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SEMINARI
E CONVEGNI

Universals in Ancient Philosophy

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Epicureans and Stoics on Universals

There is no surviving discussion of universals as such in the texts and fragments reporting Stoic and Epicurean views. But the Stoics discuss genera and species, claiming that they are concepts and Epicurus refers to natural kinds, of which we have preconceptions¹. Both schools elaborate their views in reaction to the Platonic claim about the existence of the Ideas: the Stoics say that the Ideas are concepts and the Epicurean view of the world as constituted by a constant flow of atoms shows that there is no place for such kinds of items. The criticism of the Ideas produces very different theories of what counts as a generic item for Stoics and Epicureans. However, one crucial point of contact between the two accounts is that, for both, universal or generic features of reality are nothing other than the result of a mental capacity to recognize them. Thus, generic features characterize certain workings of the mind, and are not themselves items in reality independent of the mind. It is the Stoics who push this capacity of recognition to a state of having concepts in the mind which are utterly mind-dependent. Thus, it is the Stoics who set up a positive theory of universals as concepts, whilst the Epicureans contribute towards a conceptualist view of universals through their systematic elimination of the Ideas from ontology and epistemology. After a brief overview of the right or wrong reasons the Stoics and Epicureans are associated in their reaction against the classical schools, we shall examine first the Epicurean account of reality without the Platonic Ideas or any kind of universal, followed by the Stoic view of the Platonic Ideas as concepts.

¹ See for the Stoics D.L. VII, 60-61; S.E., *PH* II, 219; *STOB.*, *Ecl.* I, 50, 30; *SYRIAN.*, *In Met.*, 105, 28-29. For Epicurus, D.L. X, 33, S.E., *M.* VII, 267.

1. *On what the Stoics and Epicureans seemingly agree on, and on what they do not*

Philosophers of the Hellenistic period are often referred to collectively by ancient commentators as the ‘new’ or ‘newer’ (νεώτεροι) philosophers in comparison with the ‘older’ (ἀρχαῖοι) philosophers, most prominently Plato and Aristotle. Thus, Alexander implicitly refers to the Stoics when he contrasts the views of the νεώτεροι about hypothetical arguments to those of the ἀρχαῖοι, i.e. the Aristotelians²; thus, Plutarch refers to Epicureans and Stoics together as the νεώτεροι in contrast with οἱ ἀρχαῖοι, here Parmenides and Plato³; thus, Stobaeus speaks of Plato’s Forms as introduced by the ‘ancients’ in contrast with the Stoics who put forward instead the notion of a concept (the ἐννόημα)⁴.

It is not only a question of chronology which makes Stoics and Epicureans collectively considered as νεώτεροι in contrast to the same set of ‘ancients’, but more importantly some common tenets they seemingly hold which has led a certain tradition to associate the two schools. It is, in the main, their views about the status of ordinary objects of experience born out of a common reaction against the older schools which is the basis for such a tradition. For both Stoics and Epicureans distinguish themselves from previously established schools of thought, for the most part Platonists and Aristotelians, in considering that only sensible objects of experience exist and that it is possible to give an account of being and its causes, without appealing to separate Platonic Ideas or immanent Forms. In effect, both Stoics and Epicureans can be said to hold that there are no such items as Platonic Ideas, or immanent Forms in reality. The claim therefore that it is sensible objects which exist and that there is nothing which exists over and above sensible objects is generally a claim that both Stoics and Epicureans can be shown to adhere to⁵. Thus Epicurus affirms that «besides body

² Cf. ALEX. APHR., *In Apr.*, 262, 28-32 and 373, 29-31, with BARNES 2007, pp. 315f. about the superficiality of the νεώτεροι, a common criticism against the latter as in GAL., *Inst. Log.* III, 4-5 whose νεώτεροι are distinctly Stoic given the idiosyncratic terminology they are characterized by (e.g. the use of συνημμένον, cf. D.L. VII, 71).

³ PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1114A and 1116B.

⁴ STOB., *Ecl.* I, 12, 3, 4-5. It is in more specific contexts that successive generations of thinkers from the same school are distinguished as newer and older, e.g. S.E., *M.* VII, 253 about the older Stoics, S.E., *PH I*, 164 about the newer Sceptics.

⁵ Cf. on both the *rapprochement* of Stoic and Epicurean views about the existence

and void, nothing can even be thought of» (*Her.* 40), whilst the Stoics hold to a strict identity between corporeality and existence: only bodies exist.

Though the latter Stoic tenet is one of the most well-known, which has marked out the Stoics as ‘materialists’ from Plotinus to Bertrand Russell⁶, it is noteworthy that hardly any of our available texts actually furnishes us with such a clear expression of the claim. It is mainly in critical texts, arguing against the Stoics, that the claim is expressed in this manner⁷. Lack of available textual testimonies is not generally surprising in dealing with the Stoics. However, in this case, the lack of textual evidence for this particular Stoic tenet which takes on such importance in the later tradition of transmission and criticism of Stoic doctrine – compared with the clearly preserved original Epicurean view that bodies exist and nothing apart from body and void can exist⁸ – appears to indicate more than the usual misfortunes of transmission. It may rather suggest that the original Stoic view about corporeality is more complex than a mere equation of body and existence – too complex for a certain tradition with a tendency to generalization and criticism, to properly account for and distinguish from an apparently similar Epicurean claim.

For though the Stoics can be said to share with the Epicureans the view that only bodies exist, the claim covers two very different views about ontology. Whereas for Epicurus, the existence of body and void is all there is in reality (τὸ πᾶν ἐστὶ σώματα καὶ κενόν, *Her.* 39), the Stoic equation of body and existence does not fully answer the question of what there is. On Stoic doctrine, besides corporeal entities which are the only kinds of items which can properly be said to exist (εἶναι), there are additional items which are incorporeal and accordingly do not ex-

of body and their marked distinction from a Platonic and Aristotelian line concerning Forms, HAHM 1977, pp. 5 ff.; also SHARPLES 1996, esp. pp. 33 f.

⁶ E.g. PLOT., *Enn.* VI 1 [42] 25-26: for the Stoics «[e]xistence comes to the other things from matter» (at VI 1 [42] 25, 22-23); RUSSELL 1946, section 3, on Stoicism (Russell attributes the materialism claim mainly to the early Stoa).

⁷ For example: the afore-mentioned passage from Plotinus (*Enn.* VI 1 [42] 25 ff.), ALEX. APHR., *In Top.*, 301, 20-302, 2. Cf. the similar remark in HAHM 1977, pp. 3, 9, 25 and note 26: speaking consequently of the need for a ‘reconstruction’ of the Stoic view.

⁸ Cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 39-40; EPICUR., *Pyth.* 86. Also LUCR., *DRN*, I, 445-450.

ist⁹. The Stoics are very careful about the way these incorporeal items are described, for they precisely do not speak of them as beings (ὄντα), nor as items which are or exist, but rather they are said to subsist or obtain (ὑφεστάναι and ὑπάρχειν)¹⁰. In this way the incorporeals are part of reality, with a role to play, distinct from the role which existing, corporeal, items have. The ὑπο- prefix in both verbs suggests some form of subordinated reality to the existents, however, as we shall see, it would be a mistake to consider them as dependent for their subsistence on other items, neither on a person's mind nor on any other existent item.

When Plutarch mentions the Stoic view about the reality of incorporeals as «subsisting and present in life and in philosophy» (at *Adv. Col.* 1116B) though they do not actually exist, it is as part of a profound criticism of Epicureanism; more precisely, this aside comes up in the middle of a long counter-argumentation against the Epicurean criticism of the Platonic theory of Ideas (from *Adv. Col.* 1114F to 1116E). Plutarch presents the Platonist view that there are two kinds of ways of being, one of things which properly are (i.e. of the *Ideas*) and the other, of things which are forever becoming (τὰ γιγνόμενα)¹¹. Colotes, a student of Epicurus and nominal target of the work¹², and the Epicu-

⁹ PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1116B, seemingly brings out a contradiction in the Stoic claim by summarizing their view thus: «for these beings do not exist» (ταῦτα γὰρ ὄντα μὲν μὴ εἶναι); the juxtaposition of ὄντα and μὴ εἶναι should make manifest an incoherence.

¹⁰ Thus a *lekton* (one of the four incorporeals including also place, void and time) ὑφιστάμενον at D.L. VII, 43, 63; S.E., *M.* VIII, 70; with variations καθεστηκώς at *M.* VIII, 406-407, 410; ὑπάρχειν at *M.* I, 157 and *M.* VIII, 100, 262 etc.; place is said to παρῴφιστασθαι, cf. SIMPL., *In Cat.*, 361, 10-11; time and κατηγορήματα (a kind of *lekton*) are said to ὑπάρχειν and ὑφεστάναι in STOB., *Ecl.* I, 8, 42, 38-43. For the force of these verbs: HADOT 1969; GOLDSCHMIDT 1972; BRUNSCHWIG 1988, esp. p. 23; FREDE *M.* 1994a, esp. pp. 116 ff.

¹¹ In accordance for example, with the way the distinction is formulated in PL., *Ti.* 27d5-7.

¹² As a student of Epicurus, Colotes is named at D.L. X, 25, he is emblematic of the general polemical attitudes the Epicureans have towards, mainly, schools of thought established in pre-Hellenistic times, as the title of his work expresses: *On the impossibility of living according to the doctrines of the other philosophers*, referred to by Plutarch at the beginning of his *Adv. Col.* 1107E, which consists thus of a defence, one after the other, of those philosophers Colotes attacks. Proclus speaks of him as particularly adverse to Platonism (cf. PROCL., *In R.*, II, 113, 9-10). For an overview of the

reans in general, are accused of saying that all that, according to them, is part of reality (body and void) exists in the same way, regardless of the contrary features which characterize, on their own view, these two components of reality, e.g. the intangibility of void in contrast with the resistance of body, the inalterability and eternity of the atoms in contrast to the ever changing aggregates of atoms (τὰ συγκρίματα). For the Epicureans there is only one way of being. Reality is constituted by items which exist in that one unique way, however differently these items seem to behave.

The appeal to the Stoics is made thus against the Epicureans but nevertheless not in support of the Platonic approach. The Stoics are not actually named but referred to, as mentioned above, as νεώτεροι. They are however clearly identifiable by the view they are said to hold concerning the subsistence, but not existence, of the incorporeals¹³. Plutarch, by not naming the Stoics but designating them as νεώτεροι, appeals to philosophers who are considered to be close to the Epicureans. For together, Epicureans and Stoics, as νεώτεροι, mark themselves out by their common critical attitude towards the doctrines of the older schools. The underlying suggestion therefore is that even amongst the 'newer' philosophers (καὶ τοῖς νεωτέροις), the Stoics, in contrast to the Epicureans, recognize at least two different kinds of ways of being real. For the Stoics recognize that there are items in reality which are of a different kind from others and therefore have a different mode of being real from others. Accordingly, only one kind of item can be said to exist, whilst the other is real but does not properly exist. In this manner, Plutarch reads the Stoic distinction between bodies which exist and incorporeal items which merely subsist as keeping in line with a certain Platonic model in which there are items which properly exist, and others which fall short of proper existence.

For sure, the Stoic distinction is set in different terms which, from the point of view of a Platonist, are utterly mistaken as Plutarch's deprecating use of ἀποστεροῦσι indicates: for the Stoics 'rob' their existence from items which on the contrary, it is suggested, should be considered

various polemical writings by Epicurean authors of which Colotes' work appears to be a general *summa*, see KECHAGIA 2010, pp. 134 ff.

¹³ Recognisably the four 'canonical' incorporeals of Stoic ontology, cf. S.E., *M.* X, 218.

as existent, and which Plutarch refers to as *μεγάλα πράγματα*¹⁴. We can postpone, for now, considerations about Plutarch's complaints, and rather retain the distinction he draws between the Stoics and the Epicureans, in particular with regard to a Platonic model and the role in it of the Ideas, by bringing out the weakness of their presumed closeness on these questions. The Epicureans, because of their view that only bodies and void exist are shown to be not only in utter disaccord with Plato, but in particular to have utterly rejected the presence in reality of items which exist differently from the sensible objects of experience. The Stoics, in contrast, though they too are in disaccord with the Platonists, are shown however to have taken in the Platonic lesson that not everything which is real is real in the same way¹⁵.

The claim therefore that only bodies exist together with the rejection of the existence of additional items such as the Platonic Ideas has a different purport when attributed to the Epicureans and when it is associated with the Stoics.

2. *Epicurean elimination of the Ideas*

2.1. *Physics*

Plutarch's *Adversus Colotem* preserves at least some elements of the Epicurean criticism of Platonist doctrine, which is in particular directed against the theory of the Ideas. Plutarch frames the Epicurean criticism of the Ideas as a general criticism of the Platonic commitment to a notion of being which is distinct from the way objects of experience appear to be. Thus, in contrast to the Platonic distinction between really being (*ὄντως ὄν*) and only accidentally participating in the being of something else, namely in the Idea (*ἀπ' ἄλλου συμβέβηκε μετέχειν*

¹⁴ See PLUT., *Comm. Not.* 1073DE, remarking on this very same Stoic view that it is *ἄτοπον*.

