content of one's *prolēpseis* as a response to the worries which motivate that sort of objection. *Prolēpseis* function as criteria of truth because, like perceptions, they are guaranteed to report things as they are. As long as my identificatory beliefs of something are directly taken from my perceptions of it, then they will be true. They will also be such as successfully to identify the kinds into which perceived things fall.[86] Both perceptions and *prolēpseis* are able to bear this epistemological load because their content is determined by the objects of perception themselves: it is only if one starts going beyond the content of perceptions and *prolēpseis* that one risks falling into error. So long as what underlie my words are *prolēpseis* and not less secure beliefs, then my words will indeed succeed in referring to things – and so will those of other people. Just as the *prolēpsis* I acquire after repeated observations of parrots is guaranteed to pick out parrots, so is that acquired by anyone else.

For those beliefs which are *prolēpseis*, the common causal history of different people's *prolēpseis* guarantees that they do have relevantly the same content – which is why one can talk of *the prolēpsis* of something.[87] Epicurus' psychologism does not carry an inevitable danger of people's terms having different extensions because their concepts differ, since, if they follow his epistemological advice, their concepts will not differ. 'Parrot' will have the same extension in my idiolect as it does in anyone else's if it rests on the *prolēpsis* anyone will acquire in virtue of having perceived parrots.[88] Although it is a consequence of the psychologism that the meaning of words in an idiolect is prior to that of words in a common language, it is a consequence of the relation of *prolēpseis* both to experience and to language that speakers are able to make their idiolects type-identical. Epicurus, unlike later semantic psychologists, was not forced into an account of language which rendered meaning irredeemably subjective.[89]

[86] See Frede [24], 240 f. for some remarks on the relation between perception, *prolēpsis* and thought. Compare David Charles' remarks on Aristotle at the end of ch. 4 above.

[87] See Jackendoff [509], 30–1, for a somewhat similar response to this danger posed by psychologism (although Jackendoff himself takes the more extreme view that terms actually refer to entities of a mentally constructed world). His own conclusion is not un-Epicurean: 'Thus we can reasonably operate under the assumption that we are talking about the same things, as long as we are vigilant about detecting misunderstanding.' For Epicurus, that vigilance would mean ensuring that we use our terms in accordance with *prolēpseis*, and this would justify what Jackendoff takes to be an assumption.

[88] Of course, once words are determined by convention rather than by nature, there is the risk that different people may associate different words with the same concept – hence, perhaps, the warning in *de Natura* 28 (cf. above, p. 104).

[89] I am grateful to Jonathan Barnes for allowing me to see an unpublished piece of his on Epicurus' semantics and to him, Hugh Johnstone and David Charles for comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

6

The Stoic notion of a *lekton*

MICHAEL FREDE

The notion of a *lekton* lies at the very heart of the Stoic theory of language. The Stoics distinguish between an expression one utters or uses in saying something, and what gets said by uttering or using this expression. Thus they distinguish between the expression 'Socrates is ill', which is used to say that Socrates is ill, and what gets said by using this expression, namely that Socrates is ill. This kind of item, i.e. what gets said by using the appropriate expression in the appropriate way, the Stoics call a *lekton*. The notion lies at the very centre of the Stoic theory of language, because, on the basis of this distinction, the Stoics in one part of dialectic proceed to develop systematically a general theory of the kinds of things which get said, whereas in the other, or another, part of dialectic they try to develop a general theory of the expressions we use to say what we mean to say, what there is to be said (see Diogenes Laertius (D.L.) VII.62–3; 43–4). And since the Stoics assume that the primary point of using expressions is to say what there is to be said, they also, when they study expressions, study them primarily from the point of view of how they manage to reflect, to represent, to signify, to express, what we mean to say by using them. Hence, to understand the Stoic theory of language it is important to get as clear a grasp as possible on how the Stoics conceive of a *lekton*.

Perhaps the way to start is to look at the term *lekton* itself. It is a verbal adjective derived from the verb *legein*, 'to say'. In general such verbal adjectives ending in *-tos* are used in one or more of the following three ways: (i) they can indicate a passive state: thus *agraptos* means 'unwritten'; (ii) they can indicate a passive possibility: thus a *haireton* is something which can be chosen, an *aisthēton* something which can be perceived; (iii) they can have an active sense: thus *dynatos* means capable. Sometimes in late antiquity the word *lekton* is used in the active sense. In fact, some very late ancient authors, for example Philoponus, *On Aristotle's Prior Analytics* (*In An. Pr.*) 243.4 ff.; cf. Ps.-Alexander, *On Aristotle's De Sophisticis Elenchis* (*In*

S.E. 20, 28 ff.) claim that this is how the Stoics use the word. But this, obviously, is not correct. The Stoics clearly use the word in a passive sense for what gets said when we use the appropriate expression, rather than for the expression. Moreover, as we will see, the Stoics think that what gets said has some status independently of its actually being said, that it is somehow there to be said, whether or not it actually is said. And this suggests that the word *lekton* in Stoic usage has the passive modal sense of 'something which can be said'.

The next question, then, is: what is the relevant sense of 'to say' here? From what has been said earlier it should be clear that the relevant sense of 'to say' here is one in which what is said is not an expression, but rather what gets said by using the expression. To avoid any misunderstanding the Stoics systematically distinguish between saying (*legein*) and uttering (*propheresthai*), between being said and being uttered. We are told (D.L. VII.57): 'But there is also a difference between saying and uttering. It is sounds which are uttered, but things which are said; which is also why these things are *lekta*.' Similarly Sextus Empiricus, discussing *lekta*, tells us (*adversus Mathematicos* (*M*) VIII.80) that the Stoics characterise the sense of 'to say' in which *lekta* are things to say in this way: to say something is to utter an expression which is significative of the thing one has in mind. Thus there is a clear distinction between saying and uttering; it is expressions which are uttered, things, *lekta*, which are said. We should not let ourselves be confused by the fact that in Greek, as in English, what gets said can be identified in terms of the expression used. We do say 'He said: "it is getting late".' But this does not mean that what got said was the expression 'it is getting late'; it rather means that he said that it was getting late. Similarly with 'He said to him "Shut the door!"' and 'He told him to shut the door', with 'He said to him "what time is it?"' and 'he asked him what time it was'. When, then, Plutarch (*de Stoicorum repugnantiis* (*de Stoic. rep.*) 1037d) reports that according to the Stoics when we say 'Don't steal' we are saying one thing, namely 'Don't steal', ordering another thing, namely not to steal, and forbidding yet another thing, namely to steal, we should not get confused: the point is not that in uttering the expression 'Don't steal' we are telling somebody not to steal and forbid him to steal. The point rather is that in saying to somebody that he should not steal, we are ordering him not to steal and forbidding him to steal. So the relevant sense of 'to say' is one in which it is not the expressions themselves which get said, but rather what gets said by using these expressions.

