwood does, op. cit., n. 25, p. 253.

¹³⁴ Sextus Empiricus, loc.cit.

¹³⁵ 7.49 (33D); see also 7.43, where the *lekta* are *ek phantasion*

¹³⁶ Diogenes Laertius 7.55 (33G)

¹³⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 117.13 (33E)

¹³⁸ See A.A. Long, "Soul and Body in Stoicism," *Stoic Studies*, University of California Press (2001), pp. 224-249

¹³⁹ For example, Jacques Brunschwig, "Stoic metaphysics;" Dorothea Frede, op. cit.; Michael Frede, "The Stoic notion of a *lekton*," in Stephen Everson (ed.) *Companions to Ancient Thought 3: Language*, Cambridge University

see it as something that accompanies or co-varies with the impression but is not the result of it. Of course, this gives the *lekton* a completely different mode of subsistence from the other incorporeals; the *lekton* is no longer body-less but rather a-corporeal (and not like our figments and limits, either). On this view, the Stoics are just closet Platonists; they have had to take an unaltered page from the *Sophist's* Gods after all. I am unwilling to bite this bullet when there is a perfectly good account of *lekta* that makes them consistent with the rest of the ontology.

A related challenge to my account of *lekta* as subsisting according to the rational impression is that the *lekton* loses its place in the ontology; it is effectively reduced to the impression and therefore a self-undermining interpretation. But the place where Socrates drank the hemlock is no more reduced to Socrates or the hemlock than the *lekton* is reduced to the impression. In order for the account of subsistence to be consistent for the four incorporeals, the particularity of the *lekton* must be due to its reality *kath' hupostasin*, which it is. I am prepared to say there is a 1:1 relation between thoughts and *lekta*; for every *lekton* there is a corresponding thought.¹⁴⁰ It is in virtue of its subsistence according to a particular impression that the *lekton* is itself particular and can have a determinate truth value. “It is raining” is only true or false if it is tied to a time and place, which it gets from its reality *kath' hupostasin*. Such a result may seem extreme or undesirable since it still raises the bedtime sheep challenge.

What makes the *lekton* shareable at all is its being uttered, for one, so its reality *kath' hupostasin* is already one difference from my sheep. Still, this is not enough for intersubjectivity, as evidenced by the *lekton* being precisely what the barbarian does not understand.¹⁴¹ The availability of the *lekton* to thought is thus not quite like the other incorporeals’—it’s not the *physical* subsistence *kath' hupostasin* that’s salient (though it’s there); it’s the content left over or bracketed from the impression that makes the *lekton* Something. Hence we have a sixth mode of subsistence.

Press (1994), pp. 109-128; Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic*, University of California Press (1953); Pasquale Pasquino, op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ Though maybe not *vice versa*.

¹⁴¹ Sextus Empiricus 8.11-12 (33B), and the animal before, see note 137.

The fact that for the barbarian to grasp what I say, he must be a part of my linguistic community signals the respect in which *lekta* are akin to fictions. Fictions like the Centaur come to subsist according to token images, texts and illustrations—this was the analysis I gave of taking on some image (*habere aliquam imaginem coepit*) in the Seneca passage.¹⁴² Taking on some image implies objective availability to the mind, so that occurring to the mind (*animo succurrere*) can be identified with the objective reality of subsistence (*huphistasthai*). Mickey Mouse and Centaurs take on a life of their own and in this respect are objectively available independent of any one thought. Mind-dependence and objectivity were perfectly compatible in that case, as they are now in the case of *lekta*. After all, the point of the *lekton*'s being sayable is that it is in some sense prior to the utterance. It is the *lekton* considered *kat' epinoian* that fits this bill. Considered *kat' epinoian*, *lekta* take on a life of their own like Mickey Mouse and are thus available to be said and thought about independent of any token utterance considered by itself. Like fictions, the reality of the *lekton kat' epinoian* subsists on the token *lekta* and linguistic practice generally. We can therefore speak of the meaning of the sentence, "It is raining," because it subsists according to particular uses but has taken on a life of its own independent of any simple utterance. Meaning is use, one might say.