¹⁵ Without this contrast implying in addition an actual polemic between Epicureans and Stoics on the question of the status of the Ideas, it is Plutarch who contrasts the one with the other, as representatives of different views amongst the 'new' philosophers who distinguish themselves from previous pre-Hellenistic schools, see ΚΕΧΑΓΙΑ 2010, p. 139 on the scarce attention given at first by the Epicureans to the Stoics in general, which changed over the successive generations into pointed attacks on questions of epistemology and ethics. On the general reaction against 'the classical schools' of the Hellenistic philosophers, cf. FREDE M. 1999, pp. 783 ff.

τοῦ εἶναι), being, in this way, not particularly «solid»¹⁶, for Epicurus there is only one way of being: the way in which the objects of experience exist¹⁷.

Plutarch moreover, roots Plato's ontology and the introduction of the Ideas in an original Parmenidean theory about being, which Plato's theory of Ideas is said to expose «even better»¹⁸: namely that being is one, unchanging and eternal, and thus in every way opposed to the way perceptible objects of experience seem to be¹⁹. In this way, the attack on the Epicurean view is carried out in two steps. Firstly, against Parmenides, Plutarch refers to Epicurus' acknowledging the existence of void together with body, in direct opposition to the Parmenidean view of the sole possible existence of the One and the express rejection of the void (1114A)²⁰. The Epicureans are thus shown as sustaining a plurality of beings against the single being of Parmenides. Further down, against the Platonic theory, the Epicureans are said to hold to a single understanding of being, valid for body and void alike. Plutarch's strategy of attack consists in suggesting that the Epicureans are deluding themselves by attributing the same kind of existence to opposite things, such as intangible void and tangible bodies, or eternal, indestructible, atoms and generated, destructible aggregates (1116D). It is here that he notes that even the Stoics acknowledge that there are two kinds of ways of being.

¹⁶ Cf. at PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1115E: the being of participants is not solid (βέβαιον) enough since because of their ἀσθένεια, they can easily lose it.

¹⁷ Thus PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1116D, ironically: σοφώτερος δὲ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ὁ Ἐπίκουρος ἢ πάντα ὁμοίως ὄντα προσαγορεύει.

¹⁸ Cf. PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1114F. and BIGNONE 2007, p. 20.

¹⁹ Plutarch says of Parmenides that, «even before Plato and Socrates» (ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ Πλάτωνος καὶ Σωκράτους ἔτι πρότερος συνείδεν [...], *Adv. Col.* 1114C) Parmenides had distinguished between an ever-changing, inconstant nature which is accessible by perception and object of mere opinion, in contrast to the unmoved, ungenerated world of what is νοητόν. See also PLOT., *Enn.* V 1 [10] 8, 15-26, presenting Parmenides as a forerunner of Platonism insofar as he recognized the distinction between true being and the world of sense, identifying knowledge with (true) being.

²⁰ Plutarch thus goes back to a tradition of setting the Atomists' claim about void, revisited by Epicurus, against an Eleatic view to the contrary. Thus Aristotle interprets the Atomists' move to make void something real, as a reaction against the Parmenidean positing of being as one and void as nothing at all, see ARIST., *GC*, A 8, 325a1-32: what is, on the Eleatic theory, covers all there is, the Atomists deny this principle, by claiming that what is, is not all there is, for there is void as well, cf. HUSSEY 2004, p. 251.

The double axis Plutarch takes in his refutation of the Epicurean view, from the Parmenidean point of view and from the Platonic, is meant to bring out an internal contradiction in the Epicurean understanding of being, as that which is seemingly both one and not one. But the way Plutarch confronts the Epicureans serves, in effect, to bring to light all the better the view of ontology, in two basic steps, which characterizes Epicureanism in direct reaction against Platonic ontology. The Epicureans thus sustain (i) that the void exists (against Parmenides), and (ii) that it exists unqualifiedly, on a par with the existence of body (against Plato). In this way, the Epicurean whole, τὸ πᾶν, reaches saturation. It is therefore a rather different whole from the Parmenidean whole, which is one and immobile²¹. In acknowledging the existence of void, the Epicureans, like their Atomist forerunners, acknowledge the existence of what is in motion, given that the existence of void is inferred from the realization that there is motion²². Thus the Epicurean whole is continuously in motion, and it is in this way that it is eternal and infinite, in exact opposition to the Parmenidean whole.

The Platonic theory of Ideas is considered, by Plutarch, to be an elaboration on the Parmenidean notion of being, re-articulated into a distinction between the eternally unchanging Ideas and the continuously changing objects which participate in them. In contrast, the Epicurean account of reality holds fast: what exists, what is real, is permanently and continuously changing. It is the items whose origin, for Plato, can only be traced down to their subordinate relation with the truly existing Ideas²³, which, for Epicurus, are the only existing items. These items, the ordinary objects of experience, are characterized, on Epi-

²¹ Cf. Aristotle's report of Eleatic doctrine at ARIST., *GC*, A 8, 325a14-15: ἐν καὶ ἀκίνητον τὸ πᾶν εἶναί φασι, see the description of being also in the Parmenidean poem, in DK 28B8, 3-4. On the contrast between the Epicurean characterisation of the whole and the Eleatic position, BRUNSCHWIG 1995a, p. 17.

²² EPICUR., *Her.* 40: bodies καθάπερ φαίνεται κινούμενα. Cf. further on the arguments for the existence of the void based on the perceived motion of bodies as fundamentally anti-Parmenidean, from the Atomists to the Epicureans, ASMS 1984, pp. 244-9.

²³ In Plato, this relation is sometimes considered as causal (e.g. PL., *Phd.* 100c5-6), but also as a «presence in, association with, or whatever way» (ὅπη δὴ καὶ ὅπως, PL., *Phd.* 100d3-4), elsewhere the Ideas are presented as models or paradigms (e.g. PL., *Prm.* 132d). The various configurations of the relation are recapitulated by PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1115E, but see also STOB., *Ecl.* I, 12, 2a.

curean doctrine, precisely by the unqualified existence which, on the Platonic account, only the Ideas can be said to have. For the Platonic Ideas, which truly are, and in this sense are unqualifiedly beings, exist independently, described as αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά, a formula which indicates the way of being of the Ideas as being the kind of thing they are, independently from the existence of any other kind of item²⁴. In a similar way, Epicurus identifies the independent status of body and void as καθ' ἑαυτό²⁵, existing in their own right.

It would seem as though the bodies and void which constitute all there is, on Epicurean doctrine, coincide with the mass of objects forever in becoming of the Platonic view. But, bodies and void on one side and the Platonic τὰ γινόμενα on the other, are not the same kinds of things. The objects of experience, on the Platonic view, are not αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά, themselves for themselves²⁶. In addition, their state of always becoming some thing or other, denies them any form of unity since they participate in many Ideas: thus body, in Plato's *Phaedo* (80b3-5), is described as never being the consistently same sort of thing, being in addition to destructible («mortal», «capable of dissolution» are the terms used), also said to be πολυειδές, multiform²⁷. For Epicurus, bodies are distinct units considered as wholes (καθ' ὅλας φύσεις, *Her.* 40). The properties a body might have (being of this or that colour, having this or that weight, being hot, etc.) – which, on the Platonic account are what makes an object a participant of many Forms, a mixture as opposed to the simplicity of the Form – are, for Epicurus, properly constitutive of the unity, or whole nature of a body²⁸.

²⁴ E.g. PL., *Smp.* 211b1; *Phd.* 78d5-6; *Prm.* 129d7-8.

²⁵ Cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 67 for void as καθ' ἑαυτό and *Her.* 40, 68-71 for the distinction between bodies as καθ' ἑαυτά and their accidents which cannot even be thought of independently from them; also S.E., *M.* X, 220.

²⁶ Cf. the account of the perceptible objects in part of the secret doctrine in PL., *Th.* 157a8-b3, of which it is utterly mistaken to speak of as being any kind of thing.

²⁷ The description of body as πολυειδές at PL., *Phd.* 80b4, recalls the description of the Form of Beauty, at PL., *Phd.* 78d5, as μονοειδές (simple, uniform). The term πολυειδές thus distinctly characterizes the participants' lack of uniformity in contrast with the simplicity of the Ideas. Cf. MANN 2000, pp. 107 ff., on the characterisation of the participants as Anaxagorean mixtures.

²⁸ EPICUR., *Her.* 69: «But [we must consider] the whole body as a whole, to have its own permanent nature made up from all of its properties, not as if they had been assembled together». See also LUCR., *DRN*, I, 451-454, and S.E., *M.* X, 221-222.

There are two ways in which an Epicurean can speak of body. One way is as a *συμπεφορημένον*, a collection of smaller particles or masses – body being «a larger aggregate of particles [ὄγκοι], either primary or in any case smaller than the whole body itself»²⁹. This is a body's material constitution: aggregates of atoms, or aggregates of aggregates (*μείζον ἄθροισμα*, *Her.* 69). But the material constitution does not make up the whole nature of the body. There is thus another way to speak about a body, precisely not as something which is assembled together (οὐ... *συμπεφορημένον*), but rather as a whole made up of its properties. It is the properties which make a body the kind of body it is, a man, a stone or a chair, and which thus guarantee the unity of the body³⁰.

The distinction between the material constitution and the «whole nature» of a body thus marks out the difference between bodies according to Epicurus and bodies as mixtures, on the Platonic account. For the mixture, designated as «aggregates» (*ἄθροίσματα* as in the *Tht.* 157b9), which constitutes everyday items such as men or stones, is an aggregate of qualities identified as those perceptible features which make a thing seem the way it seems (e.g. white or hard, cf. *Tht.* 156e). The Epicurean properties of a body are thus quite different from the features or qualities which, on the Platonic account, are, at times, perceived in an object of every day experience – these need to be explained in terms of their subordinated relation to a universal Idea. The properties, on the Epicurean account, are particular to each body they belong to³¹. It is not the properties which aggregate to form a body, but the atoms. It is inexact, what is more, to talk of properties as 'belonging to' a body, for, in view of their properly forming the whole nature of a body, they are rather described as «escorting» (*συμπαρακολουθοῦντος*) the whole body, whilst never being separated from it (*Her.* 69) – until the body itself changes so as not to be that body any longer. For when the material constituents of the body, that is, a certain aggregate of atoms, change configuration (*μετασχηματίζονται*), then those properties vanish (*ἐξ ὅλου τοῦ σώματος ἀπολλύμεναι*, *Her.* 55), though the

²⁹ Cf. the following lines from previous quote at EPICUR., *Her.* 69; see also *Her.* 41 on the material constitution of bodies as *συγκρίσεις*.

³⁰ Cf. BETEGH 2006, p. 280, distinguishing between a physical and a metaphysical analysis of bodies.

³¹ Cf. on the passage from a notion of aggregates of qualities to aggregates of atoms, BARNES 2003, p. 343.

atoms remain and can re-configure into different aggregates. A body's properties exist and perish with the whole as a whole. Thus there is no such thing as sweetness (γλυκύτης) independently from what is sweet. Sweetness, according to Epicurus, does not exist, only the sweet, τὸ γλυκύ, of the honey exists, in virtue of making up the nature of honey. The example is taken from a passage in Philoponus, discussing the Epicurean criticism of the argument from Plato's *Phaedo* in which the soul is compared to a certain kind of harmony (cf. *Phd.* 95e5 ff.). Epicurus is said to have set up a parallel argument using τὸ γλυκύ and honey instead of harmony and soul (PHLP., *In De An.*, 143, 4-144,21). Without entering here into the details of the argument³², it is rather what is missing in Philoponus' account of Epicurus which is relevant to us, and which reveals a point about Epicurus' understanding of the status of qualities. Philoponus reasons in Aristotelian terms, considering sweetness as a «simple» (ἀπλοῦν) quality and the sweet as standing for a qualified substrate³³. Epicurus, in dismissing sweetness, dismisses the possibility of an independent existence of a property. By considering only the sweet, he merely individuates a property of honey, actually indistinct from the whole nature of honey, though it is possible to identify it and distinguish it from other properties – each property having its own mode of apprehension (ἐπιβολή, *Her.* 69). Though Epicurus borrows an Aristotelian way of speaking when he says that properties are «predicated» (κατηγορεῖται) of bodies at *Her.* 68, his view is very much un-Aristotelian with regards to the relation of property and that of which it is a property; for the two are not distinct so that the one could exist without the other. Body, for Epicurus, is not considered as a substratum or a bare substratum which properties are said of, or in which properties are said to be, but rather a body is considered to be all its properties at once, as a whole³⁴.

In such a highly particularized ontology, the Ideas, or indeed any form of supra-sensible entity, are eliminated from the Epicurean sys-

³² See for this, with a discussion of the Epicurean view of the soul: WARREN 2006, pp. 240 ff., suggesting Strato as the source for this Epicurean argument.

³³ Cf. for an Aristotelian origin of this analysis, ARIST., *Cat.*, 8, 9b19-27, and on the paronymous relation between a quality which can be expressed by an abstract noun and that which is qualified expressed by the neuter article + adjective, *Cat.*, 8, 10a27-32, cf. MANN 2000, pp. 191 ff.