Moreover the relevant sense of 'to say' is such that to say something may be a matter of making a statement or a claim, of asserting a proposition. But as the Plutarch passage shows, it may also be a matter of asking a question,

or of issuing a command, or of invoking somebody, or of swearing an oath, or whatever else there may be of this kind. Thus the Stoics distinguish different kinds of things to say, or different kinds of *lekta*, depending on what one is doing in saying something (cf., e.g., D.L. VII.66 ff.; S.E., *M* VIII.71 ff.). Claims, things claimed to be the case, roughly propositions, are just one kind of *lekton*, though the most important one. But there are also questions, commands, invocations, oaths, and the like. These different kinds of *lekton*, though they have further distinguishing features, are distinguished primarily by the fact that in saying them one is doing a certain kind of thing, for example asking a question. Thus it is a distinctive feature of claims or propositions that they are true or false. But they are defined not in terms of this feature, but by the fact that they are the kind of item such that in saying this sort of thing one is asserting something (cf. D.L. VII.66; S.E., *M* VIII.71). So a *lekton*, to go just by the word, is what gets said, a thing to say, what there is to say, what can get said, in the sense indicated. And, in fact, I take this to be the primary notion of a *lekton*, at least in the context of the Stoic theory of language.

But a *lekton* is not just what gets said by using the appropriate kind of expression; a *lekton* is also made to serve two further functions. These have already been alluded to in Sextus' characterisation of the relevant sense of 'to say', mentioned above: to say something is to utter an expression which is significative of the thing one has in mind. So a *lekton* not only is what gets said, but is also (i) what is signified by the expression used to say something, and (ii) what the speaker has in mind, what he thinks, when he utters the expression. In a way it is easy to see why the Stoics identify what gets said both with what is signified by the expression used and with what the speaker has in mind. For in this way we can readily see how somebody who knows the language also knows what is signified by the expression he hears, and thus knows what gets said, and thus knows what the speaker has in mind (cf. S.E., *M* VIII.12). But let us look briefly at these two identifications separately.

A *lekton* is what is signified by the corresponding expression. Hence the Stoics also refer to the *lekton* as 'what is signified' (*sēmainomenon*), and to the expression as a 'thing signifying' or 'signifier' (*sēmainon*) (cf. D.L. VII.62-3). But there are two things to keep in mind here, if we want to get clearer about the notion of a *lekton*. First, it is not the basic meaning of the term *lekton* that a *lekton* is what is signified or meant by an expression; it only serves this function because the Stoics identify what gets said with what is signified by the corresponding expression. Secondly, though a *lekton* is something which is signified by an expression, we should not rush to the unwarranted conclusion that anything which is signified by any expression for this mere

reason already is a *lekton*. Our sources often talk as if there were one distinction indifferently marked as the distinction between *lekta*, 'things' (*pragmata*), 'things signified', on the one hand, and 'sounds' or 'expressions' and 'things signifying', on the other. But this may be a rather loose way of talking, which is only roughly adequate. We will return to this point later.

The other equation we need to consider in some more detail is this: the *lekton* is what the speaker has in mind, the thing thought, when he utters an expression to say something. The Stoic view is this: like animals we do have impressions of things, for example impressions of things we look at. But because we are rational beings, because we have minds, these impressions in our case are rational impressions or thoughts (D.L. VII.51). This means that they are articulated in a certain way, namely in such a way as to represent a propositional item. Thus when we perceive a green object we tend to have the thought that the object in front of us is green. The thought itself is conceived of by the Stoics as a complex physical state. For they conceive of the mind as a physical entity and correspondingly treat its states as physical states. But the content of the thought, what it represents, is a propositional item. Thus the thought in question represents the object as being green. In this sense there is a *lekton* corresponding to every human impression or thought; and it is in this sense that the *lekton* is what one has in mind when one is thinking something and when one is saying what one is thinking. Given that different people are rather different, it is not surprising that these thoughts are very different even when they think or say the same thing, for example that the object is green. But since the propositional content, the *lekton*, is precisely the same, we can also understand precisely what somebody is saying and what he is thinking, though his thought and our thought may be very different indeed. In this way what gets said, what there is to say, the *lekton*, also serves as the content of our thoughts and as what is signified by the expression we use when we express our thoughts. So thus far we have no reason to doubt that the basic notion of a *lekton* is the notion of a thing to say, and this all the more so since not everything which gets thought gets said, and since not everything which is there to say gets thought. There are lots of things to say which never get thought or said. Nevertheless they are there to be thought or said.

Though this is the basic notion of a *lekton*, one may wonder whether it is the original notion. There is, for instance, the following possibility which, for the moment, we may just note as a possibility: when the Stoics talk about *lekta*, this not only includes propositions, but also questions, orders, invocations, and the like. The reason for this simply is that *legein* is taken to have such a wide sense as to cover any speech-act. But clearly what the Stoics primarily have in mind, and what they are mostly interested in, are

propositions, things said in a narrower sense of 'to say' or *legein*, namely the sense of 'to claim' or 'to state'. Some things the Stoics have to say are more readily understood if we assume that the original notion of a *lekton* was narrower in this way and only got extended when the Stoics tried to give an account of language as a whole.