Of course, the *lekton* considered *kath' hupostasin* does not come about in a vacuum; the rational impression that can be brought forth in language is already immersed in linguistic practice, which is to say with the reality of the *lekton kat' epinoian*. So the reality of the *lekton kata hupostasin* remains ontologically prior to its reality *kat' epinoian*, but certainly not independent. As I said before, a *lekton* only has a determinate truth value *kath' hupostasin* because the impression according to which it subsists makes it particular; only then is it a full-fledged *lekton*. The *lekton* considered *kat' epinoian*, as the lexical meaning of a sentence according to collective use, lacks time, place and other details necessary to establishing truth value. "It is raining" has no truth value until made particular by bringing forth a rational impression *kath' hupostasin*; but we can still speak of a determinate meaning to the proposition, which is the *lekton kat' epinoian*. So *lekta kat' epinoian* are like fictions in their level of remove from the corporeal world. Mickey Mouse and mathematical limits are called neither corporeal nor incorporeal because the question of corporeality does not compute; Mickey cannot be

¹⁴² Ep. 58.13-15 (27A)

referred to a real mouse. Similarly, *lekta kat' epinoian* are neither true nor false because the question of truth value does not compute; what is said has not been referred to the world. Only when a *lekton* subsists according to a particular rational impression is its content sufficiently particular to refer and be eligible for truth value. Considered *kat' epinoian*, though, the *lekton* is still objectively real because of its subsistence according to the token uses, much the way fictions take on a life of their own.

But, the objectivity of the *lekton* does not come just from language and practice. The central difference between *lekta* and *fictions* is that the objectivity of the *lekton* is grounded in the corporeal world itself in addition. One might think this is the spirit of Marcus Aurelius' admonition cited earlier: "It is there [in your mind (*dianoia*)] that your evil and harm have the whole of their subsistence (*hupostasin*)."¹⁴³ The Stoics did not believe in evil and harm as a natural part of the world order, but as something that we ourselves impose or invent by failing to keep things in proper perspective (namely that we are tiny parts of a giant cosmos indifferent to us as individuals). Marcus Aurelius criticizes the person who thinks in terms of evil and harm for being out of touch with nature, for having thoughts not grounded in the way things really are. So he cautions that thoughts about evil and harm are more like fictions than *lekta* because they subsist only *kat' epinoian*. The strong empiricism of Stoic epistemology provides more substantive proof that the objectivity of *lekta* is grounded in the corporeal world. Seneca captures the Stoics nicely:

(1) There are [the Stoic says] bodily substances: for instance, this is a man, and this is a horse. These are accompanied by movements of thought (*sequuntur motus animorum*) which can make enunciations about bodies. (2) These movements have a property peculiar to themselves (*proprium quiddam*), which is separate from bodies (*a corporibus seductum*). For example, I see Cato walking: sense-perception has revealed this (*hoc sensus ostendit*), and my mind has believed it. What I see is a body, and it is to a body that I have directed my eyes and my mind. Then I say, "Cato is walking." What I now utter (he says) is not a body, but a certain enunciation about a body, which some call a proposition (*effatum*), others a thing enunciated (*enuntiatum*), and others a thing said (*edictum*). (3) So when we say "wisdom", we understand something corporeal; when we say, "He is wise", we are speaking about a body. There's a very great difference between naming *it* and speaking *about* it.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Marcus Aurelius, op. cit., 9.42,2

¹⁴⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 117.13 (33E)