³⁴ Cf. LONG 1986, p. 20; BETEGH 2006, p. 280, referring to Epicurus as a bundle theorist.

tem, as the view put forward is an ontological levelling: no item in reality is more real, or exists more properly than another. Body (atoms or aggregates of atoms alike) and void exist in the same and only way a thing can exist, whilst their properties share in their existence insofar as they are the particular properties of particular beings.

In this way, though void is defined negatively compared with body as «incorporeal» (*Her.* 67) and having an «intangible nature» (ἀναφής φύσις, *Her.* 40), compared with the tangible and perceptible nature of body (*Her.* 39, 44), void is not the contrary of body. Indeed, as it has been shown³⁵, a careful re-elaboration of the ontological status of void carried out by Epicurus transforms the original notion promoted by the Atomists. From the Atomists' acknowledgement of there being a sense in which the void, which is not-being, is³⁶, Epicurus establishes void not as a being which is not-being, but as existing καθ' ἑαυτό alongside body. Void, in this manner, is no longer the contrary of body, as the well-known Atomist formulations tend to suggest, (e.g. ὄν καὶ μὴ ὄν or δὲν καὶ μηδέν)³⁷. Rather, to apply Betegh's distinction between the physical (material constitution) and metaphysical (whole nature) analysis of body (see note 31), there is (compared to body) a negative physical analysis of void as empty space³⁸, and there is a metaphysical analysis, according to which void has its own kind of nature which distinguishes it from body, namely its characteristic as an «intangible nature» (ἀναφής φύσις)³⁹. In this way, Sextus can speak of an atom as

³⁵ Cf. INWOOD 1981, pp. 273-85; SEDLEY 1982, pp. 175-93.

³⁶ Cf. ARIST., *GC*, A 8, 325a27-28 and a31: τό τε κενὸν μὴ ὄν [...] κενὸν γὰρ εἶναι.

³⁷ Cf. ARIST., *GC*, A 8, 325a27-28; PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1109A, cf. BARNES 1979, pp. 316 ff.

³⁸ Void is sometimes referred to in the texts by different terms such as space or room – these merely express different states void finds itself in relation to body, so that these are different names for the same thing, depending on circumstance, cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 40; S.E., *M. X.*, 2.

³⁹ SEDLEY 1982, pp. 189-90, gives supports to the physical account of void, thereby also defending the MS order of LUCR., *DRN* I, 433-435, reading I, 433 f.: «Nam quodcumque erit, esse aliquid debet id ipsum/ augmine [...] dum sit», which sets void on a par with body as both are said to have *augmen*, which Sedley translates as extension. Their contrasting features (e.g. intangible nature in contrast to tangible) are further distinguishing characteristics of their extension: thus in meeting with another body, in the case of tangible extension, there is an increase to the body, in the case of intangible extension, the body which is met with passes through it. Intangible extension is thus properly *vacuum*, i.e. free space, and for this reason, Lucretius says, it is called «*inane*»,

«colliding» (πελάζειν) with either void or body, that is to say approaching either void or body in a similar way. What differs is the effect of the collision, in the one case, with void, the atom passes through it, in the case of colliding with another body, it rebounds⁴⁰. The intangible nature is not a feature separable from void, but properly characterizes the kind of being void is – as the sweet nature of honey characterizes the honey as the kind of body it is and is inseparable from that whole. The characteristics of void, namely its being incorporeal and intangible distinguish the kind of being void is from the kind of being a body is but they do not guarantee or establish the actual existence of void, just as the honey being sweet does not establish the existence of honey. In the latter case, it is the atoms set up according to a certain configuration, in the case of the void it is, negatively with respect to body, either as the space in which the atoms are not (void), or the space occupied by atoms (place), or the space through which the atoms pass (room). Void thus has an ontological status such that entities which may share some of the features void has, e.g. incorporeality and intangibility, cannot however have any claim to existence, without having the appropriate negative physical description as well. Thus in particular, items such as the Platonic Ideas, though they are incorporeal, are eliminated from reality given the lack of a physical description for them⁴¹.

2.2. *Knowledge without universals*

Since all there is in the world is body and void, these are also all there is to know and understand about reality. The Epicurean account of being as presence or absence of atoms makes for a theory of knowledge which does not require the existence of imperceptible Ideas or any non-empirical entity, but rather, fundamentally, relies on sense-perception. For the Epicurean account, in line with one of the main points of contention of the anti-Parmenidean tradition of the first Atomists⁴², takes sense-perception as a faithful purveyor of information⁴³.

void (LUCR., *DRN* I, 435-439) in virtue of the kind of extension it has, i.e. being intangible, but not because of its mere intangibility.

⁴⁰ Cf. S.E., *M.* X, 223.

⁴¹ Cf. also SEDLEY 1982, p. 190.

⁴² According to the doxographical tradition that is, cf. ARIST., *GC*, A 8, 325a23-24: where Leucippus' theory is said to be «in accordance with sense-perception». See BIGNONE 2007, pp. 5 ff.; SEDLEY 1980, p. 13.

⁴³ Cf. D.L. X, 32; S.E., *M.* VII, 210.

Thus the senses which, on the Parmenidean and Platonic account, report an ungraspable, constantly changing realm of sensible objects⁴⁴, are the points of anchorage, on Epicurean doctrine, for the possibility of a reliable and truthful understanding of reality – so much so that the existence of what is imperceptible, the void and the atoms, is derived from the observations made by the senses⁴⁵.

One of the reasons put forward by Epicurus for trusting in sense-perception is that it is independent from the mind, «being irrational and without memory»⁴⁶. The senses thus present the perceiver with an impartial, un-interfered with image of reality, guaranteeing an objective presentation of reality. It is precisely what sense-perception lacks, namely some form of rationality and the use of memory, which makes knowledge of reality possible. For it is part of the nature of the soul, in particular the part composed of the «finest of particles» which cover the «capacities of the soul», to have thoughts (διανοήσεις)⁴⁷ – thoughts which rely on sense-data as a basis for further reasoning⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ Cf. on the rejection of the senses as untrustworthy, Parmenides' Poem, in DK, 28 B7, 3-5, more explicit on this point is Melissus, acknowledging that we perceive change, e.g. from hot to cold and therefore concluding: δῆλον τοῖσιν, ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἐωρῶμεν [...] οὐ γὰρ ἄν μετέπιπτεν, εἰ ἀληθὴ ἦν (DK, 30B8, 3-5); see BARNES 1979, pp. 233-7. On the distinction between the imperceptible Ideas which can only be grasped by the mind and the ever changing perceptible particulars, see for example PL., *Phd.* 79a1-4, and for a neat summary, see for instance Cicero's account of the Platonic distinction at CIC., *Acad.* I, 31-32 spoken through the mouth of Antiochus.

⁴⁵ Though the details are far more intricate, the basis for the proof of the existence of the void is grounded on our perceiving that bodies are in motion and that nothing counter-witnesses (ἀντιμαρτυρεῖν) that appearance, cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 39-40; S.E., *M.* VII, 214. Philodemus (in *Sign.* viii, 26-ix, 3) gives a version which exemplifies the method of sign-inference by similarity, appealing to our experience of bodies as being in motion under certain conditions established through ἐπιλογισμός (a kind of reasoning based on experience and the phenomena, «empirical reasoning» in SEDLEY 1973, pp. 27 ff.) to conclude that motion is impossible without void, cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 32 on methods of inference, and BARNES 1988, pp. 95-8 for a general overview of this method of inference from our experience to what is not apparent.

⁴⁶ Cf. D.L. X, 31; S.E., *M.* VII, 9.

⁴⁷ Cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 63, and D.L. X, 66 on the rational part of the soul located in the chest.

⁴⁸ Further reasoning of the kind which can lead, say, to demonstrating the existence of what is not perceptible, like the void (cf. note 46), but also of the atom itself which

As for memory, it plays a central role for what a person thinks, as it is repeatedly mentioned by Epicurus, whether in reference to remembering the main tenets of Epicurean doctrine⁴⁹, or remembering the *προλήψεις* or preconceptions a person naturally has in order to subsequently have the right beliefs and keep away from confusion and error⁵⁰. Thus, for Epicurus, sense-perception alone does not provide knowledge of reality but rather the fundamental information in order to reach knowledge. For, crucially, the form of reasoning Epicurus has in mind is based on sense-data (*Her.* 32), as is the notion of memory he is interested in. It is a deviation from sense-data which brings on error and false beliefs⁵¹.

This rapid overview is relevant to our present purposes in bringing forward one main point: namely that, in acknowledging certain 'mental capacities' (in the main, a form of reasoning and memory) in addition to sense-perception, the objects of knowledge do not shift to an intelligible realm⁵², but rather, on the contrary, are all the more tied down to what is observed⁵³. For it is possible, according to Epicurus, to recognize in the observable reality, with the help of memory and *λογισμός*,

is not itself perceivable. See FREDE M. 1990, pp. 241 f., contrasting this form of reasoning, grounded on sense-data and memory, to logical inferences which characterize dialectic from Plato to the Stoics.

⁴⁹ Cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 35, 36, 45.

⁵⁰ E.g. at EPICUR., *Her.* 82 on the necessity to remember the true nature of the gods, i.e. the *πρόληψις* of the gods (as it is referred to at EPICUR., *Men.* 123-124) so as to have the right belief or *δόξα* about them; or EPICUR., *Pyth.* 95, on remembering the method of plurality of explanations. It is thus *προλήψεις* together with sense-perception, and also feelings (*πάθη*) which are considered as standards of truth (cf. D.L. X, 31).

⁵¹ Cf. D.L. X, 34; S.E., *M.* VII, 210; VIII, 9: perception is always true, it is beliefs, *δόξαι*, which can be true or false according to whether they are in agreement with what we can perceive and whether there is no counter-evidence.

⁵² As with the Parmenidean view (cf. DK, 28 B 8, 35-36) developed by Plato, e.g. at *R.*, V, 477a2-4 on the knowability only of what completely is, i.e. the Ideas, as opposed to the senses which lead to mere opinion, see also *Phd.* 79a1-4, d1-7; *Sph.* 246b7-8, where the Friends of the Forms refer to the Ideas as *νοητά*.

⁵³ Cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 38: *τὰς αἰσθήσεις δεῖ πάντως τηρεῖν*: «We must on all accounts, stick to our sense-perceptions, that is, quite simply to the actual apprehensions of the mind [*διανοίας*] or of any other criterion [...] so as to make deductions [*σημειωσόμεθα*] regarding both that which awaits confirmation [*τὸ προσμένον*, cf. D.L. X, 34] and that which is not apparent [*ἄδηλον*].»

certain regularities which are the basis for knowledge – without these being immanent or separate universals. Thus, the distinction made by Aristotle in the first chapter of the *Metaphysics*, namely between experience on the one hand which yields knowledge of certain particulars (*Met.*, A 1, 981a9), and art, or science, which is of universals and of which particular individuals are instances (*Met.*, A 1, 981a10-12 and a16) – and which a person can have also without experience, given that an art can be taught (*Met.*, A 1, 981b9) – is resolved, on the Epicurean account, into one unique path towards knowledge. For experience is the art or science which is able to yield knowledge of regular and generic features of reality, exhibited by the individual beings which compose it, without this knowledge being limited to a specific knowledge of this or that individual. It is possible to have knowledge on the basis of experience, without there being universals and thus without knowledge being of universals.

2.3. *The capacity of the mind*

As we have seen, reality according to Epicurus is not identical to the changing and uncertain realm of the sensible objects for Plato, though the two should coincide, insofar as the objects contained in them are the same, namely those which are accessible through sense-perception, the *ὁρατά* as Socrates calls them in Plato's *Phaedo* (79a6-7)⁵⁴. However, the senses, on the Epicurean view, present us with a different sort of spectacle from what the senses are said to perceive on the Platonic account. Whereas on Plato's view, what is perceived is multiple and contradictory to the extent that it makes the perceiver «feel dizzy» (*Phd.* 79c6-8) from the objects' multiple participation in different Forms, these same objects, on the Epicurean account, present a unified whole, knowledge of which can only lead to *ataraxia* and certainty (EPICUR., *Pyth.* 85, 8-10).

What is perceived is, in effect, a certain cluster, a bundle, of properties which make up the individual bodies, as indeed bodies are perceived through their properties (*Her.* 68), not being something different from the properties which make up the whole body they are⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ An expression which is echoed in Epicurus (τοῖς ὁρατοῖς, EPICUR., *Her.* 68), but crucially designates only one part of the bodies in reality as there are also the atoms which are not 'visible'.

⁵⁵ Body is primarily perceived through touch (cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 50; CIC., *Nat. D.*, I, 49; PHLD., *Sign.*, xviii, 3-8), whilst other senses, such as sight or smell, perceive its shape and size and colour, fragrance. Cf. SEDLEY 1989, pp. 123-34, esp. p. 126.