But before we pursue this any further, another fact has to be introduced. The Stoics standardly distinguish between complete *lekta* and incomplete *lekta* (see D.L. VII.63). As examples of incomplete *lekta* we invariably get what the Stoics call 'predicates' (*katēgorēmata*: see D.L. VII.63–4). These are items which correspond to the verb-phrase of a declarative sentence in the way in which a *lekton* corresponds to the whole sentence. Thus being wise and taking a walk are the predicates corresponding to '. . . is wise' and '. . . is taking a walk'. It is easy to see why they are called 'incomplete *lekta*'. To utter the expression '. . . is wise' is not yet to say anything; nothing gets said by just saying '. . . is wise' (see D.L. VII.63); to get a complete *lekton* we have to add something. It is more difficult to understand why such incomplete *lekta* would also be called *lekta*. For, strictly speaking, given the notion of a *lekton* as a thing to say, they are not *lekta* but only incomplete *lekta*, and, just as an unfinished sentence is not a sentence, an incomplete *lekton* is not a *lekton*. But Diocles (in D.L. VII.63) talks as if it were; for he reports: 'of *lekta*, the Stoics say, some are complete and the others incomplete'. Perhaps Diocles is just talking carelessly. But there is a way to explain why the Stoics may have had no qualms about also calling predicates *lekta*, 'things to say'. We will remember that Plato in some crucial passages makes the distinction between saying something and saying something about something (see, for example, *Theaetetus* 188d9–10; 189b1–2; *Sophist* 262e6–263d4). Thus somebody who is saying that Theaetetus is flying might also be described as saying about Theaetetus that he is flying. Correspondingly one might think that a predicate is a thing to say at least in the sense that it is a thing to say about something. In this way one would understand why the Stoics might be ready to extend the notion of a *lekton* to cover predicates, especially since, as we will see, *lekta* in the strict sense and predicates have a further feature in common: they are supposed to be incorporeal somethings (see below).

With this in mind let us return to the question of the origin of the notion of a *lekton*. I think there is reason to believe that this notion of a *lekton* was originally a metaphysical notion, the notion of a fact, of an incorporeal item to be contrasted with the body it is a fact about, and that the notion only in a second step got modified or construed in such a way as to serve both in metaphysical and in logical or linguistic contexts.

But let us first consider the notion of a predicate: for this notion, too, originally seems to be a metaphysical notion. What I have in mind when I

talk about a metaphysical notion is this: we use the term 'predicate' to refer to a predicate-expression like 'is wise'. But in Greek philosophy there is a tradition of using the word 'predicate' to refer to an item in the ontology which is supposed to be signified by the predicate-expression. If, for example, we look at Aristotle's treatise *Categories*, we see that what is predicated is not an expression, but an entity. What is more, Aristotle clearly uses the verb 'to predicate' (*katēgorein*) in the sense of 'to ascribe a true predicate to something', i.e. a predicate is not only an item in the ontology, but an item which belongs to the subject it is ascribed to. Thus the notion of predicate here really is the metaphysical notion of an attribute. But why is it called a 'predicate'? The idea seems to be this: there are not only objects, but there are also further entities introduced by truths about the objects. To put the matter differently: Aristotle's thought seems to be that there are not only items like Socrates and Fido and a tree in our ontology; there must also be items like the species man or wisdom, because it is true to say of Socrates that he is wise or that he is a man. These further items, in Aristotle's ontology, are the predicates.

Now Aristotle has a certain view as to what is predicated when Socrates is wise: he thinks it is wisdom. This reflects the fact that his ontology is an ontology of entities rather than of facts or states-of-affairs. Thus in his ontology what corresponds to the fact that Socrates is ill is an ill Socrates, a composite of Socrates and illness.

Other philosophers, though, took exception to this. They, too, distinguished between an object like Socrates and a quality like wisdom. But they did not identify the predicate with the quality wisdom, as Aristotle and his followers did. They distinguished between wisdom, the quality, and being wise, the predicate. Seneca (*Letters* (*Ep.*) 117.11–12) not only tells us that the Peripatetics rejected the distinction, but also attributes the origin of the distinction to the 'old dialecticians' from whom, he says, the Stoics inherited it. Seneca explains the distinction in these terms: the field which a farmer has is one thing, namely something corporeal; but it is not to be identified with having the field, which is something incorporeal; similarly wisdom is one thing, namely on the Stoic view a quality and hence a body; having wisdom or being wise is something altogether different, namely something incorporeal. The point which is made here is clearly a metaphysical point: in addition to Socrates and to wisdom, both of which are bodies, there is also such an item as Socrates' being wise, which is not a body, but something incorporeal.

This metaphysical contrast between a body and an incorporeal predicate is one the Stoics rely on in various contexts. Thus, for example, in ethics when they claim that virtue or wisdom is good, but being virtuous or being

wise is not (see Seneca, *Ep.* 117.1 ff.); or when they argue that we have to distinguish between the object of desire, which is a good, for instance wisdom, and what is to be desired, which is having that good, for instance to be wise, which, as they put it, is incorporeal and a predicate (see Stobaeus, *Eclogae* (*Ecl.*) 11.97.15–98.6). Quite generally they say that an impulse is an impulse for a predicate (see Stob. *Ecl.* 11.88.2 ff.). Perhaps the most important and most interesting use of the distinction, though, is made in the context of the Stoic account of causality. The Stoic view, attested in many places (see, for example, S.E., *M* IX.211; Stob. *Ecl.* 1.138. 14 ff.), is that a cause is a body, but that what it is the cause of is not a body, but an incorporeal predicate; it is the cause for a body of a predicate, or, as we would put it, it is the cause for a body to have a predicate true of it: the sun, for example, is the cause for the wax of its melting.

Now it is clear here that we are not talking about predicates in a linguistic or a logical sense; we are rather talking about metaphysical items of a certain kind which are contrasted with bodies. But it is also easy to see in these contexts how readily one would move from the notion of a predicate or an attribute, which is something which is true of something, to the notion of a predicate which is or is not true of a given object.

With this in mind let us return to *lekta* and consider the first attested use of the word by Cleanthes. Clement (*Stromateis* (*Strom.*) VIII.9.26.3 ff.) reports the Stoic doctrine that causes are causes of predicates, but then adds that some also say that they are causes of *lekta*. And he explains this by saying that Cleanthes called predicates *lekta*. The text is problematic in various ways, but it very strongly suggests, not only that Cleanthes used the word *lekton*, but that Cleanthes, as opposed to Zeno, said that causes are causes of *lekta*. This, in turn, allows for different interpretations. Perhaps Cleanthes meant to clarify or to correct Zeno's point: wisdom, for example, is not the cause of the predicate 'being wise', but rather of the *lekton* that somebody is wise. But presumably Cleanthes was just trying to make the very point Zeno had made in a different way: Socrates is a body, wisdom is a body, but that Socrates is wise is not a body, but an incorporeal *lekton*; and it is this *lekton* which is caused, rather than the wisdom, which is a body.