First, notice it is explicit that the movements of thought are what have the unique capacity to make enunciations about body, and that the sayable is a product of that capacity. This supports my strong mind-dependence thesis that the *lekton* owes its very content to the thought it brings forth. But also notice, second, that the movements of thought are unique in being from and about the world. The impression brought forth by the enunciation that Cato is walking owes its content to Cato, his walking and the various walkings that have given the predicate “is walking” objective reality in my linguistic community.¹⁴⁵ The objective content of the thoughts we express by *lekta* is guaranteed by our interactions with the corporeal world and its natural joints, as well as by our immersion in linguistic practice. Third, the function of our unique capacity is to say things about the world (make enunciations about bodies), to refer and “tell it like it is.” That is the force of Diogenes’ report that “it is states of affairs that are said,”¹⁴⁶ and Sextus’ testimony that “what is signified is the actual state of affairs revealed by an utterance.”¹⁴⁷ By aligning the *lekton* with *pragma* Diogenes and Sextus emphasize the directedness of what we say, the fact that the function of *lekta* is to represent the world under various aspects (to borrow Brentano’s language of intentionality). One can’t take *pragma* in any stronger sense without running afoul of the sophism cited by Clement: “‘What you say passes through your mouth.’ This is true. ‘But you say: A house. Therefore a house passes through your mouth.’ This is false. For what we say is not the house, which is a body, but the case, which is incorporeal and which a house bears.”¹⁴⁸ Rather, the alignment of *lekta* with *pragmata* reflects the fact that *lekta* represent the world as being a certain way; and when we say true things about the way things are, the *lekton* can be disquoted.¹⁴⁹ But the fact that “Snow is white” is true if snow is white does not license equating the proposition (*lekton*) with the brute fact.

The advocates of a Fregean reading of *lekta* will not be satisfied with this approach to states of affairs (*ta pragmata*) since it is in the objectivity of this phrase that they find reason to make *lekta* mind-independent. Treatment as states of affairs makes *lekta* facts, the Fregean says, and this must be evidence of their mind-independence: surely facts of the matter are indifferent

¹⁴⁵ The possibility that *lekta* began as predicates, and then became complete propositions would make good sense of the phenomena as I see them.

¹⁴⁶ 7.57 (33A)

¹⁴⁷ Sextus Empiricus, 8.11-12 (33B)

¹⁴⁸ Strom. 8.9.26.5 (33O)

¹⁴⁹ A la Ramsey.

to whether we think them or not, so *lekta* must be something mind-independent. Here again, the criticism conflates two phenomena. The way the world is, the existing and subsisting natural joints, is one thing: a single continuous whole with no proper parts. But the way we choose to describe the world, be it in inches, meters or yards, is another. The world itself is the truth-maker, which is indeed indifferent to the true or false statements we might make about it. Just as there are not 70 Fahrenheits in the room when it's 70 degrees, so the true *lekta* do not literally correspond to distinct facts in the world—except in an inexact way in reference to natural joints, as in the true statement that we consist of head, trunk and limbs. When I see Cato walking, there might be several distinct and true things to say about the circumstances.¹⁵⁰ I might say simply that he's walking, or more specifically that he's loping, or even that he's going to the store, and they could all be true. But it would be out of place to assume that to each of these *lekta* there corresponds a single fact, like a Fahrenheit for each degree. I'll give myself the last word with that since I cannot pursue a proper debate over the mind-dependence of *lekta* now. Until then, I am content if I have demonstrated how the metaphysics of *lekta* can be analyzed consistently with the other incorporeals, and to let that coherence recommend the view in turn.

The last element of my ontological analysis of *lekta*, from the inside out so to speak, is their particularity. The other incorporeals owe their particularity to their reality *kath' hupostasin*; and so it is with *lekta*, which subsist according to a particular impression. So, it is surely *qua* uttered *lekton* with a truth value that the *outis* test will apply. My commitment to a 1:1 correspondence between *lekta* and thoughts *kath' hupostasin* commits me to unique *lekta*, which pass the *outis* test easily: If “It is raining” is uttered in Athens, its content is not the same as “It is raining” uttered in Megara. The *lekton* expressing an impression in Athens cannot be expressing an impression in Megara. But can this really be? Surely two people can express the same thing, or else we're back to the bedtime sheep. The refrain is: keep track of the phenomena. The objective particularity of the *lekton kath' hupostasin*, what is properly speaking a fully particular *lekton* that is true or false, is one thing. The *lekton kat' epinoian*, what I have called the lexical meaning, is what we share when we “say the same thing,” and this is a different (though intimately related) phenomenon. “It is raining,” uttered in Athens and Megara have the same lexical meaning, but there is an ambiguity to saying they express the same proposition. If

¹⁵⁰ And the fact that each can be true while the others are false demonstrates they are distinct *lekta*.

we mean that the Athenian and Megarian express the same proposition *kath' hupostasin*, the Stoics deny it. If we mean that they express the same proposition *kat' epinoian*, they will gladly agree.

