Elements and Matter in Diogenes Laertius 7.137

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Abstract: A sentence in Book 7 of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives* states that, according to the Stoics, the four elements are "unqualified substance, i.e. matter." Scholars have noted that this appears to conflict with the Stoics' distinction between principles and elements. Different solutions have been proposed, from dismissing the sentence entirely to emending the text. This note proposes a new interpretation according to which the standard reading of the text can be retained.

From sections 132 to 160 of Book 7 of his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius presents the central tenets of Hellenistic Stoic physics, while citing works by many early and middle Stoics. His report constitutes a valuable piece of evidence for a school of philosophy for which we have mostly second-hand testimony. Yet, given the condensed nature of his writing, several interpretive puzzles arise in the course of Diogenes' presentation. I would like to examine one of those puzzles, which concerns a sentence at 7.137. After explaining why this sentence is problematic and assessing scholars' attempts to make sense of it, I will propose a new solution.

To understand why this sentence is puzzling, we must first examine an earlier section of Diogenes Laertius's presentation. Near the beginning of his account of Stoic physics, he describes the Stoics' theory of principles and their distinction between the principles and elements.

δοκεῖ δ' αὐτοῖς ἀρχὰς εἶναι τῶν ὅλων δύο, τὸ ποιοῦν καὶ τὸ πάσχον. τὸ μὲν οὖν πάσχον εἶναι τὴν ἄποιον οὐσίαν, τὴν ὕλην, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ λόγον, τὸν θέον· τοῦτον γὰρ ἀΐδιον ὄντα διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς δημιουργεῖν ἕκαστα. τίθησι δὲ τὸ δόγμα τοῦτο Ζήνων μὲν ὁ Κιτιεὺς ἐν τῷ Περὶ οὐσίας, Κλεάνθης δ' ἐν τῷ Περὶ τῶν ἀτόμων, Χρύσιππος δ' ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ τῶν Φυσικῶν πρὸς τῷ τέλει, Ἀρχέδημος δ' ἐν τῷ Περὶ στοιχείων καὶ Ποσειδώνιος ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ τοῦ Φυσικοῦ λόγου. διαφέρειν δέ φασιν ἀρχὰς καὶ στοιχεῖα· τὰς μὲν γὰρ εἶναι ἀγενήτους καὶ ἀφθάρτους, τὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα κατὰ τὴν ἐκπύρωσιν φθείρεσθαι. ἀλλὰ καὶ σώματα εἶναι τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ ἀμόρφους, τὰ δὲ μεμορφῶσθαι.

They think that there are two principles of the whole of things—the active and the passive. The passive is unqualified substance, i.e. matter, and the active is the reason in it, i.e. god. For this one, being eternal, crafts each thing through all of it. Zeno of Citium puts forward this doctrine in *On Substance*, Cleanthes in *On the Atoms*, Chrysippus in the first book of *Physics*, near the end, Archedemus in *On Elements*, and Posidonius in the second book of *The Physical Account*. They say that the principles and elements differ. For the former are ungenerated and indestructible, while the elements are destroyed during the conflagration. And the principles are bodies and formless, while the elements have been formed (Diog. Laert. 7.134).[1]

The Stoics posit two principles: an active principle and a passive principle. The active principle acts on the passive principle to "craft" or "construct" (δημιουργεῖν) each object in the world. The active principle is called "god" or "reason," and the passive principle is called "unqualified

[1] All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. I am using the most recent edition of the text, Dorandi 2013. The only change I have made relates to the accentuation of the word translated with "bodies" above. I have changed it from σωμάτα to σώματα, following George Boys-Stones and Katerina Ierodiakonou's editorial note in Frede 2021.

substance, i.e. matter" (τὴν ἄποιον οὐσίαν τὴν ὕλην). Since the active principle acts on the passive principle, the Stoics believe that they are bodies. For only bodies can be causes or affected by causes.[2] However, the Stoics also posit the four elements—fire, air, water, and earth. These bodies are essential to the Stoics' explanations of the natural world, as well.