But however we interpret this, here we have a metaphysical notion of a *lekton*. We are not concerned with the meaning of expressions, or the intentional objects or contents of thoughts, but with facts; whether or not anybody has thought of them or will ever think about them, whether or not they get stated is completely irrelevant. The point is the metaphysical point that there is an item like Socrates' being wise which is not to be confused with either Socrates or wisdom, but which, though not a body, nevertheless has some ontological status, since it is the kind of item of which a cause,

properly speaking, is the cause. Here the notion of a *lekton* seems to be the notion of a true thing to say, just as the notion of a predicate had been the notion of a something truthfully predicated of something. And one can see why the term *lekton* would have seemed appropriate. We do not understand the world properly unless we take into account that there are not only bodies, but also truths about bodies, which themselves are incorporeal. But, again, one readily sees how one could move (or slide) from the notion of a true thing to say to the notion of a thing to say which is true or false, and how then this notion would get naturally extended to cover things to say quite generally. This, I think, is in fact what happened. But it does not matter much whether it did or not, if we want to get clear about the standard Stoic notion of a *lekton*, as it was clearly used by Chrysippus and his followers. What does matter is that even on the standard notion of a *lekton* facts, true propositions, remain paradigms of *lekta*. And this should make us hesitant about assuming too readily that the basic notion of a *lekton* is the notion of the meaning of an expression, and it should also make us hesitant about assuming too readily that *lekta* are language- or mind-dependent items.

But let us turn to the metaphysical status Stoic *lekta* are supposed to have. They are supposed to be incorporeal somethings which as such merely subsist, but do not exist. To understand this we have to take into account that the Stoic view is strikingly similar to that of the Unreformed Giants of Plato's *Sophist*. Like the Giants the Stoics believe that only bodies exist; thus they are even ready to say that the soul, virtue, wisdom are bodies. Quite generally everything which can affect something else or can be affected is counted as a body and hence as a being. But the Stoics also realise that their theory makes reference to items like the void, space, time and *lekta* which are not bodies, but which cannot be said to be altogether nothing, to have no status whatsoever. Hence for items of this kind they introduce the category of a something (*ti*) which, though incorporeal, is not nothing (see S.E., *M* x.218). Correspondingly they introduce the notion of subsistence (*hyphistanai*), as opposed to being (*einai*), to characterise the mode of existence of these items (see S.E., *M* I.17; VIII.70). The question is why the Stoics want to attribute to *lekta* an ontological status in the first place and what kind of status subsistence is.

If we return to our initial distinction between an expression used to say something and what gets said by using this expression, we might be quite ready to make this distinction, but this in itself would not commit us to the view that ontologically there are two distinct items here, an expression and a thing to say. The Stoic doctrine of *lekta* becomes controversial precisely because the Stoics assume that in some sense there are things out there to be said, items distinct both from the expressions we use and the thoughts we

express. Why, then, did the Stoics attribute an ontological status to *lekta*? Given our earlier remarks the answer, in a way, should be easy. The very point, or at least a point, in introducing the notions of a predicate and a *lekton* was the metaphysical one that reality is not just constituted by bodies, that in addition to bodies there are also predicates true of bodies, propositions true about bodies. So it is not surprising that *lekta* should be accorded some status, namely precisely the status of incorporeal somethings, as opposed to bodies.

But given that we now operate with the notion of a predicate which is true or false of something, and the notion of a *lekton* which is true or false, rather than the notions of an attribute or a fact, the Stoic doctrine must be somewhat more complex. For not just attributes and facts are accorded subsistence: any predicate and any *lekton* is supposed to be a subsistent incorporeal something. Accordingly the Stoics introduce a new notion, the notion of being present or being there (*hyparchein*). And this is applied not only to *lekta*, whether complete or incomplete, but also to time. As we noted earlier, the Stoic view is that time is an incorporeal something, too, and as such only subsists and does not exist. But the Stoics go on to distinguish between the past and the future, on the one hand, which merely subsist, and the present, which is there or is present (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* I.106.18 ff.). Similarly in the case of predicates: as incorporeal somethings they subsist, but if they are true of something, they have the stronger status of being there or present (*Ecl.* I.106.20 ff.). In fact the word *hyparchein* is often used by philosophers in the sense of 'to belong', for example by Aristotle in his syllogistic when he talks of something A's belonging to something B in the sense of 'B is A.' Similarly, finally, with propositions: a *lekton*, even if it is false, is something and hence subsists; but if it is true it is a fact and is present or there (S.E., *M* VIII.10). So, though the major reason why the Stoics do attribute some ontological status to *lekta*, whether complete or incomplete, is clearly that they want to attribute some status to facts and to attributes, this cannot be the whole explanation. For this would not explain why they attribute subsistence to *lekta* quite generally and why they attribute a special status to facts and attributes, instead of merely attributing some status to facts and attributes. So why do the Stoics attribute subsistence to *lekta* quite generally?

There are various possibilities. One is that the Stoics were still concerned with the problem which had vexed philosophers for so long and which Plato had repeatedly tried to deal with, in particular in the *Theaetetus* and in the *Sophist*, namely the problem of how false statements and how false thoughts are possible, given that there does not seem to be anything there to get stated or to get thought, if they are false. And the assumption of subsistent *lekta*

even in these cases would immediately take care of such problems. But, again, the explanation might be much more metaphysical. Sextus (*M* VIII.10) reports: 'According to them true is what is there and contradictorily opposed to something, and false is what is not there and contradictorily opposed to something.' This might suggest that what is false gets its status as the contradictory of what is true; the thought might be that a fact is the fact it is in part by making it not be the case that the contradictory is true, or that a claim has to be understood not only as asserting one thing, but also as implicitly denying the contradictory.

If, thus, we consider what mode of being the Stoics ascribe to *lekta* in calling them subsistent, we should be hesitant to assume that this is some mind-dependent existence, that they only exist as the actual or even the possible contents of thought. It is, of course, true that the Stoics seem standardly to have said that a *lekton* is something which subsists in correspondence to rational impression. For we find the same formulation in Diogenes Laertius (VII.63) and Sextus Empiricus (*M* VIII.70). In fact, in Sextus Empiricus (*M* VIII.12) we get the even more suggestive formulation that the *lekton* is something which we grasp as something which subsists upon our thought (*parhyphistamenon dianoiai*). But if we consider these passages without prejudice, their point rather seems to be that the *lekton*, what is true or false, should not be confused with our thought (many philosophers had assumed that it is thoughts which are true or false: see *M* VIII.11), but rather conceived of as something subsisting alongside our thought; i.e. the point is not that *lekta* only exist as the contents of thoughts, but that they are contents of thoughts or impressions, rather than the thoughts or impressions themselves. It also does not seem to be right to attribute the view to the Stoics that facts are mind-dependent. It is, of course, true that they depend on the Divine Mind, but this is clearly not what the passages in question refer to, or what we usually think of when we say 'mind-dependent'. So it is reasonable to assume that the mode of being of *lekta* is not that of mind-dependent items, at least not in the ordinary sense of the term.