So does the *lekton kat' epinoian* pass the *outis* test? Insofar as *lekta kat' epinoian* rely on token utterances for their subsistence, it does make sense to think of meanings as particulars of sorts. However, it won't do to say that if "It's raining" is uttered in Athens the same thing can't be said in Megara, especially since that's the *explanandum* itself. The *outis* test needs to be modified to capture the particularity of lexical meaning as what is shared. One might say instead that if a certain lexical meaning subsists according to these token uses in Athens, then it is not the lexical meaning subsisting according to those token uses in Megara. Such a difference would hold when there are variations in dialect. For example, "chips" means something different in Britain from what it means in the US.¹⁵¹ The point is that if meaning considered *kat' epinoian* is a function of uses *kath' hupostasin*, the particularity of the type is guaranteed by the particularity of the tokens. Fictitious individuals are subject to a similar analysis. When Mickey Mouse takes on a life of his own so that we can say true and false things about him, like that he's a him with red shorts, he attains particularity. His particularity consists in the attributes that characterize him, which are themselves due to the individual images, texts and drawings on which he subsists as a character. This was the account of taking on some imagistic consistency, which I have argued is similar to the process *lekta* go through in their reality *kat' epinoian*.

Long & Sedley say, "Since...expressions like 'Centaur' and 'today' are genuinely significant, they are taken to name something, even though that something has no actual or independent existence (independent of the world's motion in the case of time, or of someone's mental image, in the case of a Centaur)."¹⁵² When a term has significance it names Something characterized in a determinate way. For example, expressions like "minutes" and "hours" are significant because I can say things like, "A minute is 1/60th of an hour." There is, of course, no physical body corresponding to each minute; but there is something I refer to in such a sentence. What "minute" refers to is a mental construct whose reality is *lekton kat' epinoian*. The fact that

¹⁵¹ Or, for the uncouth, "I'll knock you up" means two very different things in Britain and the US.

¹⁵² *op. cit.*, p. 164

we can put frameworks in the object language and say true and false things about them indicates that they are objective particulars with a determinate character.

What's challenging about this account is that *lekta* are *kat' epinoian* twice over: once in the subsistence of a fully particular and proper *lekton* according to our token thoughts (so the reality of *lekton kath' hupostasin* is itself *kat' epinoian*); then again in the subsistence of lexical meaning according to these token thoughts, i.e., linguistic practice, which is the reality *kat' epinoian* as it applies systematically to the incorporeals. This last step is admittedly dizzying since it explains the reality of void, place and time *kat' epinoian* in terms of the *lekton kat' epinoian*, which itself subsists according to *lekta kath' hupostasin*. But once the nausea subsides and phenomena are properly in sight, the virtue of this account is that it yields a coherent Stoic ontology where others do not.

Why the Stoic ontology is principled, coherent and comprehensive

I will finish by summarizing the Stoic ontology as I have developed it. I began with Brunschwig's observation that the Stoic innovation was in forging two relatively independent criteria of reality in response to Plato's *Sophist*. The strong criterion for existence is the action/passion principle satisfied only by bodies, which the Stoics have broadened to include the virtues and other intangible qualities that posed problems for the Giants. On the other hand, the Stoics deny the Giants' core thesis that only what can be squeezed in the hand is real. The Stoics are happy to admit intangible realities as well, but not in the sense that the friends of the Forms do. It is here that the relative independence of the Stoics' two criteria is operative: the intangible realities that count as non-existent Somethings always subsist according to body in some way—even what is sayable. But little effort has been made to develop the Stoics' second, minimal criterion of reality.