Thus, together with the emphasis on the perceptibility of the properties, there is also an emphasis on their being received by the perceiver not as distinct kinds of properties, but as forming, together, a whole nature. Epicurus (*Her.* 69) describes this whole in concrete terms, talking of a body's «permanent nature» formed by all its permanent properties which «follow along with the whole» (συμπαρακολουθούντος τοῦ ἀθρόου). It is thus of the whole that we have a conception (κατὰ τὴν ἀθρόαν ἔννοιαν). Indeed, it could not be otherwise, given that there is no other way of existing, apart from the way body and void exist. Properties cannot have any form of additional or derivative existence from the bodies they are properties of: «They are not some other kind of incorporeal items existing in addition to body»⁵⁶. Were they to exist in addition to body, Epicurus would be granting, or forced to grant, some form of separate existence to properties, which would weaken considerably the difference of the Epicurean system from a basic Platonic and Aristotelian model. But for Epicurus, as we saw, there is no sweetness outside of sweet honey, nor resistance distinct from a body, nor intangible nature distinguishable from void⁵⁷, hence no possibility for the existence of a separate universal property such as 'intangibility' or 'blueness'.

The formulae in *Her.* 69 all point towards considerations about body which go beyond the actual perceiving of distinct properties, the ἐπαισθήματα mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (D.L. X, 32)⁵⁸: the distinct perceptions which cannot refute one another, and attest the truth, or trustworthiness of all perceptions. Rather, on the basis of the different ἐπαισθήματα (e.g. red colour perceived through sight, sweet perfume perceived through smell, velvety texture perceived through

⁵⁶ Cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 69: οὐθ' ὡς ἕτερ' ἄττα προσυπάρχοντα τούτῳ ἀσώματα, a claim repeated a few lines below (*Her.* 70) in describing what the non-permanent properties have in common with the permanent properties, namely that neither they, as the latter, are «invisible or incorporeal» (οὐτ' ἐν τοῖς ἀοράτοις καὶ οὔτε ἀσώματα). See also *Her.* 40.

⁵⁷ See LUCR., *DRN*, I, 451-454.

⁵⁸ The term is authentically Epicurean, as a fragment from the *PHerc.* 1042, at *fr.* 26, 34 Arrighetti, attests, in which there is talk of the ἐπαίσθημα βέβαιον of objects of reality (τῶν ὑποκειμένων). And see in EPICUR., *Her.* 53, talk of ἐπαίσθησις referring to a precise mechanism which enables a person to perceive an external object, namely the perception of the actual current of particles, the εἶδωλα, which that object emits.

touch etc.), a perceiver has what Epicurus calls an *ἔννοια*, a conception, say, of a rose (*Her.* 69). And indeed, a rose is a rose, i.e. a whole, not a juxtaposition of properties. Thus Epicurus insists, with the repeated use of *ὅλον* and *ἄθροον* especially in the discussion of the status of properties, that a body is really a whole or a whole is really a body, repeating twice in less than ten lines, that what is referred to as the *ὅλον* is «by us, called body» (*Her.* 70, 5 and 71, 4-5). Thus it is our mind, our way of thinking, which enables us to grasp the body as the whole it really is; for an *ἔννοια*, elsewhere referred to as an «*ἐπίνοια*» (*Her.* 45, also D.L. X, 32), corresponds to the further stage after sense-perception, in which reasoning and memory have a prominent role in forming a mental presentation of reality. The passage from perceptions, («irrational and without memory») to the conceptions a person has, is described in the following manner: as always proceeding from sense-data with the addition of the mind's arrangement of the data, through direct experience (*περίπτωσις*), or by analogy (*ἀναλογία*), by resemblance (*ὁμοιότης*), or by composition (*σύνθεσις*) and eventually also with some form of reasoning (*τι καὶ τοῦ λογισμοῦ*, in D.L. X, 32).

The link between what exists, what is observed, and conceptions is such that what can be conceived exists in that it necessarily can be, if not directly perceived, then at least deduced to exist on the basis of perception: such is the case of void, or infinity (*Her.* 57). In contrast, what cannot even be conceived of, cannot therefore exist, for it is neither directly perceived nor deducible from what is observed: such is the case for the separate existence of properties; they are not perceived separately and hence, separate existence is inconceivable for them (*οὐδ' ἐπινοηθῆναι δύναται, Her.* 40)⁵⁹. In this way, Epicurus attributes to the mind the capacity to present to itself, in the form of *ἔννοια*, *ἐπίνοια*, or *προλήψεις*, what there is in reality.

Conceptions and preconceptions are thus the result of a certain arrangement in the mind of sense-data. One indication of what such an arrangement consists in is the Epicurean distinction between permanent and non-permanent properties⁶⁰. The latter are perceived and

⁵⁹ Another example is the impossibility that an atom becomes visible which makes the notion of a perceptible atom inconceivable (*οὔτε [...] ἐπινοῆσαι, EPICUR., Her.* 56). See BARNES 1988, pp. 125 f. on the empirical basis of the Epicurean notion of inconceivability and on inconceivability implying necessary inexistence.

⁶⁰ The distinction between *συμβεβηκότα* and *συμπτώματα*, EPICUR., *Her.* 68-71; S.E., M. X, 221-227; LUCR., *DRN*, I, 449-458.

perceivable just as the permanent properties are, as Epicurus insists on with the marked emphasis of a *litotes* (οὐτ' ἐν τοῖς ἀοράτοις, *Her.* 70). Yet they are distinguished from the permanent properties by their not contributing to the whole nature of the body they are the properties of (*Her.* 70). Since they are perceived in the same manner as the permanent properties, it is not on the basis of perception that they are distinguished but at the level of the mind's reception and organisation of these perceptions, though the distinction between them is real⁶¹. The way a perceiver can come to recognize the difference is through a certain mental processing of sensory information, capable of identifying the whole nature of a body and, distinct from it, what does not constitute that whole, though those non-permanent elements are part of what is perceived of a body⁶². The latter thus properly deserve the name of «accidental property». Epicurus expressly reverts to «the most common usage» (κατὰ τὴν πλείστην φεράν, *Her.* 70) to designate these non-permanent properties as συμπτώματα, as if conceding to a general tenet of philosophy that there are accidental features, though the συμπτώματα have no separate existence from a body. In this way, knowledge based on sense-perception, appears possible insofar as the mind is capable of distinguishing between what forms a whole body and without which the body is destroyed, and what can come and go, whilst the body remains the whole thing it is⁶³. Here again, we can see the difference between the atomic constitution of a body, from the physical point of view and its characterisation as the specific body it is through its permanent properties (the metaphysical point of view). For a body is destroyed once its permanent properties disappear (ἀπολλύμεναι), but its material constituents, the atoms, remain and merely change their configuration. None of the properties of the body

⁶¹ As the phrase at EPICUR., *Her.* 71 recalls: «[...] and we should not banish from what exists this self-evidence, namely that [the σύμπτωμα] does not have the nature of the whole of which it is the property [...] nor does it have the nature of the [properties] which permanently escort a body» (καὶ οὐκ ἐξελατέον ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος ταύτην τὴν ἐνάργειαν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει τὴν τοῦ ὅλου φύσιν ἢ συμβαίνει [...] οὐδὲ τὴν τῶν αἰδίων παρακολουθούντων).

⁶² See in BETEGH 2006, p. 281, note 36, a hint as to the possibility of προλήψεις playing the role of criterion between essential and accidental properties.

⁶³ Cf. LUCR., *DRN*, I, 457: «The coming and going [of the accidental properties] leave the nature [of the whole] intact» («Adventu manet incolumis natura abituque»); see further BARNES 2003, p. 357.

remain or have any connection – they do not ἐνυπάρχειν as Epicurus says – with the individual constituent atoms which make up the body whose whole nature they contribute to form⁶⁴.

Having ἔννοιαι, ἐπίνοιαι, or what, at some point in his philosophical development, Epicurus starts to designate as προλήψεις⁶⁵, i.e. conceptions of the objects of reality, is the capacity to recognize certain regularities in these objects so as to distinguish the whole from the accidental. If we have a conception of Socrates say, we are able to recognize Socrates whether he is pale or tanned, fat or thin, and we are also able to distinguish him from anyone else, once we receive the sufficient sense-data. The whole nature of Socrates, is one such regularity which the mind is able to recognize by having a conception of it. Thus, on having, at different occasions, a perception of Socrates which differs from the conception one has, a person can distinguish between an accidental feature of Socrates and the regular, whole nature of Socrates. Thus προλήψεις play a central role in the Epicurean theory of knowledge, «without which nothing can be understood, or questioned or discussed» (CIC., *Nat. D.*, I, 43).

But there is a fundamental ambiguity which characterizes the status of προλήψεις, namely their being merely, but crucially for their truthfulness, a certain accumulation of perceptions, and thus faithful mental presentations of reality, whilst at the same time being the result of some form of mental organisation of sense-data⁶⁶. As such, the Epicurean προλήψεις mark a first stage towards a conceptual view of generic items insofar as we have προλήψεις of natural kinds. However, given that developing προλήψεις of generic kinds relies on an accumulation of experiences and thus reflects an ever broader familiarity with reality, the Epicurean step towards conceptualism is limited in virtue of its

⁶⁴ Cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 55 and *supra*.

⁶⁵ Cf. SEDLEY 1973, pp. 14-7 and p. 21. Cicero thus interprets the force of the prefix προ- as indicating a form of primitive possession we would have of προλήψεις. Cicero speaks of Epicurean preconceptions as «insitas vel potius innatas» (CIC., *Nat. D.*, I, 44), with «innatas», rather than taken as 'innate', corroborating the sense of *insitas* suggesting the naturalness of the development of a person's preconceptions. Cf. ASMIS 1984, p. 69 and pp. 71 f., suggesting «innatus» is Cicero's translation of the Greek ἔμφυτος.

⁶⁶ On the double nature of προλήψεις, between conceptual device and faithful presentation of reality, cf. GLIDDEN 1985. The Stoics attend to and give a systematic solution to these ambiguities.

empirical basis⁶⁷. For Epicurus does not proceed, as the Stoics will, to properly make the contents of *προλήψεις* conceptual representations of reality, which are thus utterly mind-dependent.

Epicurean *προλήψεις*, in some cases, are of a generic item, but not necessarily. For that of which we have *προλήψεις* cannot not be real items in reality; for the trustworthiness of *προλήψεις* depends on their being faithful presentations of reality. In this way, *προλήψεις* of generic items are *προλήψεις* which have fixed certain features of reality so as to recognize within reality natural kinds or types. These types crucially belong to reality and are not a feature of the mind. It is thus through repeated experience and familiarity with the objects of reality that a person acquires the *προλήψεις* of these natural kinds: e.g. of man, horse, or cow⁶⁸ but presumably also of individuals⁶⁹. If we have the *πρόληψις* of Plato we will be able to recognize him whenever we see him, distinct, say, from Theodorus, just as we can recognize a man from a horse, on the basis of our *πρόληψις* of man, though it is not of a particular man. With experience, the distinction between the whole and the accidental grows in degrees of generality. Thus the conceptions a person has of the whole nature of a number of particular items, through their similarity, become a preconception of a generic type. For this generic type is itself perceived as a whole which serves as a criterion by which to distinguish accidental properties of individual observed items. After having acquired the conceptions on the basis of which a person can distinguish Plato from Socrates, the preconception of generic man is formed, which the Epicureans describe as being «of this sort of shape»⁷⁰. This sort of shape is neither Socrates' nor Plato's in particular, but of both as well as of all human beings, including those who have yet never been perceived. Each individual human being will present to the senses a series of accidental properties which can be distinguished from the generic whole they can all be conceived to be. Thus, the accidental properties which are perceived, or will be perceived, of individuals will be properly recognized as such. It is thus

⁶⁷ Cf. BARNES 1988, pp. 127 f.

⁶⁸ Cf. ASMIS 1984, p. 286; GLIDDEN 1985, p. 199.

⁶⁹ Thus S.E., *M.* VII, 212 gives 'Plato' as an example where Diogene Laertius, in a parallel passages speaks of the kinds 'horse' and 'cow': though Sextus does use here the word *πρόληψις*, it would seem he is speaking of the same thing as Diogene Laertius, cf. ASMIS 1984, p. 63; GLIDDEN 1985, p. 205.

⁷⁰ Cf. S.E., *M.* VII, 267.

on the basis of his πρόληψις of the natural kind, tree, that a European Epicurean will be able to truly identify as a tree the birch tree he walks past, as well as the baobab he might some day see if he travels to Madagascar. He presumably will not however, be able to recognize each kind as a birch and a baobab specifically, if he does not have the additional preconceptions of each of these. Yet, on the basis of the πρόληψις of tree, he will be able to describe the differences between them as different kinds of trees, and not as merely two completely different objects of perception.

Some of the examples of προλήψεις correspond to what there are Platonic Ideas of. In this way, the Epicurean criticism of the Ideas is complete. For Epicurus can consistently incorporate into his system based on sense-perception, the items Plato and Aristotle consider to be both indispensable for an account of reality, and at the same necessarily distinct from the material or sensible aspect of reality. Προλήψεις are Epicurus' answer not to what universals are or what the role of a universal is – he has shown in his physics that there are no such things as universals or Forms – but rather to the question of how human beings become familiar with certain regularities which are clearly perceived and which structure the constant flow of atoms⁷¹. Thus, all there is to the notion of a universal, on the Epicurean account, is a certain pattern which we can, partially⁷², grasp, as a result of our preconceptions, based on observation. For these regularities are perceivable, in contrast with the Platonic disclaimer, such that it is possible, «there is time» says Diogenes of Oenoanda⁷³, to register the way bodies appear to us. There are προλήψεις of items which are of a generic or universal nature, but that is so because, on observing what there is in the world, it is possible to form conceptions of natural kinds according to

⁷¹ Cf. Epicurus' comparison of the regularity of the motion of the sun and the moon with our everyday life, explaining the first regularity by the second, at EPICUR., *Pyth.* 97.