With this as a background, we can now turn to what modern scholars have treated as the locus classicus for the Stoic doctrine of *lekta*, Sextus Empiricus, *M* VIII.11–12. The context is a discussion as to what is the primary bearer of the predicates 'true' and 'false'; is it an expression, or a thought, or something else? The Stoic view, according to Sextus, is this: 'Three things, they say, go together, what is signified, what is signifying, and what has it (*to tynchanon*). Of these it is the sound (i.e. the expression) which is signifying, for example "Dion"; what is signified is the thing itself which is revealed by the sound . . . what has it is the external object, i.e. Dion himself. Of these, two are bodies, namely the sound and the what has it, one is incorporeal, i.e. the thing signified and the *lekton*, and it is this which turns out true or false.'

If we take this passage at face value, it shows that the Stoics did distinguish between (i) the expression 'Dion', (ii) what is signified by this expression, an incorporeal *lekton*, and (iii) Dion himself. It thus poses a challenge to our interpretation according to which the notion of a *lekton* is the notion of something which gets said in the relevant sense of 'to say'. For to utter the expression 'Dion' is not yet to say anything in the relevant sense, and so there also should not be a *lekton* corresponding to the expression 'Dion'. On the contrary, the passage suggests that the notion of a *lekton* is a notion of the meaning of an expression. In fact, on the basis of this passage one might come to think, as, for example, Mates did in his [385], that the Stoics distinguish between the sense and the reference of an expression.

Now before we accept such far-reaching conclusions we should take note of the fact that this is the only text which attributes to the Stoics the view that there is also a *lekton* corresponding to an expression like 'Dion'. We should also note that there must be something wrong with Sextus' account: he means to tell us what it is on the Stoic view which is true or false; but instead he gives us as an example the expression 'Dion' and what is signified by it; but whichever view the Stoics may have about what is signified by the expression 'Dion', we know that this is not going to be something which is true or false. So the least that has to be said about Sextus' account is that it relies on a badly chosen example. There is a minimal textual change which would do away with this problem: if at the beginning of VIII.12 we read *Dion peripatei*, ('Dion is walking'), instead of *Dion*, the text would become perfectly satisfactory. It would completely fall in line with the passage in Seneca (*Ep.* 117.13) parts of which we considered earlier. Seneca had reported that the Stoics distinguish between wisdom and being wise, the one a body, the other an incorporeal item. He then goes on to elucidate the distinction in the following way: Cato is a body; thus when we see Cato walking we see a body; but what we have when we see Cato walking is a thought, namely the thought which is put into the words 'Cato is walking'; and what we are saying when we say this is not a body, but an incorporeal *lekton*. (Incidentally this passage shows how easily a point made in terms of the notion of a predicate can be made in terms of the notion of a *lekton*, as we saw earlier considering Cleanthes' remarks about causality; it also shows how easily we move from the metaphysical notion of a *lekton* to the logical notion.) Thus according to Seneca we have to distinguish between Cato, a body, the expression 'Cato is walking', similarly a physical item, and the *lekton* that Cato is walking. Similarly Sextus, if we accepted the textual change, would

now distinguish between (i) the expression 'Dion is walking', (ii) the *lekton* signified by this expression, and (iii) Dion himself. And this would just be the distinction we are already familiar with. Unfortunately it is clear from *M* VIII.75 that the text here is not corrupt. For in VIII.75 Sextus again distinguishes between (i) the expression 'Dion', (ii) the incorporeal *lekton* signified by it, and (iii) Dion himself.

How, then, are we to deal with Sextus' unparalleled testimony? It seems that we should distinguish three questions: (i) Is Sextus right in assuming that the Stoics distinguish between the expression 'Dion', what is signified by it, and Dion himself? (ii) Is Sextus right in identifying what is signified by the expression 'Dion' as an incorporeal *lekton*? (iii) Do the Stoics distinguish between the signification of 'Dion' and Dion himself as the sense and the reference of 'Dion', respectively? There is good reason to think that the answer to the first question is affirmative, and that the answer to the third question is negative. In the end it will turn out that the answer to the second question is presumably affirmative too, though with some important qualifications; but it will be important for our topic to see precisely in what way Sextus may be right on this question too. Thus Sextus would be right in assuming that the Stoics, given an expression like 'Dion', as in 'Dion is running', make a threefold distinction. He even would be right in suggesting that the second item in the triad, what is signified by the expression, is somehow a *lekton* too. But it will be crucial to see that this can be so only in a very derivative sense of the term *lekton*. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake on our part to conclude, on the basis of this passage, that the Stoics did distinguish between the sense and the reference of an expression.

Let us turn to the last point first. It is natural to assume that the truth or falsehood of 'Dion is running' depends on whether the predicate 'is running' is true or false of Dion. And in this case Dion himself would be the reference of the expression 'Dion' in the sentence 'Dion is running.' But this is not the way the Stoics actually construe the truth-conditions for the proposition that Dion is running (cf. *M* VIII.97–8; Alexander Aphrodisius, *On Aristotle's Prior Analytic* (*In An. Pr.*) 402.3 ff.). According to the Stoics this proposition is true precisely if there is something which is Dion and it is running; if, then, Dion is already dead or Dion has not yet been born, the proposition is false, just as it is false if Dion is not running. So Dion is not the reference of the expression 'Dion', but rather that of which the predicate is true, if the proposition is true. For 'Dion' in the sentence 'Dion is running' is not treated as a referring expression. It is rather treated in the way the Stoics treat 'man' in 'man is running' (in Greek one does not standardly say 'a man is running'). They think that this sentence is true precisely if there is something which is a man and it is running. So there, too, will be the

expression 'man', what is signified by the expression, and, if the proposition is true, some man of whom the predicate is true.