As Diogenes says, the principles and elements constitute two distinct groups. The principles are formless, ungenerated, and indestructible, while the elements are formed, generable, and destructible. For example, god, the active principle, will never be generated or destroyed, while any given portion of water is generated and mutable. Diogenes Laertius mentions the Stoic conflagration as evidence of the elements' destructibility. During this period, after consuming all other bodies in the cosmos, only fire remains.[3] This shows that the elements can be destroyed.[4]

This picture is complicated by our puzzling sentence, which occurs in section 137 of Book 7:

> τὰ δὴ τέτταρα στοιχεῖα εἶναι ὁμοῦ τὴν ἄποιον οὐσίαν, τὴν ὕλην·
>
> The four elements together are unqualified substance, i.e. matter.

[2] Cic. *Acad. Post.* 1.39; Nemesius *De natura hominis* 78.7–79.2; Sext. Emp. *Math*. 9.211; Stob. *Ecl*. 1.13.1c (1.138.14–139.4 in Wachsmuth and Hense 1884 [W-H]). Frede 2021 argues that we should read ἀσωμάτους rather than σώματα in the passage above. According to such a reading, Diogenes would describe the principles as being incorporeal, while implying that the elements are corporeal. Although I disagree with Frede's argument, addressing these issues is beyond the scope of this note. Nothing that I argue here depends on whether the principles are bodies or incorporeal. For this piece, all that matters is that the principles and elements are two distinct groups of entities, which is a claim that Frede endorses.

[3] Cic. *Nat*. *D*. 2.118; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 15.18.3; Philo *De aeternitate mundi* 90–94; Plut. *De stoicorum repugnantiis* (*Stoic. rep.*) 41 (1053b), discussed below; Stob. *Ecl*. 1.20.1e (1.171.2–5 W-H).

[4] How the conflagration is meant to prove the destructibility of the elements constitutes a puzzle. Some explanation is needed, given that fire is said to be the element present during the conflagration. How could it then be destroyed in the conflagration, as Diogenes suggests? I will not attempt to resolve this issue. Instead, my target is to explain a puzzling sentence that occurs later at 7.137. This later sentence can be understood independently of how we understand this puzzling remark at 7.134. Perhaps one could use my reading of the later sentence to interpret the remark about the conflagration at 7.134, but doing so is beyond the scope of what I am hoping to accomplish here.

Diogenes Laertius appears to identify the aggregate of the four elements with something called "unqualified substance, i.e. matter." This is the same phrase that he used above to name the passive principle. However, as we saw above, the principles and elements constitute two distinct groups. This would entail that neither principle could be identified with a subset of the four elements. Yet by saying that the aggregate of the four elements is "unqualified substance, i.e. matter," Diogenes Laertius seems to do exactly this.

This apparent contradiction has been noted before. Michael Lapidge declares that the puzzling sentence "makes nonsense" out of the Stoic doctrine of the passive principle.[5] A. A. Long and David Sedley agree, in declaring the sentence "nonsensical."[6] Thus, these scholars imply that we should dismiss this sentence entirely.

Jean-Baptiste Gourinat believes we can make sense of the sentence, however.[7] He proposes that, taken in aggregate, the four elements' qualities cancel each other out. This would entail that the aggregate of the four elements is unqualified, even if each element individually is qualified. This has some plausibility. Gourinat's solution can explain how the four elements, which are clearly qualified in different ways, can be thought of as unqualified when taken together. However, it ignores the other puzzling claim implied by the sentence: that the aggregate of the four elements is the passive principle. This is impossible, given the earlier distinction between these groups. Thus, Gourinat's solution will only take us so far.

The most recent edition of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives*, edited by Tiziano Dorandi, prints the sentence above. This follows the manuscript F, the 12th century excerpt, Φ, and the Suda (s.v. στοιχεῖον), and it is the standard reading of this sentence. However, David Sedley suggests an

[5] Lapidge 1973, 265.
[6] Long and Sedley 1987, 2:278.
[7] Gourinat 2009, 67. See also Plut. *Comm. not.* 50 (1086a).

alternative.[8] He notes that the manuscript B has τινὰ in exchange for τὴν. The resulting sentence would be:

> τὰ δὴ τέτταρα στοιχεῖα εἶναι ὁμοῦ τινα ποιὸν οὐσίαν, τὴν ὕλην·

Sedley then suggests changing ποιὸν to ποιὰν. The result would be:

> τὰ δὴ τέτταρα στοιχεῖα εἶναι ὁμοῦ τινα ποιὰν οὐσίαν, τὴν ὕλην·
>
> The four elements together are a sort of qualified substance, i.e. matter.