⁷² The celestial phenomena for example are less systematically and clearly explainable than the theories concerning ways of living, or physics, cf. EPICUR., *Pyth.* 86.

⁷³ Cf. DIOG. OEN., *fr.* V, col. 2, 8-3,1 (M.F. Smith). Diogenes refers to a view held by some Platonizing Peripatetics (col. 1, 13-col. 2, 8) according to which, because of the speed with which the objects of reality flow by, they are impossible to grasp. The Epicureans, he claims, agree that there is a flow of the items in reality (τὴν μὲν ῥεῦσιν αὐτῶν ὁμολογοῦμεν) but consider the speed of the current not too fast that there is no time to grasp the way each nature appears to the senses.

which reality appears to be organized⁷⁴. Thus, it is not the Ideas, that one should look to (βλέπεσθαι), or be aware of, but rather to what one has in one's mind (τὰς βλεπομένας προλήψεις, *Her.* 72)⁷⁵.

A person need not look to (βλέπεσθαι) his προλήψεις whilst looking at (βλέπειν) reality. Epicurus thus sets out a more accessible standard of knowledge and understanding of the world. For a person reaches a perfect balance by sticking to what he sees in reality and to his προλήψεις which present him with that reality. A πρόληψις is thus not unchangeable like a Platonic Idea, but depends on how things are in the world at the time the πρόληψις is formed, as is exemplified with the πρόληψις of justice⁷⁶. In *KD* 37, Epicurus considers the possibility that at some point in time, what seemed to be useful to a community and thus in accordance with the πρόληψις of justice, ceases to be so. However, until that moment, all that occurred was in accordance with the πρόληψις for anyone who looks at the reality of the times (τὰ πράγματα βλέπουσι). Since in fifth century Athens, society considered it just that there should be slaves, we, at a later date in history, should take it that the life of fifth century Athenians was in accordance with the πρόληψις of justice. It is the πρόληψις of justice we have from our

⁷⁴ Cf. GLIDDEN 1985, pp. 211-3.

⁷⁵ See ASMIS, 1984, p. 35, on the parallel usage of βλέπεσθαι by Plato and Epicurus: the former often uses the verb and cognate form ἀποβλέπειν to designate the contemplation of the Ideas (e.g. *Pl., Men.* 72c7-8; *Euthphr.* 6e4-5; *R.* VI, 484c9). Epicurus, in contrast, urges students of his philosophy to «look to» the προλήψεις, or the πρῶτον ἐννόημα as at *Her.* 38. At *Her.* 72, Epicurus refers to our βλεπομένας προλήψεις.

⁷⁶ The πρόληψις of justice is a πρόληψις of an accidental property, derived from the distinction between a generic whole, in this case the πρόληψις of a just community, and the accidental properties which distinguish one particular community from another, namely differences in each particular's πρόληψις of justice: Cf. *KD* 36: «Generally, justice is the same for all, for it is what was found to be useful for the reciprocal relations of a community; in particular cases, [...] it does not follow that the same is just for everyone» (κατὰ τὸ κοινὸν πᾶσι τὸ δίκαιον τὸ αὐτό, συμφέρον γὰρ τι ἦν ἐν τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους κοινωνίᾳ· κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἴδιον [...] οὐ πᾶσι συνέπεται τὸ αὐτὸ δίκαιον εἶναι). Accordingly, it is on the basis of what is witnessed (τὸ ἐπιμαρτυρούμενον, *KD* 37), that the πρόληψις of justice for each community is formed and on the basis of which, violations to justice, for that community, can be recognized. Thus the paragraph continues: «[...] and should what is useful according to law change, but which for a certain time fitted the preconception, in that time it was no less just for those who do not disturb themselves over empty words but look to reality». Cf. GLIDDEN 1985, p. 210.

society which has changed according to what in the observable reality has changed. In this way, *προλήψεις* are checked by the reality to which they are tied. Thus, what we observe is no less a measure of our *προλήψεις* as our *προλήψεις* function as a standard for what we observe.

Presumably it is less likely that our *προλήψεις* of natural kinds should change in this manner, but the example of the *πρόληψις* of justice shows how distant from the notion of a separate universal *προλήψεις* are. For the latter depend on reality and can eventually themselves alter in accordance with it, whereas a universal Idea is such in virtue of never altering, regardless of any change in the sub-lunar reality. For Plato, what there is to understand about justice is the Idea of Justice which is not at all relative to circumstantial practices.

Epicurus indicates the role of the mind in understanding and recognizing a regular structure of reality. But on his view, the mind is never free from the way things appear to the senses and indeed Epicurean concepts and preconceptions can never serve as standards of truth without a direct or indirect attestation of the senses. The Stoics appropriate for themselves some of the mentalist or conceptualist terminology fused into philosophical discourse by the Epicureans, but altering considerably the purport of the doctrine by giving it a radically conceptualist bent⁷⁷.

3. *The Platonic Ideas in the Stoic ontological system*

The Stoics take the view that whatever other schools of thought consider genera and species to be, whether Ideas or kinds of substances, they cannot actually be anything other than concepts in the mind, i.e. a way our rational minds generalize over what there is in reality. They discuss the Platonic Ideas precisely in relation to concepts, saying that the Ideas are nothing more than concepts. Plato himself refers sometimes to the Ideas as genera and species⁷⁸, attributing genera and species a particular status in ontology, namely an existence in reality, distinct and apart from individual sensible objects. In response, Aristotle questions the plausibility of having genera or species existing sep-

⁷⁷ Cf. GLIDDEN 1985, p. 200.

⁷⁸ E.g. PL., *Prm.* 129c2; *Sph.* 253d1-3 where a division into *γένη* and *εἶδη* is understood in the following lines, 253d5-e2 as the division between different Ideas (*ιδέαι*). Cf. HADOT 1968, 1, p. 215.

arately from the particular objects of everyday experience⁷⁹. Aristotle himself, in the *Categories*, considers genera and species as secondary substances, the kind of items which are said of many things – a characterisation which, in the *De Interpretatione*, is attributed to universals, τὰ καθόλου⁸⁰. When the Stoics therefore say that genera and species are concepts, they enter a debate about what there is in reality and specifically, whether, and how, a kind of non-sensible entity can exist. Their view about concepts as what the Ideas actually are, reflects their preoccupation with the Platonic notion: by rejecting the Ideas from reality, they do not eliminate them from their system but rather find a place for them as concepts in the mind (ἐννοήματα)⁸¹, restricting thus their role to the expression of a mental capacity to organize reality.

Though the Stoics share with, or take up from Epicureanism certain terms and notions relevant to a form of conceptualism⁸², the theory of concepts and conceptions they develop runs parallel to Epicureanism rather than in contrast, or in reaction to it. Unlike Epicurus' use of the term ἐννόημα (*Her.* 38) which seemingly is interchangeable with ἔννοια further down in the same letter the Stoics make a clear distinction between ἔννοιαι and ἐννοήματα, conceptions and concepts, using

⁷⁹ In ARIST., *Met.*, K 2, 1060a5, ps-Aristotle uses the expression παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα γένη ἢ εἶδη which is merely a more synthetic repeat of the aporia at *Met.*, B 4, 999a26-34 in which Aristotle brings out the clash between the necessity of positing a universal element (καθόλου τι) which allows for the possibility of knowledge and at the same the impossibility of having separate genera which are παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα.

⁸⁰ Cf. ARIST., *Cat.*, 5, 3b16-18 and *Int.*, 7, 17a39-40. Thus, Alexander commenting on the continuation of the aporia from *Met.* B 4 quoted in the above note, speaks of genera and species as universals (τὸ καθόλου, τουτέστι τὰ γένη καὶ εἶδη), see ALEX. APHR., *In Met.*, 211, 28, also 218, 7-9.

⁸¹ See STOB., *Ecl.* I, 12, 3; PS.-GAL., *Hist. Phil.* 25, 5: οἱ δὲ Σ τ ω ι κ ο ἰ ἐννοήματα ἡμέτερα τὰς ιδέας εἶναι νομίζουσιν; SYRIAN., *In Met.*, 105, 22-26; CALCID., *In Tim.*, 294, 11-16 where the Stoics are accused of «a Platone usurpantes».

⁸² See DYSON 2009, pp. 1-5 and pp. 111-28 about various circumstances in which the Stoics appropriate for themselves Epicurean terms, pointing at Chrysippus as the first Stoic to have integrated into Stoic terminology terms such as πρόληψις. Indeed Plutarch (PLUT., *Comm. Not.* 1059BC) reports of Chrysippus that he «dispelled completely the confusions about preconceptions and conceptions». See also DYSON 2009, p. 89, noting Epicurean influence on the Stoics for the account of the ways things can be thought of (by similarity, direct experience etc.; cf. *supra*, p. 272), compare D.L. X, 32 and D.L. VII, 52-53.

the term ἐννόημα in a precise way such that ἐννοήματα correspond to the contents of ἔννοιαι.

3.1. *The distinction between concepts and conceptions*

The distinction between ἔννοιαι and ἐννοήματα is a fundamental distinction which makes the Stoic view a properly conceptualist view. It is in failing to make some similar form of distinction that the Epicurean theory of preconceptions falls short of being a properly conceptualist theory. On the basis of their morphology, ἔννοια and ἐννόημα, both derived from the same verb ἐννοεῖν (to have in one's mind), are distinguished by their suffixes: the suffix -ια in ἔννοια forms a noun corresponding to the activity expressed by the verb it derives from, whilst the suffix in -μα is suggestive of the result of the action expressed by the verb⁸³. Thus an ἐννόημα is the result, or product, and hence, the content of what one has in one's mind, i.e. the ἔννοια. The morphology in effect, mirrors the real distinction the Stoics make between a conception and what the conception is of⁸⁴ – a distinction which the Stoics set up on the basis of a difference in ontological status.

Having a conception involves both the passivity and the activity of the soul, in particular of the ἡγεμονικόν, the commanding faculty, to which «conceptions get registered» (εἰς τοῦτο [τὸ ἡγεμονικόν] μίαν ἐκάστην τῶν ἐννοιῶν ἐναπογράφεται, Ps.-PLUT., *Plac.* 900B). The use here of ἐναπογράφεται expresses the concrete way in which the soul is impressed on so as to form conceptions. Being impressed on, being thus acted upon, is one of the features which proves the corporeality of the soul, for the Stoics consider that only what can act or be acted upon is a body⁸⁵. In the following lines in the passage from the *Placita*, the ἔννοιαι are described as an accumulation of impressions retained by the soul through memory. In this way, the soul is also active in a certain way in forming conceptions, some arising «naturally», others «through learning and effort». The latter distinction is the basis for the Stoic differentiation between their notion of a πρόληψις and the ἔννοιαι, distinguished on the basis of the way they are formed, or their causal histories, but not as to the kind of thing they are, namely states or dispositions of the corporeal soul which have been registered to it.

⁸³ Cf. CHANTRAINE 1979, p. 287.

⁸⁴ Cf. SEDLEY 1985, pp. 88 f.

⁸⁵ See D.L. VII, 56: πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ποιῶν σῶμά ἐστι; CIC., *Acad.*, I, 39; SEN., *Ep.* 117, 2. Cf. BRUNSCHWIG 1988, pp. 67-73, see more below.

Conceptions in general, including preconceptions, correspond to a collection of similar (ὁμοειδεῖς in *Plac.* 900B) memorized impressions and as such appear to be themselves, a kind of impression⁸⁶. Accordingly, conceptions share the same characterisation as impressions, namely as the soul being impressed in a certain way (cf. D.L. VII, 50). In the lines from D.L., a series of verbs describe the literal stamping of an impression onto the soul with heavy insistence on the ἐναπο- prefix, vividly expressing the corporeality of the soul and what the interaction with the soul is like: an impression is thus said to be ἐναπομεμαγμένη καὶ ἐναποτετυπωμένη καὶ ἐναπεσφραγισμένη⁸⁷. There is a difference between these descriptions and the internal registering of conceptions which ἐναπογράφεται indicates, though both are suggestive of the soul's being acted upon in some way.

In a passage from Plutarch's *De Sollertia Animalium* (961CD), we are told that the Stoics call ἔννοιαι those thoughts (νοήσεις) which are stored inside (ἐναποκειμένας), whereas thoughts we are currently thinking, which are thus activated in actual thinking (κινουμένας) are called διανοήσεις⁸⁸. Being stored inside thus adds some precision to the *Placita*'s ἐναπογράφεται, indicating the capacity of the soul to accumulate a stock of conceptions which can be activated in the form of a διανόησις. From the conception we have of man as having two legs, or being rational, we can have the thought, the διανόησις, that the thing coming towards us is a man, once we have activated our conception⁸⁹. In calling ἔννοιαι, νοήσεις, as distinct from an activated thought, a διανόησις, the Stoics indicate that conceptions are a particular kind

⁸⁶ See PLUT., *Comm. Not.* 1084F who reports that a conception is φαντασία τις.