Let us next turn to the first question. There are good reasons to suppose that Sextus is right when he assumes that the Stoics distinguish three items, 'Dion', the signification of 'Dion', and Dion himself; there seem to be three items, at least when the proposition is true. For according to D.L. VII.58 the Stoics claim that proper names like 'Dion' reveal or signify an individual quality, whereas common nouns like 'man' signify a common quality. This view we also find in grammarians influenced by Stoicism (see, for example, Apollonius Dyscolus, *Syntax* 103.13 ff.; 142.1–2; 155.3–5; *De pronominibus* (*Pron.*) 105.18–19; Priscian II.56; XVII.34). The details of the Stoic doctrine of individual qualities are obscure, but the view seems to be that there is something about an individual which makes it the unique individual it is, and this is the individual quality, whereas the common quality makes an object the kind of object it is, for instance a human being. Now both the individual quality and the common quality characteristic of men are something an object has. It has them in a rather special sense of 'have'. For unlike other qualities, like wisdom, the individual quality and this kind of common quality are constitutive of the object. Nevertheless they are not identical with it. And hence this kind of quality can be said to be something an object has, in a special sense of 'has', which is rather different from the sense in which it has a quality like wisdom. Thus we would readily understand why the Stoics would distinguish between the expressions 'Dion' and 'man', what is signified by them, namely an individual or a common quality, and what has this quality, namely Dion or a particular man.

There is a further reason to think that the Stoics make the threefold distinction Sextus presupposes. According to D.L. VII.70 the Stoics claim that the proposition that Dion is walking is constituted by a case and a predicate. And there is reason to think that the Stoics distinguish a case both from an expression, on the one hand, and an object, on the other, so that, again, we seem to have a triad: expression, case, object. Consider, for instance, the use of the word 'case' in *M* XI.29, where Sextus discusses how the Stoics deal with a certain ambiguity in the term 'dog'. The word 'dog' (*kyōn*) in Greek is ambiguous: it might mean (i) a dog, (ii) some kind of marine animal, (iii) a cynic philosopher, or (iv) the star. Sextus puts it in the following way: the expression 'dog' signifies a case under which the dog falls, a case under which the marine animal falls, etc. So here a case is clearly something which is signified by an expression, and equally clearly it is distinguished both from the expression and from the things designated by it. It is some intermediate item. Unfortunately we do not have a clear grasp of what a case is supposed to be.

The pursuit of this question again leads us back to metaphysics. Though the evidence is very meagre, it is clear enough that there is a metaphysical notion of a case which forms part of a network of notions, the notions of an object, a universal, an attribute, a quality, of having (*tynchanein*), possessing (*echein*) and participating. Most intriguingly, there is a Platonist version of it, which may well go back to the Old Academy, as well as a Stoic version. Simplicius (*On Aristotle's Categories* (*In. Cat.*) 209.10 ff.) tells us that the members of the Academy (he must mean Platonists, given the dogmatic character of the distinction attributed to them) called dispositions (*hexeis*) 'things to possess' (*hekta*), universals or concepts 'things to participate in', cases (*ptōseis*) 'things to have', and predicates 'accidents'. It is quite difficult, given the lack of evidence, to reconstruct the underlying view. But another passage in Simplicius (*In. Cat.* 53.9 ff.) is of some help. We are given Iamblichus' interpretation of what Aristotle means when he talks about something's being predicated of something as its subject, in particular when he talks about the genus or the species being predicated of something. Iamblichus' view is that it is not, strictly speaking, the genus which is predicated of the species when we say 'man is an animal', or the species of the individual when we say 'Socrates is a man'; it is rather a case which is predicated, and he explains a case, as Simplicius puts it, in terms of 'participation in the generic (*to genikon*)', i.e. the genus or the species. The underlying view here is clearly that Socrates participates in the universal man, but that what is predicated is not the universal itself, but a case. And a case here, at least in the example 'Socrates is a man', seems to be something like an immanent, as opposed to a transcendent, Form. Thus the view attributed to the Platonists may be this: there are objects; they participate in Ideas or universals corresponding to sortal concepts; but what they have as a result (*tynchanein*) are not these Ideas, but cases, i.e. immanent Forms; but there are also attributes like wisdom; they are not Ideas, i.e. things to participate in, or immanent Forms, i.e. things to have; for they are not constitutive of an object; rather they are things to possess; the things to possess themselves have to be distinguished from the attributes, the predicates which are true of an object when it possesses a property, for wisdom and having wisdom, or being wise, are distinct. But, whether or not this is the Platonist view Simplicius is referring to, it is clear from the two passages in Simplicius that there are Platonists who use a metaphysical notion of a case and who assume that a case is to be contrasted with both the universal or the concept or the Idea and the individuals falling under the concept, as something which is had (*teukton*), rather than something which is participated in.

What, in spite of all the difficulties of detail, emerges from a passage in

Stobaeus is that the Stoics have a view which is very much like the one I have just attributed to some Platonists, in any case the Stoic version of a metaphysical theory involving objects, cases and universals. In *Ecl.* 1. 136, 21 ff. we are given the Stoics' view on Platonic Ideas. It seems as if it were assumed that there are only Ideas of natural kinds. In any case, the Stoics claim that such Ideas are mere concepts (*ennoēmata*), not conceptions or mental items, but their counterparts, mental constructs of some kind. Nevertheless, being concepts of natural kinds they have some status: they are quasi-somethings and quasi-qualified. Stobaeus then tells us (137. 3 ff.): 'Of these [sc. the Ideas] the Stoic philosophers say that they do not exist, and that we participate in the concepts, but have (*tynchanein*) the cases, which they call appellations.'

So it seems that, right down to the terminology, the Stoics have a view quite like the Platonists considered earlier, except that the Stoics replace Ideas by concepts. The case is distinguished, on the one hand, from the particular objects which have it, and, on the other, from the concept, the generic, man in general, or animal in general. Thus it seems that a case is something like the Stoic counterpart of an Aristotelian form or of a Platonist immanent Form, as opposed to the transcendent form participated in: i.e. it should be something like a common quality or an individual quality. And this is exactly, as we saw, what according to the Stoics is signified by a proper name or a common noun (see D.L. VII.58).