First, let us note that the Stoics sometimes use the term "matter" to refer to bodies at a higher level of complexity than the principles.[9] Hence, with Sedley's suggested reading in hand, we could understand the puzzling sentence as identifying the aggregate of the four elements with something at a higher level of complexity than the passive principle. His use of the phrase "a sort of qualified substance" would indicate this, in contrast to "unqualified substance," which would only refer to the passive principle. Thus, the philosophical puzzle associated with the standard reading would not arise.

However, there are three points against this reading. First, I am unaware of another report on Stoic physics that uses the term "qualified substance." Thus, it would be somewhat surprising to find a lone instance of this phrase in Diogenes Laertius only shortly after "unqualified substance" was used. This latter term, on the other hand, is used several times in our sources for

[8] Sedley 2011, 62n28.
[9] See Chalcid. *In Tim.* 290.

Stoicism.[10] Second, Sedley's reading requires us to accept B's text as providing the basis for a correct reading. In support, Sedley claims that B is the "best" manuscript. Still, F, Φ, and the Suda all contain τὴν rather than τινὰ.[11] Additionally, if we adopt B's reading, we still must change ποιὸν to ποιὰν. This gives us some reason to prefer the standard reading of F and Φ, which requires no emendation, if we can somehow make sense of it. Third, there is a way to make sense of the standard reading that can resolve the puzzle raised above. Hence, the philosophical implications of the standard reading do not make it impossible. I now turn to arguing for this third point.

In discussing the puzzling sentence, it is usually taken in isolation. However, it should be read in context to be fully understood. Here is that context:

> κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν οὖν καθ' αὑτὸν ὄντα τρέπειν τὴν πᾶσαν οὐσίαν δι' ἀέρος εἰς ὕδωρ· καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ γονῇ τὸ σπέρμα περιέχεται, οὕτω δὲ καὶ τοῦτον, σπερματικὸν λόγον ὄντα τοῦ κόσμου, τοιοῦτο ὑπολείπεσθαι ἐν τῷ ὑγρῷ, εὐεργὸν αὐτῷ ποιοῦντα τὴν ὕλην πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἐξῆς γένεσιν· εἶτα ἀπογεννᾶν πρῶτον τὰ τέτταρα στοιχεῖα, πῦρ, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, γῆν. λέγει δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν Ζήνων τε ἐν τῷ Περὶ τοῦ ὅλου καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ τῶν Φυσικῶν καὶ Ἀρχέδημος ἔν τῷ Περὶ στοιχείων. ἔστι δὲ στοιχεῖον ἐξ οὗ πρώτου γίνεται τὰ γινόμενα καὶ εἰς ὃ ἔσχατον ἀναλύεται. τὰ δὴ τέτταρα στοιχεῖα εἶναι ὁμοῦ τὴν ἄποιον οὐσίαν, τὴν ὕλην· εἶναι δὲ τὸ μὲν πῦρ τὸ θερμόν, τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑγρόν, τόν τε ἀέρα τὸ ψυχρὸν, καὶ τὴν γῆν τὸ ξηρόν. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔτι ἐν τῷ ἀέρι εἶναι τὸ αὐτὸ μέρος. ἀνωτάτω μὲν οὖν εἶναι τὸ

[10] [Gal.] *Quod qualitates incorporeae sint* 4 (19.472.4); Origen *De oratione* 27.8; Plut. *Comm. not.* 50 (1086a).
[11] P, the remaining among the three oldest manuscripts, cannot settle the issue. Although Miroslav Marcovich's critical apparatus in his 1999 edition suggests that P agrees with F and Φ, from my understanding of Dorandi's apparatus, P, prior to correction, read τινὰ; after correction, the text is τὴν. Marcovich also notes that D, a 15th century manuscript, agrees with F.