So, I developed the Something criterion in two steps: one, as a measure of objectivity; and two, as a measure of particularity. The measure of objectivity—whether something is a *proper* subject of thought, signals either subsistence according to body or having taken on some imagistic consistency despite lacking substance. The measure of particularity, the *outis* test,

dictates that only properly determinate individuals will be Something. Incorporeals are properly determinate in virtue of their subsistence according to body *kath' hupostasin*; they inherit their particularity from the bodies on which they depend. Reality *kat' epinoian* is properly determinate in virtue of having taken on some imagistic consistency, a life of its own now independent of any particular thought. In the course of this essay I have identified nine attested kinds of subsistent: place, void, the proper Swiss cheese holes, surface, time, *lekta kath' hupostasin* as well as *lekta kat' epinoian*, figments, and mathematical limits¹⁵³. Each counts as Something non-existent because each is objectively real and particular in its subsistence according to body. I have illustrated my proposed ontology in Fig. 5, below.

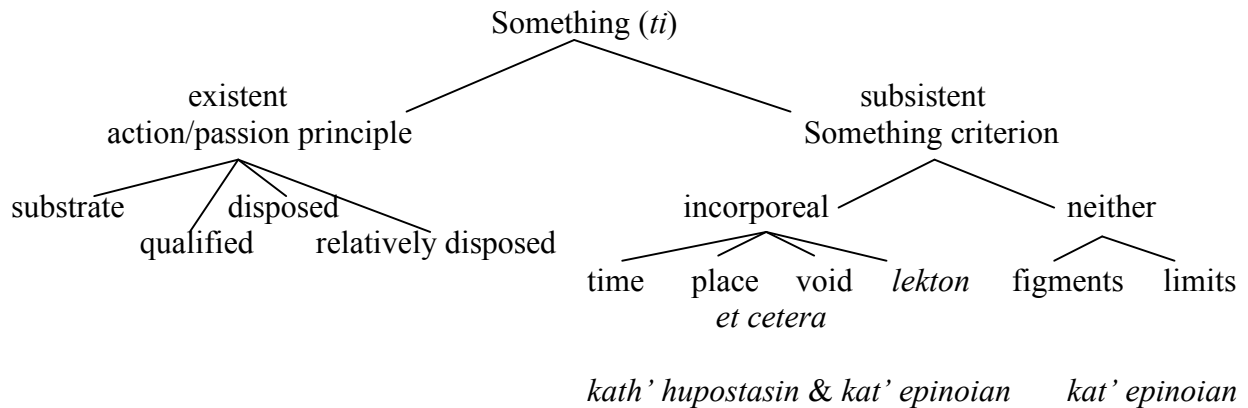


Fig. 5 — A coherent and comprehensive Stoic ontology

Adopting Long & Sedley’s tripartite ontology removes two of the usual temptations to posit Not-Something as an intermediate category between Something and nothing at all: figments and mathematical limits. My contribution, that the Stoics may have been operating with a systematic distinction between reality *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*, supports the tripartite ontology by explaining why subsistence falls into two kinds. Incorporeals, on the one hand, have reality both *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*. For example, the reality of time is *kath' hupostasin* considered as the dimension of the corporeal world’s motion, and it is *kat' epinoian qua* framework we apply, e.g. seconds, minutes and hours. What is neither corporeal

¹⁵³ I could even push for a tenth, found in the one *huphistasthai* passage left to address: “The interplication of causes was from eternity weaving together your subsistence (*hupostasin*) and this outcome” (Marcus Aurelius, op. cit., 10.5). This is no time to discuss determinism and personal identity, but I will float the idea that *your subsistence* is a function of corporeal thoughts, actions and dispositions. Specifically, it is what’s left of your life when you bracket the corporeal you.

nor incorporeal, on the other hand, only has reality *kat' epinoian* because there are no bodies to which we refer when talking about them. So even though the parts of time are *kat' epinoian*, they are grounded in objective reality *kath' hupostasin* and therefore not mere figments. What we refer to when we talk about Mickey Mouse, however, only has reality *kat' epinoian*. The objective reality of such figments is due to the token thoughts, texts and illustrations that are all themselves thought constructs. But this is still a realist physical story insofar as the corporeal tokens give rise to an objectively subsisting pattern like the drill sergeant's motions provide a model for the boy.