There is a good deal of further evidence that the Stoics distinguish the case both from the object which has it and from the generic or the concept it falls under. As to the first, the distinction would explain why the Stoics standardly call the object which has the predicate true of it, if the proposition is true, *to tynchanon*, i.e. 'what has it' (see, for example, Plutarch, *adversus Colotem* (*Adv. Colot.*) 1119f; Philop. *In. An. Pr.* 243.2; Ps.-Alex., *In S.E.* 20, 27 ff.), as, in fact, Sextus does twice in the passage under discussion (*M* VIII.11; 12). As to the second contrast, it is clearly what Ammonius (*On Aristotle's de Interpretatione* (*In de Int.*) 43.9 ff.) and others (see Stephanus, *In de Int.* 10.28–9) have in mind when they try to explain the Stoic use of the word 'case': a case is supposed to be something which falls under, or from, a universal as a concept. And it is also this contrast which Simplicius is referring to when (*In Cat.* 105.7 ff.) he reports the Stoic view as to whether a genus or a species can be called a 'this'. He points out that in this connection we have to take into account what the Stoics have to say about generic qualia (i.e. items like man in general, the universal man) and about cases. Presumably the view he refers to is this: generic qualia, i.e. universals, are not a this, not even a something, whereas cases are.

So there is a Stoic metaphysical notion of a case. It is called a 'case'

because it falls under the concept of an object. But, unlike the Peripatetics and most Platonists, the Stoics distinguish between general concepts, which they also call 'genus' (D.L. VII.61) and individual concepts, which they call 'species' (D.L. VII.61). So what is ordinarily called 'the species man' the Stoics call 'the genus man', whereas Socrates, i.e. the individual concept of Socrates, will be a species (D.L. VII.61). Correspondingly we have cases both of general concepts and of individual concepts. And I take it that these cases are just the common qualities and the individual qualities respectively. This, then, is the metaphysical notion of a case. Hence the case signified by 'man' in the true statement 'man is running' is a common quality in virtue of which a particular man is a man, for example the common quality in virtue of which Socrates is a man. But, given this, it should be clear that, unlike what we may at first have thought, the common quality 'man' is not a universal, something all you share; it is rather something which in a particular case falls under this universal: it is a case of man.

Now, consider the statement 'man is in Athens' (in English, but not in Greek, one would ordinarily say 'a man is in Athens'). What is signified by 'man' here? It seems that Chrysippus used the argument 'if something is in Athens, it is not in Megara; man is in Athens; hence man is not in Megara' to show that it is not the universal man, but a case, namely a case of man, which is signified by 'man'. For it does not follow from the fact that a particular man, and hence that man is in Athens, that it is not the case that man, and hence any man, is in Megara. And he explained this, it seems, by pointing out that the universal man is not a something, let alone a this, and hence not covered by the range of 'if something . . . it . . .', whereas a case is a something. So it is a case, more specifically a case of man, which is signified by 'man' in 'man is in Athens'; in fact it is a body, namely a common quality. Does this mean, though, that it is some particular case of man, some particular body, which is signified? Obviously not; for otherwise the truth of the statement would depend on whether or not there was something with this particular (instance of the) common quality which was in Athens, when, in fact, the statement is true as long as there is any man in Athens. Moreover, one thing we can learn from the sophism mentioned above is that 'man is in Athens' and 'man is in Megara' can both be true, though it is a case which is signified, because it is no case in particular which is signified, let alone the same particular case, whereas 'man is in Athens' and 'he is in Megara' cannot both be true, because the same case is involved in both.

This may become a bit clearer if we consider an analogy. If I want a bicycle, I want a certain kind of physical object. There are any number of objects of this kind. Does this mean that I want any one of them in particular? Obviously not. Does this mean that what I want is not a particular physical object of this kind, after all, but some other kind of item, that the object of my want is some kind of intentional object? There is no need to say this. To say that one wants a bicycle is to say that one has a want which is satisfied if there is a bicycle which one has. And the bicycle which one has, if one's want is satisfied, is indeed a particular physical object. Similarly with signification. To say that 'man' in 'man is in Athens' signifies a case is not to say that there is a particular case which is signified; it rather is to say that, if what is claimed to be true is true, there is a particular case such that something has this case and it is in Athens. And this particular case is a particular quality, a particular body. So even if there are no men at all, either because they have all gone out of existence or because men have not yet come into being, what is signified by 'man' in 'man is in Athens' will be a case, though the quality does not exist at all. For, to say that a quality or a case is signified is not to say that there is a quality or a case there to be signified, just as to say that one wants a bicycle is not to say that there is a bicycle there to be wanted (bicycles, by chance, may all have gone out of existence). It is just to say that, if things are such as to make the claim true, there is a quality or a case there. This does not mean that, if the claim is false, 'man' does not signify a case. If you want a bicycle, this does not mean, either, that there is a bicycle which you want. And conversely, if there is no bicycle which you want, if perhaps there is no bicycle at all, it does not follow that what you want is not a bicycle, or that it is not a bicycle which you want.

So we might attribute to the Stoics the view that, though an expression like 'man' or 'Dion' signifies a case, this does not mean that there has to be a case there which is signified by the expression. And on this view we can straightforwardly identify the cases with the constitutive qualities of an object. So this is one notion of a case, the metaphysical notion, and we might try to reconstruct the Stoic position in terms of this notion along the lines indicated. But it seems that the Stoics, after all, do want to attribute some status to cases even if the proposition is not true. And the reason for this, presumably, is that they want to say that a *lekton*, even a false one, even one which is false because there is no Dion or no man, is constituted by a case and a predicate (see D.L. VII.70).

At this point it might help to remember, to understand the Stoic view, though perhaps not to support their position, that, as we pointed out earlier, the Stoics not only distinguish between subsistence (*hyphistanai*) and existence (*einai*), but also introduce an intermediate notion, which, for the lack of a better word, we called the notion of being present or being there (*hyparchein*). This allowed us to say that even false *lekta* and predicates in false *lekta* have some status, though they are not facts or attributes. Perhaps