⁸⁷ Chrysippus' attempt to attenuate the concreteness of the imprinting of impressions on the soul, by saying that it would be more precise to call it, not τύπωσις, but ἀλλοίωσις ('alteration'), arises from a concern for the practicability of having the same body receiving simultaneously a variety and possibly contradictory, impressions. Alteration makes for a more flexible soul, according to him, for the same body can receive innumerable alterations, like air, see D.L. VII, 50, and S.E., *M.* VII, 229-231.

⁸⁸ See also GAL., *Inst. Log.*, III, 3; PLUT., *Comm. Not.* 1085AB; PS.-GAL., *Def. Med.*, XIX.381, 12-13: ἐπίνοιά ἐστιν ἐναποκειμένη νόησις, νόησις δὲ λογικὴ φαντασία.

⁸⁹ GAL., *Inst. Log.*, III, 2, reports a similar version of this, retaining the main contrast between ἔννοιαι characterized as «being at rest» (ὅταν δὲ ἡσυχάζουσαι τύχωσιν, ἔννοιαι) and the activation of these (κατὰ κινήσεις) which, it seems, he calls νοήσεις (ὀνομαζέσθω τοῦτο ἡμῖν νόησις), but also reporting that ἔννοιαι are also called νοήσεις (πολλάκις μέντοι καὶ τὴν ἔννοιαν νόησιν ὀνομάζουσιν οἱ Ἕλληνες).

of νόησις. For every rational impression corresponds to a νόησις (D.L. VII, 51), but conceptions are a particular kind of rational impression. They accordingly correspond to a particular kind of thought. The Stoics seem thus to designate a general class of items as νοήσεις which correspond to any rational impression; it is as a sub-division of νοήσεις in general, that they distinguish one particular kind, the conceptions, which also end up being called νοήσεις, by a not uncharacteristic duplication of heading and sub-heading terms⁹⁰. The specificity of conceptions is that they are stored inside the mind, or as Galen says «are at rest» in the mind, ready to be activated when necessary. The capacity to think thus relies crucially on the capacity of the soul to stock conceptions and preconceptions and thus be disposed in the appropriate way, i.e. ready to activate the appropriate conception at the appropriate occasion⁹¹. Thus, in registering conceptions to itself, the soul is both active and passive, as the verb ἐναπογράφεσθαι conveys: it appears to be a specifically Stoic term, mostly used in the Middle form, aptly expressing the soul's simultaneous activity and passivity⁹². Its activity consists in generalizing over individual impressions, remembered and collected together; its passivity consists in being in the state or disposition which enables a person to have thoughts about the world and constitutes thus the basis for the possibility of knowledge.

The distinction between a state of mind we have, an ἔννοια, and the content of that conception, the ἐννόημα, appears thus to be a distinction between a corporeal state and something which cannot itself be corporeal, not acting or being acted upon in any way. Concepts themselves thus are not corporeal. Yet, on Stoic doctrine, not being corporeal does not make them as such, incorporeal.

3.2. Corporeals and incorporeals

It is common enough to find the Platonic Ideas referred to as incorporeal, for indeed they are the exact opposite of anything cor-

⁹⁰ E.g. the Stoic definition of the good «in general» (κοινῶς) and the good «in particular» (ιδίως), cf. D.L. VII, 94-95; S.E., *M.* XI, 25-27.

⁹¹ Chrysippus held that reason, λόγος, is «a collection [ἄθροισμα, thus in concrete terms] of certain conceptions and preconceptions», as reported by GAL., *PHP*, V.445, 10 K. See further BRITAIN 2005, p. 170.

⁹² ἐναπογράφεσθαι becomes used almost exclusively to refer to the soul's own activity, e.g. what gets registered in the heart in ORIG., *Exp. Prov.*, PG XVII, 221 A,1; GREG. NYSS., *C. Eun.*, II,1, 282, 3, where a thought gets registered into our memory.

poreal. Thus, in comparison to bodies, the Friends of the Forms in Plato's *Sophist* say that Forms are incorporeal (ἀσώματα, *Sph.* 246b8). Later accounts of Platonic doctrine present the Ideas as incorporeal substances (οὐσία ἀσώματος)⁹³ or directly as «the incorporeal Ideas» (τὰς ἀσωμάτους ιδέας) as often by Sextus – a qualification of the Ideas presented as a well-known and obvious Platonic tenet, with no further explanation required⁹⁴. It could be thought that what the Stoics propose to substitute for the Ideas, namely concepts, would likewise be incorporeal, especially given that they are not corporeal. However, to say of something that it is incorporeal, on Stoic doctrine, is a very specific thing to say. The Stoics are thus intent on distinguishing between the Idea as a universal which is reduced to a concept in the mind, and the status of an incorporeal which the Ideas are said to have.

The Stoic notion of an incorporeal is based on the distinctive view the Stoics have on what a corporeal item is. Namely, the Stoics say bodies, and only bodies, exist. The Stoics support this claim by introducing a criterion for corporeality: if something is corporeal, then it is capable of either acting on something or being acted upon by something. This criterion of corporeality is very similar to the criterion of being which is suggested to the reformed Giants in Plato's *Sophist* (at 247e1-3). In Plato, the criterion of being is supposed to serve as a means of persuading the Giants that also incorporeal things such as justice, wisdom or the soul exist, though they are not bodies. But the Stoics use the very same criterion to establish the exact opposite of what it is intended to establish in the *Sophist*. Rather than extending existence beyond sensible objects, the Stoics extend corporeality beyond the sensible objects, namely to such items as qualities and souls which, according to them, are bodies⁹⁵. As a result, also souls and qualities exist in so far as

⁹³ See STOB., *Ecl.* I, 134, 9.

⁹⁴ See for instance S.E., *M.* VII, 119; IX, 364-365; X, 258.

⁹⁵ Thus, for the Stoics, the soul is corporeal, see TERT., *De An.* V, referring to Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus on the corporeality of the soul; NEMESIUS, *Nat. Hom.*, II, 20, 14-17 and II, 21, 6-9 and II, 22, 3-6; other references to Zeno and Cleanthes together by Longinus in EUS. CAES., *Praep. Evang.*, XV, 21, 2; CALCID., *In Tim.*, 220. On the corporeality of qualities: SEN., *Ep.* 106, 3 ff., and *Ep.* 117, 2-15; PLUT., *Comm. Not.* 1085E and *Virt. Mor.* 441C. Qualities and soul mentioned together as corporeal: STOB., *Ecl.* II, 7, 5b7=; SIMPL., *In Ph.*, 530, 11-14. In this manner, the Stoics «dare unashamedly to claim that everything is a body», a step which Theaetetus said the Giants would not dare to take (in PL., *Sph.* 247c2).

they can satisfy the criterion for corporeality. As a further result, anything which cannot either act on or be acted upon is not a body. And thus this leaves out a certain number of items which, because they do not meet the criterion for corporeality are not themselves bodies and therefore do not exist. These are the incorporeals.

Though the incorporeals cannot be beings, they are still something and that is precisely what they are said to be: they are things or some-things: *τινα*. Each incorporeal is a something because there just is such a thing as place, time, void and *lekta* – only that these things are not beings since they are not bodies and consequently do not exist. Therefore, the Stoics say that they subsist (*ὑφιστάσθαι*) or in certain cases, that they obtain (*ὑπάρχειν*)⁹⁶. These verbs serve to express the parallel form of reality the incorporeals have, distinct from the existence of bodies. Thus place, time, void and *lekta* subsist. But they subsist, or obtain, in and for themselves, i.e. they depend for their subsistence on no other item, incorporeal or corporeal, to subsist or exist in addition to them. The incorporeals thus have a certain ontological status, and as such, form with bodies the ontological framework which makes up our world. This is the reason why Plutarch says that we make use of the incorporeals «in life and in philosophy»⁹⁷. For we need them and use them in life just as much as we need and use the corporeal items. They subsist as they subsist, just as bodies exist as they exist, with or without philosophers explaining the world with their help. This is the claim which actually underlies Plutarch's defence of the Platonic Ideas: they are part of reality and not a philosophical tool. He thus sees in the Stoics' distinction a parallel with Platonism insofar as they too acknowledge the use, therefore the reality, of items which are not perceptible.

From some point onwards, the status of the incorporeals as *τινα* became the minimum requirement for having a status in reality – a requirement which all bodies, being on a higher ontological level, satisfied automatically. Hence the *τι* came to be regarded as the supreme genus under which everything which is real, i.e. which has any type of metaphysical status, has a place. But there is a question, and there are doubts, as to whether this doctrine of a supreme genus *τι* was part of the original, orthodox, Stoic schema. The majority of passages referring to this theory are by late non-Stoic authors who are either criticizing the Stoics or mixing some Stoic traits with teachings from

⁹⁶ Cf. note 10 above.

⁹⁷ Cf. PLUT., *Adv. Col.* 1116BC, and *supra*.

other schools⁹⁸. On the other hand, as Brunschwig argues, the theory of the supreme genus which these late authors are refuting appears to be already widespread and well-known. This tends to suggest that the theory is already quite established by the time these authors attack it⁹⁹. We will not go further into the question; what is important for our purposes is to bring to light a certain confusion which may occur with regards to the use in Stoic contexts of the notion of a thing.

From what has been said about the status of incorporeals, it follows that they lack being, though still retaining a certain ontological status, namely as somethings. An incorporeal will moreover only correspond to one of the four types identified by the Stoics, namely time, place, void or *lekta*. In talking however of the $\tau\iota$ as the supreme all-encompassing genus, the notion must have a much broader application than the strict sense of a thing which indicates the subsistence of incorporeals, as it must cover bodies as well. There is thus a possible confusion between a broader and stricter sense of a thing in these contexts. The Stoics – or at least those Stoics who agreed on establishing the supreme genus thing over bodies and incorporeals – retain from a strict sense of a thing, only the notion of a thing as the mark of belonging to reality¹⁰⁰. It is the strict sense of a thing which is relevant here, as it is precisely in contrast to things in the sense of incorporeal subsistents that the Stoics describe concepts.

3.3.1. *Things and not-somethings*

Concepts cannot be incorporeal. For they do not subsist in any way but, born in the mind, the result of the formation of a conception, they are utterly mind-dependent items. It follows that they are not even things or somethings; they have no ontological status, hence they are designated as ‘not-somethings’, οὐτινα¹⁰¹. In the definition of an ἐννόημα given by D.L., this non-status describes the dependence of concepts on the mind as being no more than fabrications, figments of the mind:

⁹⁸ See ALEX. APHR., *In Top.*, 301, 19 ff. and 359, 12-16; ARETHAS, *Schol. in Arist. Cat.*, 215 (= p. 139, 27 in SHARE 1994); PHILO, *Leg. Al.*, III, 175; SEN., *Ep.* 58, 15.

⁹⁹ See BRUNSCHWIG 1988.

¹⁰⁰ An additional case of a characteristic duplication of senses, cf. note 90.

¹⁰¹ E.g. S.E., *M. I.*, 17; SIMPL., *In Cat.*, 105, 11: [...] οὐτινα τὰ κοινὰ παρ’ αὐτοῖς λέγεται.

A concept is a figment of the mind, being neither a something or something qualified but a quasi-something and quasi-qualified, as when the mental image of a horse arises even though none is present (D.L. VII, 61)¹⁰².

Though here, as in the passage from Stobaeus mentioned in the footnote (note 102), the Stoic formula οὔτι appears within a negative coordination as οὔτε τι οὔτε ποιόν, in other texts which refer to this Stoic way of speaking, it is the οὔτι formula which covers the Stoic notion of this peculiar non-status. Not being in addition «something qualified» follows from the non-status of not-somethinghood, we will not therefore spend much time here on the formula οὔτε ποιόν, but rather concentrate, as the Stoics do themselves (as also their immediate commentators e.g. Sextus), on the notion of an οὔτι. A not-something is not nothing at all. The Stoics indeed mark the difference between nothing at all: οὐδέν which is the commonly used negative pronoun, and their choice of the rarer pronoun οὔτι, not-something. There is no plurality of nothing – and indeed there is no plural of οὐδέν – whereas there can be many not-somethings, as the plural form οὔτινα testifies. The concepts thus find themselves in a peculiar position: on the one hand they have no ontological status, on the other, they are not nothing at all.