Surface and limit no longer make the Stoics conflicted about their ontology either. When we speak of the surface of a body, like my kitchen counter, we speak of something incorporeal (or even corporeal for that matter, as in Proclus' report that shapes are bodies). When, on the other hand, we speak of mathematical limits we speak of something that is neither corporeal nor incorporeal. So it's not that the Stoics were confused about surface and limit, but that there are two different phenomena at issue. Both have a perfectly good treatment in the tripartite ontology so there is no fuel for Not-Somethings with figments and limits.

Another temptation to posit Not-Somethings is concepts; the universal Man has become the paradigm case. There are two nearly identical passages that say concepts are not Somethings or qualified for the Stoics, and that they are instead *as if (hosanei)* Something or *as if* qualified.¹⁵⁴ Sedley, and Long & Sedley have taken this to indicate concepts are *quasi*-entities in "metaphysical limbo" between Something and nothing at all. Brunschwig, of course, leans heavily on these two passages in arguing outright for the category of Not-Somethings. Victor Caston, on the other hand, has suggested that the *hosanei* does not signal a metaphysical limbo but the fact that concepts are *characterized by* their attributes rather than having or exemplifying them as bodies do; he goes on to argue that concepts were considered Something by the early Stoics, then dropped in favor of *lekta* after Chrysippus' Not-Someone argument. I am sympathetic to Caston's account, especially to the reading of *hosanei* as an indication that concepts are characterized by their attributes and no mark of ontological limbo. I am less certain that concepts were Something according to Zeno and Cleanthes, though. But whether concepts

¹⁵⁴ Stobaeus 1.136,21-137,6 (30A); Diogenes Laertius 7.60-1 (30C)

turn out to be Something (with Caston) or to have no formal place in the Stoic ontology (as I suspect) is immaterial to the point that there is no evidence or motivation for a monster Stoic category of Not-Somethings. Figments, limits and concepts can all be handled within (or entirely outside) the ontology.

The only remaining bur is the all, *to pan*, which consists of the entire corporeal world plus the extra-cosmic void.¹⁵⁵ Brunschwig takes the all as a pure mental construct, and as such (along with figments and concepts) a Not-Something. Again, I will ask: what is the phenomenon? The world as a whole is a finite corporeal, while void is an infinite incorporeal. What are we to make of the combination of these? We are used to seeing what happens when body is taken away, what's left over when you bracket the corporeal. It's a new twist on the theme of incorporeal subsistence to offer something by addition instead of subtraction. So let's see what the Something criterion yields in application to the all. First, as to being a proper subject of thought, we can ask whether the all depends for its reality on being thought about. The answer is that the all, subsisting according to the corporeal world as a whole plus the extra-cosmic void, is perfectly indifferent to our thinking about it and thus a proper subject of thought—world plus void really is all there is. On the other hand, there is a sense in which it is we who create the reality of the all by choosing to group the two as a unity, and in this respect we can say the all has reality *kat' epinoian* as well. But, again, the all about which we speak is no mental construct; it owes its objective reality to the corporeal world, which exists, and the incorporeal void that subsists *kath' hupostasin*.

Secondly, as to particularity, we can ask whether the all passes the *outis* test. Insofar as the all subsists according to the fully particular corporeal world and the extra-cosmic void (itself particular in virtue of its subsistence according to the corporeal world) the all is a legitimate particular as well. The *outis* test is thus easily adapted from Athens and Megara to this world and a hypothetical alternate universe to show the particularity of the all: If the all subsists here, then it does not subsist there. The all subsisting according to this world and extra-cosmic void cannot be the same as the all subsisting according to that world and that extra-cosmic void. The case is analogous to the parking place for my dream car: if it subsists according to these

¹⁵⁵ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 9.332 (44A)

delimiting cars in Athens, then it can't be subsisting according to those cars in Megara. Hence the all, *to pan*, counts as an objective particular for the Stoics, our ninth incorporeal now, and is therefore no evidence that the Stoics posited Not-Somethings.