the Stoics dealt with cases in an analogous way. The case signified in a true statement is a body, a quality of the relevant kind. But if the statement is false, because there is no Dion or there is no man, there is still a case signified by 'Dion' or 'man', but one which merely subsists and does not exist. Put differently: there is the metaphysical notion of a case which is the notion of a certain kind of quality. But, as with *lekta* and predicates, we move from this metaphysical notion to a logical notion. We thus get the notion of something signified by an expression like 'Dion' or 'man', which, if the proposition is true, is a quality of this kind, but which, if the proposition is not true, merely subsists. A *lekton*, even if it is false, is something and hence subsists; but if it is true, it is a fact and obtains (see S.E. *M* VIII.10). A predicate, even if it is not true of something, is something and hence subsists; but if it is true of something, it is an attribute of what it is true of and obtains (see Stobaeus, *Ecl.* I. 106, 20 ff.). We might say that the metaphysical notion of a *lekton* is the notion of, for example, a fact, but that we get the logical notion of a *lekton* by moving to the notion of something which if true is a fact. Similarly we might have the metaphysical notion of a predicate which is the notion of an attribute, but we get the corresponding logical notion by moving to the notion of something which if predicated truly of something is an attribute. Correspondingly we deal with cases. There is the metaphysical notion of a case which is the notion of a certain kind of quality. But we get the logical notion of a case by moving to the notion of something which if signified in a true proposition is this sort of quality. In the first two cases, that of a *lekton* and that of a predicate, the item signified subsists; if the proposition is true, this very item not merely subsists, but is present, though it still does not exist, because it is not a body. With cases, too, the item signified would subsist, but it would exist, namely as a quality, if the proposition were true.

This might all seem unduly cumbersome and obscure, but it might help us to understand one particular detail of Stoic doctrine which otherwise is difficult to account for. One easily sees why the Stoics formulate the truth-conditions for 'Dion is in Athens' and 'man is in Athens' the way they do: 'there is something which is Dion (or man) and it is in Athens'. We want these statements to be false if Dion is dead or man is extinct. But if Dion is dead or man is extinct, the individual and the common quality do not exist either. Hence, though we do not have a problem about what is referred to by 'Dion' or 'man' in the original statement, we still have a problem as to what is signified by 'Dion' and 'man' in the statement of the truth-conditions. This will be no problem if we assume that there is at least a subsistent case to be signified, even if the proposition is false.

There are various bits of evidence, apart from Sextus' testimony and the

fact that propositions like 'Dion is walking' are supposed to be constituted by a case, which would suggest that this is the Stoic view. Thus Clement, for example (*Strom.* VIII.9.26.5), distinguishes between a house and the case which a house has (*tynchanei*), and he says of the case that it is incorporeal, whereas the expression uttered, 'house', and the house are bodies.

With this in mind we are ready to consider the remaining question: is what is signified by 'Dion' an incorporeal *lekton*, as Sextus claims? We have worked out two notions of a case, of which we favoured the second. On the first notion a case is a quality; thus it is a body and cannot be an incorporeal *lekton*. On the second notion it is some incorporeal item of a curious kind, which, if the proposition is true, turns out to be a body after all. So Sextus may be right in assuming that what is signified by 'Dion' is some incorporeal item which subsists. But is it a *lekton*?

If this is, indeed, what the Stoics said, it seems to me that the easiest explanation for it is this: there are *lekta*, things to say, for instance that Socrates is wise. They are *lekta* in the strict, basic sense of the word. There also are predicates, for example 'being wise'. We call them 'incomplete *lekta*'. This can be understood in two ways: (i) they need to be completed to be *lekta*, i.e. they, by themselves, are not yet *lekta*. So to be an incomplete *lekton* is not to be one kind of *lekton* as opposed to another kind of *lekton* which is complete. (ii) In some extended sense even predicates are *lekta*; they are essentially things which get said about something, the kind of thing which is true of something. So they are *lekta* of a kind, though in an extended sense.

It should be obvious that what is signified by 'Dion' is not a *lekton* in either the strict or the extended sense, in which even predicates might qualify as *lekta*. Nor is what is signified by 'Dion' an incomplete *lekton* in the sense in which a predicate is. And it should be noted here that our sources never call cases 'incomplete *lekta*'. But we can see how the terminology could evolve in such a way that once predicates are called, not only 'incomplete *lekta*', but *lekta*, all incorporeal parts of a *lekton*, which are not complete *lekta* themselves, come to be called *lekta* in a yet wider sense. On these assumptions we can understand why a case might come to be called a *lekton*.

But even if all this were true, it would still be clear that the notion of a *lekton* involved here would be a highly derivative one. So even if Sextus were right in claiming that 'Dion' signifies an incorporeal *lekton*, we should not focus on this isolated and questionable use of the word *lekton* to determine the basic Stoic notion of a *lekton*. Hence, we should also not, relying on this passage, think that the basic notion of a *lekton* is the notion of the meaning of an expression, let alone the notion of the meaning of an expression as opposed to its reference. It rather seems, as we have been saying all along,

that the basic notion of a *lekton*, as the word suggests, is that of a thing to say. That a thing to say and its parts should also be made to serve the function of being what is signified by the appropriate expressions and their parts is a derivative feature of *lekta*, though, needless to say, it is the feature which plays the central role in the Stoic theory of language. But the notions of a *lekton*, of a predicate and a case play a crucial role in Stoic philosophy outside the theory of language, in particular a metaphysical role, and this is what we always have to keep in mind when we consider their use in the theory of language.

7
Parrots, Pyrrhonists and native speakers

DAVID K. GLIDDEN

What it is to speak a language and what it is to learn a language are complementary abilities. Normally, one cannot speak a language without learning it, just as one learns a language by speaking it. Yet, I could have learned Greek without speaking it, just as my parrot may speak Greek without learning it. There are several puzzles here to serve as philosophical prey.

It might seem that the ability to speak a language, or even to express oneself linguistically with other sorts of signs, requires only that the proper mechanism be physically in place for language to arise. Function follows form. We speak because our neurons are connected in a certain way. Yet, it could also be the case that our ability to express ourselves in language presupposes some sort of innate syntax and semantics as prerequisite for linguistic competence. Only if this program functions can the mechanism speak.

Some say animals can speak, if only they can think, and animals can think, only if they think like us. In this way, thought comes first and language after. Others have less restrictive views concerning what can or cannot speak. Those who would teach a chimpanzee to sign, as well as those who study the sounds that whales make, or even noises made by chirping insects, typically conceive of language as complex behaviour, enjoying considerable diversity across the variety of species that generate such sounds or signs. The ability to use language would not then be dependent upon any single mechanism. Nor must the syntactic and semantic program be specific either, if bees are to have their language, along with porpoises and people.

Perhaps animals can speak, even if they do not think. And barnyard sounds directly attach themselves to situations, without requiring innate programmed preconceptions and syntactic rules. Sometimes, this seems to be the case with us too. Language often exhibits mechanical banality, with