The approach taken here differs from the claims made in two very different and influential papers on the topic: firstly from the paper by BRUNSCHWIG 1988 already mentioned, insofar as the focus is different and leads therefore to a shift in point of view, and secondly from a paper by CASTON 1999 from which the considerations made here differ quite radically. The guiding thread in Brunschwig's paper is the defence of an original Stoic doctrine of a supreme genus τι, which is deduced, to a great extent, from an analysis of Stoic interpretations of elements of Platonic ontology, mostly from the *Sophist's* Gigan-tomachia. An important part is devoted to Stoic considerations about the Platonic Ideas and their subsequent relegation to mind-dependent items, being assigned not non-existence, but not-somethinghood, as they are said to be οὔτινα. Brunschwig suggests that the notion of a not-something tends all the more to promote, by contrast, the notion

¹⁰² ἐννόημα δέ ἐστι φάντασμα διανοίας, οὔτε τι ὄν οὔτε ποιόν, ὡσανεὶ δέ τι ὄν καὶ ὡσανεὶ ποιόν, οἷον γίνεταί ἀνατύπωμα ἵππου καὶ μὴ παρόντος. See also STOB., *Ecl.* I, 12, 3, 2-4: Τὰ ἐννοήματά φασι μήτε τινα εἶναι μήτε ποιὰ, ὡσανεὶ δέ τινα καὶ ὡσανεὶ ποιὰ φαντάσματα ψυχῆς.

of something as the genus for all that is real, i.e. external to the mind: thus both incorporeals and corporeals must be *τινα*, the former placed at a basic level of reality, the latter, by satisfying *a priori* somethinghood, and possessing the highest ontological status in that they exist (cf. his p. 77). An analysis of the Platonic Ideas which become Stoic *οὐτινα* plays, in this manner, an important role in a construction or reconstruction of a Stoic theory of *τι* as the genus of reality.

However, in focusing on the peculiar nature of the concepts as not-somethings, it seems rather that Stoic descriptions of *οὐτινα* can be more precisely grasped on the basis of the stricter contrast between the *οὐτινα* and the items which minimally are something, or which are something in the strict sense, i.e. the incorporeals.

Caston, in contrast with Brunschwig, takes it as an uncontroversial assumption that the something is the highest genus in Stoic ontology¹⁰³. On his reading, the Stoics are taken to claim that concepts actually are somethings, whilst their criticism of Platonism leads them to claim that it is the Ideas which are nothing at all. Caston thus dissociates the Stoic claims about the Ideas from what they say about concepts – we shall see further down the problem with sustaining such an interpretation. The general thesis of the paper is that the Stoic genus of something is «so capacious» that it can include also things which do not exist (like the incorporeals) and things which are thought of¹⁰⁴. Thus concepts are *τινα* and the Ideas are simply eliminated from the system. He takes the presence of *ὅν* in D.L.'s formulation *οὔτε τι ὅν* (VII, 61) as an indication that concepts are merely not something existent, but nevertheless are something (CASTON 1999, p. 169). However, a quick comparison with the almost parallel text in Stobaeus (cf. note 102) shows that the *ὅν* is the participle form which corresponds to Stobaeus' infinitive (*εἶναι*) which is the definitional *εἶναι* introduced by the main clause *φασί*. Thus the structure which is more explicit in Stobaeus and abridged through the use of a participial clause in D.L., is:

¹⁰³ Cf. CASTON 1999, p. 151, in particular note 10, rejecting the arguments that the highest genus thesis is perhaps a later Stoic claim or only made by certain Stoics.

¹⁰⁴ See CASTON 1999, p. 156, attributing to the Stoics the claim that «if it possible to think of *x*, then *x* is something». In effect, Caston's approach fits more closely the Epicurean account: for an Epicurean preconception of a thing is of a real thing, since preconceptions are based on the principle that anything we can think of, or imagine owes its existence to real existence, therefore waking perceptions and dreams are put on a par, cf. EPICUR., *Her.* 51; D.L. X, 32, and GLIDDEN 1985, p. 204.

«The Stoic say that concepts are not-somethings». It is very unconvincing to maintain therefore, that the ὄν in D.L's definition has any other value than conforming with the definitional structure which underlies both texts, probably deriving from a common source. If indeed it were the case that, following Caston, concepts are somethings in virtue of being thought of – making the Stoic concepts very similar to a certain interpretation of universals as posterior (ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς) whereby the existence of universals depends on our thinking of them¹⁰⁵, some basic inconsistencies arise from what is otherwise known about Stoic concepts, namely that they are the contents of conceptions. Given that conceptions are not always «active», concepts would have to be sometimes somethings and sometimes not – τινὰ on and off. For indeed, as we saw, the conceptions are permanent dispositions of the soul, permanently present in the soul, whether they are being thought, i.e. «activated», or not. Accordingly, concepts cannot have their status depend on being thought of, for they are the permanent contents of conceptions whether the latter are thought or not, and thus whether their contents is thought of or not¹⁰⁶. There is thus a considerable difference between the existence in thought of a universal ὑστερογενές which seems to be Caston's model for concepts, and Stoic concepts¹⁰⁷.

From what we have already suggested, with the support of the following discussion of the concepts as 'not-somethings', quite the opposite claim will be made here, having taken the opposite assumption

¹⁰⁵ ARIST., *De An.*, A 1, 402b7-8, briefly hints at the possibility that the universal is either nothing at all or is posterior (τὸ καθόλου ἤτοι οὐθέν ἐστὶν ἢ ὑστερον), which a certain line of commentary has taken to refer to universals formed in the mind, thus coming after the particulars: thus, Alexander who suggests that if the existence of universals is in being thought, then, if they are not thought, they no longer exist (εἰ δὲ μὴ νοοῖτο, οὐδὲ ἔστιν ἔτι), in ALEX. APHR., *De An.*, 90, 5-8; Philoponus refers to Alexander and interprets his reading as taking ὑστερον to mean ἐννοηματικόν, universals having thereby their ὑπόστασις in thought (cf. *In De An.*, 38, 2-4). In similar terms, commentators on Porphyry's *Isagoge's* chapter 1 on genera, have taken Porphyry to treat genera as 'conceptual', i.e. 'existing in our minds' (ἐννοηματικά ὡς ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντα τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ) cf. AMMON., *In Porph. Isag.*, 69, 1-2, also referred to in AMMON., *In Cat.*, 9, 9, see also ARETHAS, *Schol. in Porph. Isag.*, 52 (= p. 30, 4-5 in SHARE 1994).

¹⁰⁶ CASTON 1999, p. 172 indeed agrees that concepts are «intentional objects» of ἔννοιαι.

¹⁰⁷ See also BARNES 2003, p. 43, on the difference between concepts and posterior universals.

that it is not obvious that there is a supreme genus $\tau\iota$, and in particular that there must be a difference, which is attested by our sources, between an all-encompassing genus $\tau\iota$ and the way incorporeals can be, in a strict sense, $\tau\iota\nu\alpha$, distinctly from the way in which existent bodies can eventually be said to be $\tau\iota\nu\alpha$ as well.

3.3.2. *Not-somethings*

In order to express the ontological peculiarity of concepts as οὐτῖνα, the Stoics resort to a peculiar expression, namely they say that the concepts are «quasi-things» (ὡσαυεῖ τῖνα)¹⁰⁸. It is almost as if the concepts were somethings, but actually they are not, they are not-somethings. To say that they are quasi-things is more a manner of speaking than an ontological category, because in fact there can be no quasi ontological status¹⁰⁹. But we do have concepts, though they are not-somethings. Therefore, saying that the concepts which we have are quasi-somethings is a way to explain the fact that we talk about them and can use them in dialectic although they actually have no ontological status. We really do have concepts but they really have no status in ontology.

Thus, not-somethings are described in contrast to somethings. On the one hand, this is because as not-somethings, there is nothing which can actually be said about them other than through negative comparison. On the other hand, it is crucial that the concepts be distinguished from things, $\tau\iota\nu\alpha$, precisely because they can be mistaken for them, as the expression «quasi-things» suggests. The distinction is crucial: for the concepts must not be assimilated to the incorporeals especially since it would be an easy assimilation to make, given that the concepts are substitutes for the Platonic Ideas commonly qualified as incorporeal.

In a passage in *Adversus Mathematicos* (M. I, 17), Sextus Empiricus poses the problem of whether something is taught by means of somethings ($\tau\iota\nu\alpha$) or of not-somethings (οὐτῖνα). The contrast between these two possibilities becomes relevant once it is clear that Sextus

¹⁰⁸ See note 102.

¹⁰⁹ Recourse to ‘quasi’ to suggest that something is not actually what it could seem to be is often made by the Stoics, cf. VARRO, *Ling.*, VI, 56 reporting that Chrysippus says of parrots, as of infants, that they do not speak but ‘quasi’-speak («negat loqui, sed ut loqui»), and Seneca’s characterisation of the mode of being of incorporeals as *quasi sunt*, in *Ep.* 58, 22, though he may not be reporting an original Stoic view, he nevertheless seems to use a Stoic way of expressing his own unorthodox view.

is opposing two items that have something in common, namely that they are both not bodies. It is as two bodiless items that they are to be distinguished one from another. The difference is that the *τινα* are incorporeals whereas the *οὔτινα* are unable even to subsist, they are *ἀνυπόστατα*¹¹⁰. The *οὔτινα* are thus directly opposed to the *τινα* as not being able to subsist as these subsist. The concepts, since they have no ontological status, are described with reference to the minimum ontological status which they cannot even reach. They are *ἀνυπόστατα*, or *ἀνύπαρκτα* as we find them spoken of by Stobaeus after reporting that the Platonic Ideas «fall under concepts»:

For the Ideas are of things which fall under the concepts, such as human beings, horses, more generally speaking, of all animals and of as many other things they say there are Ideas. But these, the Stoic philosophers say that they do not even subsist (ΣΤΟΒ., *Ecl.* I, 12, 3, 5-9)¹¹¹.

These lines provide Caston with one of his main arguments about the elimination of the Ideas on the one hand and the creation of a different notion, the concept, on the other. On his reading (CASTON 1999, p. 177 ff.), the adjective *ἀνυπόστατος* is disconnected from the previous clause, and thus cannot serve as a characterisation of concepts; the term is taken to signify the nullification of the Ideas. The parallel use by Sextus of *ἀνυπόστατα* to qualify directly *οὔτινα* however, rather suggests that it is the Ideas as concepts which are said to be *ἀνυπόστατος*, i.e. not even obtaining, which describes the non-status Ideas as concepts are relegated to – and not the flat disappearance of the Ideas from the Stoic system.

It is a characteristic Stoic practice to make use of adjectives based on the form of the verbal adjective in *-τος*¹¹². In this case, there are no corresponding verbs such as **ἀνυπάρχειν* or **ἀνυφιστάναι* from which *ἀνύπαρκτος* and *ἀνυπόστατος* respectively could derive. It is not unusual however, in ancient Greek, to create adjectives in *-τος* especially out of composite adjectives and in particular adjectives

¹¹⁰ Thus, S.E., *M.* I, 17, about *οὔτινα*: *ἀνυπόστατα γάρ ἐστι τῆ διανοία. ταῦτα κατὰ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς στοᾶς.*

¹¹¹ *τῶν γὰρ κατὰ τὰ ἐννοήματα ὑποπιπτόντων εἶναι τὰς ιδέας, οἷον ἀνθρώπων, ἵππων, κοινότερον εἰπεῖν πάντων τῶν ζώων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅποσον λέγουσιν ιδέας εἶναι. Ταῦτας δὲ οἱ Στωικοὶ φιλόσοφοι φασιν ἀνυπόστατους εἶναι.*

¹¹² Of which the word *λεκτόν* is but one example, see CHANTRAINE 1979, p. 387.

formed with the privative prefix ἀ(v)- when the simpler form of the adjective, i.e. without the privative prefix, does not exist or is created later on the basis of the pre-existing composite form¹¹³. The two adjectives ἀνύπαρκτος and ἀνυπόστατος are perfect examples of this usage. They are but constructs made out of the privative prefix ἀ(v)- attached to the verbal adjectives in -τος derived from ὑπάρχειν and ὑφιστάναι, the two verbs which mark, as we have seen, the ontological status of the incorporeals.

It is notable that there it is no verb which expresses the form of reality which the ἐννοήματα could have, as there is for the incorporeals, but only a verbal adjective. Thus, as not-somethings, concepts do not have any hold on reality. The incorporeals, by contrast, though they are not bodies and cannot act or be acted upon, still have some hold on reality insofar as they are said to subsist; there is a verb which expresses in what way they are real. But there is no verb which corresponds to the way the concepts should be thought of. It is not that they simply do not subsist – which something like *ἀνυφιστᾶσι could express, but rather that they cannot subsist. The modal nuance of the verbal adjectives ἀνυπόστατος and ἀνύπαρκτος expresses precisely this inability – the inability even to subsist. Therefore, to come back to Sextus' question as to whether it is through somethings or not-somethings that something gets taught, the answer will be that it is by means of somethings. For somethings at least subsist and therefore can be used to teach, and learn from them. In fact, it will be by means of *lekta*, one of the four incorporeals, that something is taught, as we learn from another passage in Sextus, at *M.* VIII, 409-410.