Another benefit to the ontology of Fig. 5 is that an open list of incorporeals is no threat to the canon or to the ontological category of incorporeals. I have indicated this result in Fig. 5 with *et cetera* below the canonical incorporeals. The phenomenon of incorporeality is found throughout the natural world, so it makes sense that the Stoics would highlight a core group of cases while acknowledging the phenomenon globally, so to speak. The priority of the Something criterion to its cases is thus upheld by principled variations in the list of incorporeals. Everything described as an incorporeal or as being *like* the incorporeals fits the common profile of being 1) a proper subject of thought subsisting according to body, and 2) a particular that passes the *outis* test. Anything that's Something is an objective particular.

What about the early challenge that Plato's Forms are allowed into the ontology according to the thinkability criterion? The response is that, considered *qua* general entities outside space and time, the Forms have no place in the ontology¹⁵⁶. Any reality Plato's Forms do have in the Stoic ontology is *qua* figments. By design, Plato's Forms are neither bodies nor incorporeals subsisting according to body. Nonetheless the Forms do have a certain reality as fictions that have taken on some imagistic consistency according to Plato's dialogues, just as the Centaur subsists according to token images, texts and illustrations. In this respect Forms are objectively real and particular. They will pass the *outis* test just insofar as Centaurs do, as figments whose determinate character subsists according to the token instances.¹⁵⁷

Another virtue of the Fig. 5 ontology is that it makes the most of polemical testimony. When Proclus tells us that time subsists in mere thought, we can acknowledge the respect in which it's true (*kat' epinoian*) and the respect in which it's not (*kata huspostasin*). Proclus has reported something true but incomplete; we thereby account for and even embrace the polemical context without writing off the testimony. Puzzles about the infinite divisibility of the

¹⁵⁶ The Stoics were eliminativists about Forms, as Caston argues, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁷ As opposed to Brunschwig's treatment of Mickey Mouse as a *faux* particular, "Genre Supreme," p. 33

continuum also dissolve when we apply the distinction. Considered *kath' hupostasin*, the world is a continuous and infinite whole with no proper parts (natural joints notwithstanding); considered *kat' epinoian*, it is infinitely divisible (or at least as far as we choose to keep dividing). I argued that Diogenes' testimony that Posidonius "retained surface both in thought and as subsistent" can be found in the Stoic treatment of incorporeals generally. It may be impossible to determine whether this was an articulated distinction in Stoic doctrine, or something bubbling beneath the surface (no pun intended). However, the coherence that results from my reading is mutually reinforcing evidence that the Stoics were alive to the distinction between reality *kath' hupostasin* and *kat' epinoian*.

The resulting Stoic ontology is principled in operating with two criteria of reality instead of one. In addition to a newly robust existential criterion, which licenses a materialist analysis of the virtues and other qualities, the Stoics developed a minimal Something criterion that makes room for objective particulars that are intangible but perfectly real; they are subsistent rather than existent. What counts as Something subsistent is not reducible to body, but still subject to a physical analysis of its objectivity and particularity. The Something criterion, I have argued, applies to all incorporeals, including the *lekta*, and can account for problem cases like figments, limits, concepts, and the all.

The Stoic ontology is also coherent. The Stoics are not closet Platonists with conflicting criteria, which is why they are not just a patchwork of the Gods' and Giants' views. And the Stoics do not undo their hard-won progress by positing Not-Somethings between Something and nothing at all. To posit Not-Somethings is to deny that Something is the highest and most comprehensive ontological category—in direct opposition to perfectly good testimony to the contrary. Crucially, it is unnecessary to posit the category when problem cases like figments, limits, concepts, and the all have a natural account according to the tripartite ontology. Stoic metaphysics is therefore principled, coherent and comprehensive—everything is Something, and nothing is not.