The Stoics thus go to great lengths to prove and insist on the inability to subsist of the concepts, clarifying thereby their ontological schema by distinguishing between bodies, incorporeal things and concepts as not-somethings. Their interpretation of the Platonic theory of Ideas plays a role in establishing these distinctions. The concepts we have of man, horse, animal, and so on, are but figments of our mind and the Stoics say that the Platonic Ideas merely amount to these figments. Their conversion of the Ideas into concepts is the consequence of a certain tradition of reflecting upon the Ideas and their status. Thus Zeno's

¹¹³ E.g. in *Pl., Sph.*, 249d3: ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κεινημένα, cited in CHANTRAINE 1961, p. 283. There is no such verb as *ἀκινέω from which ἀκίνητος could directly derive, as in the cases of ἀνύπαρκτος and ἀνυπόστατος.

teacher Stilpo argued against the theory of the Ideas¹¹⁴. And, from the few mentions we have, for example from Syrianus (*In Met.*, 105, 15-26), it seems that the Stoics, generation after generation, gave a certain amount of thought and attention to the Ideas¹¹⁵. Syrianus' report is a rather disordered account of various answers from various people to the question of what the Platonic Ideas are. As it appears, the people whom he cites are all Stoics, with the exception of Longinus. Since Syrianus mixes together the various generations of Stoics, going from Chrysippus to Archedemos, back to Cleanthes and then to Marcus Aurelius, mentioning Longinus on the way, there is no clear progress of thought to follow in the passage. However, it shows that the Stoics, in particular, were known to have paid special attention to the question of the Ideas¹¹⁶. They themselves, in so doing, continue the tradition of arguing against the Ideas which was practised in the schools in which Stoicism takes its roots, namely by Stilpo but also in the Cynic school, famously by Antisthenes¹¹⁷. The notion of a concept which they bring forward is the solution for the Stoics to the inconsistencies they find in the Platonic theory.

3.3.3. *Ideas as not-somethings*

The Stoics insist in particular, on the lack of ontological status of the concepts against the Platonic view of the existence of the Ideas. The Ideas are supposed to exist over and above the sensible objects and yet at the same time, since they exist, they exist alongside the other sensible objects which exist as well. In fact, it is the existence of the Ideas which is the aspect on which both Stilpo and Antisthenes themselves focus on in the arguments they advance against the Ideas. For Antisthenes, if something exists, then it should be perceivable. Since the Idea of horse, 'horseness' (ἵππότης) is not perceivable, there is no such thing as the Idea of horse. For Stilpo, from what can be gathered from the laconic argument presented in D.L. II, 119, the way he «destroys» the Ideas is by claiming that if the Idea of man exists, no particular man is said to exist, presumably because the Idea is not supposed to

¹¹⁴ See D.L. II, 119. See BRUNSCHWIG 1988, pp. 80 ff.

¹¹⁵ See also in a passage in PROCL., *In Euc.*, 395, 14-21, where Chrysippus' interpretation of the Forms by analogy with the mathematical *loci* theorems is reported.

¹¹⁶ See BRUNSCHWIG 1988, p. 78; SEDLEY 2005, p. 120.

¹¹⁷ Antisthenes who sees a horse but not 'horseness', cf. SIMPL., *In Cat.*, 208, 28-29; ELIAS, *In Isag.*, 47, 14 ff.

be a particular. Therefore, either the Idea is said to exist or individuals are said to exist, but both cannot exist together. Thus Stilpo has a certain notion of existence as being, in some way or another, related to being a particular. Thus, one basis to the arguments of both Stilpo and Antisthenes is a certain understanding of what it is for something to exist – and similarly for the Stoics, distinguishing between bodies and incorporeals on the one hand, and merely quasi-real figments of the mind on the other.

The Οὔτις Argument which the Stoics seem to have been particularly concerned with¹¹⁸, brings out the distinction between being real and being a not-something, or a not-someone in this case. In line with the way we have been talking about οὐτινα as not-somethings, we shall refer to the Οὔτις¹¹⁹ as the Not-Someone Argument – though it is far from clear that there is a direct relation between the notion of concepts as not-somethings and this paradox¹²⁰. The argument is the following: «If someone is in Athens, then he is not in Megara. But man is in Athens, therefore man is not in Megara»¹²¹. The conclusion that, if man is in Athens, then he is not in Megara, can be taken to bring out the falsity of postulating the existence of separate Ideas, like the Idea of man, but it can also be taken to show what being a particular consists in, namely that a particular can only be in one place at one time.

Understanding the argument depends on understanding what «man» stands for here. Given that in Greek adding the indefinite article is optional, one reading of the argument, with «man» being equivalent to «a man», makes up a rather common-sense inference: if a man is in Athens, then that man is not in Megara. Indeed, if Socrates is here, then he is not there. But this is hardly a paradox and thus most probably not what the Stoics mean to say. The Stoics use «man» as corre-

¹¹⁸ Cf. in the catalogue of works by Chrysippus in D.L. VII, 198, nine books explicitly on the Argument, to which should be added two books not referring directly to the argument in their title, cf. FREDE M. 1974, pp. 56 ff.

¹¹⁹ Referring to the encounter in the *Odyssey* (IX, 366 ff.), of Ulysses and the Cyclops, we maintain the modification of the accent, as Homer does, from the pronoun οὔτις to the name Οὔτις which is the basis for the play on words which the Stoics echo with this argument.

¹²⁰ Pace CASTON 1999, p. 158, for whom talk of οὐτινα directly derives from the Οὔτις paradox.

¹²¹ See SIMPL., *In Cat.*, 105, 8 ff.; ELIAS, *In Cat.*, 178, 4 ff., and also in D.L. VII, 187.

sponding to the Idea of man, man himself, and not as referring to any one particular man. Thus the argument reads such that the existence of man himself in Athens has as a consequence that man himself is not found in Megara, according to the Stoic understanding of existence. This consequence, in contrast to the former reading of «man» as «a man», is problematic. It is problematic at least, as long as one thinks that the Idea has some role to play in the world, i.e. that the Idea is somehow related to particular things. For if indeed, following the Platonists, the Idea of man is that which makes it possible, by being the cause or the paradigm¹²², for particular men to be men, then the Idea cannot be the kind of thing which is here and not there. Because there are particular men in many places, the Idea of man should somehow be at least in all the places in which the particular men are – or not have a place at all since it is not supposed to exist as the particulars exist, in a place and in a time. Indeed the Platonic Ideas are supposed to exist in a different way from the particulars.

The Stoics, Simplicius comments, are simply «ignorant of the fact that not every being has to signify a particular individual» (*In Cat.*, 105, 6). But for the Stoics, there are no degrees of being, so that every being is a being in the same way. If the Idea of man exists, then it exists like other beings exist. From this claim it could be possible to enter into a Third-Man type of argument: that there must be something which the existent Idea of man shares in common with particular men, i.e. something in addition which makes the particular men and the Idea of man, both men – and which would be another Idea¹²³. But the Stoics do not choose that line of criticism of the Ideas. Rather, what the Stoics want to claim is that by saying that Man himself exists, nobody actually exists, echoing the trick Ulysses plays on the Cyclops. But whereas with Ulysses, there is really someone who is pretending to be no one, in this case, there is really nothing pretending to be something. For underlying the argument, is the fact that there are particular men in both places all the time. Therefore, it is not the existence of the Ideas which plays any role in the existence of the particulars. For it is not that actually nobody apart from Man himself exists but that all men exist apart from Man himself. Since there is only one way of existing, it is the particular men who are existing bodies and man himself, a not-

¹²² Cf. *supra* note 23.

¹²³ See the way Aristotle sets up the argument at *ARIST., Met.*, A 9, 991a1-5.

something. He is a concept we have in our mind, made up from our experience of particular men¹²⁴.

The Stoics, by bringing out in this manner the spurious or non-status of the Platonic Idea, dismantle the grounding structure of Platonic ontology, for not only are the Ideas, from most existent, reduced to mere concepts, but, it follows, also the relation which the Ideas were supposed to have with the particulars is at best, reversed – not cancelled out however, as is the case with the ontological levelling operated by the Epicureans and hence their total rejection of the Ideas. For the Stoics, the substitution (and not elimination) of the Ideas by the concepts commits them to set up the terms of a relation between concepts and particulars. In the concluding line of our passage from Stobaeus, we have an indication of what possible re-elaboration the Stoics had in mind:

[w]hat we participate in are concepts, but we obtain cases which they call appellatives (STOB., *Ecl.* I, 12, 3, 9-11)¹²⁵.

The first clause retains the Platonic term for participation, but given what has already been said, in the text, about concepts, the relation of participation can only be a dead metaphor: with concepts as not-somethings, which do not even subsist, there is nothing to participate in. Thus, by echoing the Platonic formula, especially in this context in which the Ideas have been shown to be concepts of the mind, the Stoics bring out the emptiness of the relation of participation. At the same time, emptied of doctrinal force, μετέχειν becomes a way of speaking: saying of individual men that they participate in the concept of man, is the equivalent to saying that individual men are men¹²⁶.

It would seem that the second clause does not only add a further

¹²⁴ The Οὐτίς paradox unmasks the spuriousness of separate universal items, as such BRUNSCHWIG 1988, p. 85, interprets the argument as a «reality test» showing that also incorporeal items can «pass it», e.g. the place occupied by Socrates.

¹²⁵ τῶν μὲν ἐννοημάτων μετέχειν ἡμᾶς, τῶν δὲ πτώσεων, ἃς δὴ προσηγορίας καλοῦσι, τυγχάνειν.

¹²⁶ CASTON 1999, p. 183, speaks here of participation as a «place-holder for whatever primitive relation holds between concept and object». See also BARNES 2003, p. 138 on the possibility of a «philosophically neutral» sense of participation by Porphyry's time.

feature concerning concepts by stating that individuals «obtain cases», but rather seems to be the more precise Stoic interpretation of the uninformative relation *μετέχειν* expresses. For whereas the latter is by no means a peculiarly Stoic way of speaking and is a relation which the Stoics can only consider insofar as it is completely neutralized from a doctrinal point of view, the notion of obtaining a case (*πτώσεων τυγχάνειν*) is conspicuously technical and idiosyncratically Stoic. Therefore, the second clause seems to indicate the Stoic understanding of the relation of concept and individuals and not a different relation from the one, neutrally indicated in the first clause.

There are several texts which report the Stoic view according to which there is a difference between the body a thing is, and the case which it obtains, or bears (*τυγχάνειν* and derivatives). For example, Clement reports: what comes out of your mouth, when you say «wagon» or «house», is not a wagon or a house, but a case, a *πτῶσις*, which the actual house obtains¹²⁷. Sextus, in *M.* VIII, 12, reports that the *τυγχάνον* is the external object which the Stoics distinguish from the word «Dion» (*φωνή*), and what is signified by it (*τὸ σημαίνόμενον*); the *τυγχάνον* corresponds to the body Dion is insofar as it bears or obtains a case¹²⁸. Our passage from Stobaeus corroborates this distinction, by indicating that individuals obtain cases. Given that this is supposed to be the clause which indicates what the relation between concepts and individuals is, obtaining cases appears to be the answer: that Socrates is a man, is analysed, according to this view, as Socrates obtaining the *πτῶσις* of man. Thus, when cases are said to «fall from the generic to the specific»¹²⁹, they fall from a concept to an individual in terms of that individual obtaining a case of the concept. The *πτῶσις* thus seems to have a particularizing function: what falls from a concept, becomes, if not a particular, at least quantifiable. From the concept man, Socrates obtains the case of man, and is thus a man or one man¹³⁰.

¹²⁷ Cf. CLEM. AL., *Strom.* VIII, 9, 26, 5: οὐδὲ γὰρ τὴν οἰκίαν λέγομεν σῶμα οὖσαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν πτώσιν ἀσώματον οὖσαν, ἣς οἰκία τυγχάνει.

¹²⁸ See FREDE M. 1994b, p. 19.

¹²⁹ Cf. *Schol. in Dion. Tr.*, 230, 24 ff. See also FREDE M. 1994b, p. 18.

¹³⁰ Also from the concept itself of Socrates or 'Socrateity' – for the Stoics take also individuals to be species and thus concepts (cf. D.L. VII, 61: *ειδικώτατον δέ ἐστιν ὁ εἶδος ὃν εἶδος οὐκ ἔχει, ὥσπερ ὁ Σωκράτης.*) – Socrates, the individual, obtains a case which has fallen from the concept of Socrates; in the case of individual species, he is

What the Stoics are interested in is the way our mental capacities for generalization relies, and is grounded, on the sole existence of individuals. It is from our experience of these that we are able in the first place to form mental concepts which, in turn, are activated, or put into use, only on the basis of their relation to individual items. Thus the statement that man is a rational animal is properly analysed, on Stoic doctrine, as: there is some individual thing, a $\tau\iota$, which is a man and that something is a rational animal.

4. *Conclusion*

The comparison between the Stoic and the Epicurean criticism of Platonic ontology shows the difference between elimination and conversion of the Ideas into an ontological system which, on both accounts, denies the existence of supra-sensible items. The different forms their reactions take on, marks the difference between the Stoic view about bodies as existing and incorporeals as subsisting, and the Epicurean view that body and void alone exist. However, both accounts meet in rejecting the Ideas from reality, considering generic items to be dependent, to varying degrees, on the workings of the mind. With the theory of preconceptions, the Epicureans move towards a basic form of conceptualisation of reality, but it is the Stoics, with their concern with genera and species who propose a positive theory of universals as concepts.

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the one unique Socrates to have it, see BRUNDSCHWIG 1995b, pp. 119 ff., on the presence or absence of the article which serves to quantify over individuals obtaining a case from a concept, e.g. of the *species infima* Socrates, thus in S.E., M. VIII, 97 distinguishing between the definite and intermediary proposition on the basis of the presence or absence of the definite article before Σωκράτης in Σωκράτης περιπατεῖ.

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