πῦρ, ὃ δὴ αἰθέρα καλεῖσθαι, ἐν ᾧ πρώτην τὴν τῶν ἀπλανῶν σφαῖραν γεννᾶσθαι, εἶτα τὴν τῶν πλανωμένων· μεθ’ ἣν τὸν ἀέρα, εἶτα τὸ ὕδωρ, ὑποστάθμην δὲ πάντων τὴν γῆν, μέσην ἁπάντων οὖσαν.

(1) At the beginning, when he is by himself, god turns the whole substance through air into water. And just as the seed is contained in the generative material, so too he, being the spermatic reason of the cosmos, remains behind as such in the moisture, while making matter malleable to himself for the generation of the subsequent things. (2) Next, he first produces the four elements—fire, water, air, and earth. Zeno talks about them in his *On the Whole*, Chrysippus in the first book of his *Physics*, and Archedemus in his *On Elements*. (3) And an element is that out of which generated things are first generated and that into which they are finally resolved. (4) The four elements together are unqualified substance, i.e. matter. (5) And fire is the hot, water the wet, air the cold, and earth the dry. (Nevertheless, there is still in the air the same part.) (6) Fire, which is called ‘aether’, is the uppermost region, in which the first sphere of the fixed stars is produced, and then the sphere of the planets. After which, there is air, and next water, and earth is the foundation of everything, since it is the middle of everything (Diog. Laert. 7.136–137).

The passage begins by describing the Stoic cosmogony. This is the process by which the conflagration is extinguished and the “cosmic order” (διακόσμησις) comes about. The cosmic order is a spherical body encompassing all of matter, made up of a stratified arrangement of elemental regions. Earth constitutes the center of this body. This earth is surrounded by a watery region, which is surrounded by the air, and then fire exists at the periphery.[12] According to Zeno

[12] The cosmic order is explicitly defined in this way at Diog. Laert. 7.155. See also Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.83–85; Stob. *Ecl.* 1.21.5 (1.184.12–185.24 W-H).

and Chrysippus, who are cited at (2), the cosmogony follows a regular process. The beginning of this process is described as a change from the conflagration's fire "through air into water" (δι' ἀέρος εἰς ὕδωρ). This phrasing is repeated in all other sources on Zeno and Chrysippus's cosmogonies.[13] These sources describe a regular pattern of elemental changes after this "into water" stage. This pattern is as follows. From a mass of water, part "settles down," "condenses" into earth, and takes its place at the center of the cosmos, part remains water, and part "evaporates" into air and surrounds the watery and earthen regions.[14] Fire then ignites from the air shell and constitutes the peripheral region of the world. So, this sequence of elemental changes that follows the "into water" stage produces the concentric elemental regions in their proper arrangement such that the cosmic order comes into existence.[15]

Instead of describing these elemental changes in detail, (2) above simply states that god produces the four elements. Thus, the elemental changes that complete the cosmic order are abbreviated. But it seems clear that, in (2), "the four elements—fire, water, air, and earth" means something like "the four elemental regions that compose the cosmic order."[16] For the production

[13] Plut. *Stoic. rep.* (1053a); Stob. *Ecl*. 1.17.3 (1.152.19–153.6 W-H). At 7.142, Diogenes Laertius describes the cosmogony once again. He describes the initial change in this way: "the cosmos comes about when, from fire, substance is turned through air into moisture" (γίνεσθαι δὲ τὸν κόσμον ὅταν ἐκ πυρὸς ἡ οὐσία τραπῇ δι' ἀέρος εἰς ὑγρότητα). Presumably "through air into water" and "through air into moisture" are meant to describe the same process.

[14] These descriptions of "settling down" (ὑφίστασθαι), "condensing" (συνίστασθαι), and "evaporating" (ἀτμιζομένου; ἀναθυμιᾶται) are taken from the description of Zeno's cosmogony reported in Stob. *Ecl*. 1.17.3 (1.152.19–153.6 W-H) and from Chrysippus's description of the cosmogony preserved in Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 41 (1053a), which I discuss below. See also Diog. Laert. 7.142. For discussion, see Hahm 1985, 42–44; Harriman 2021, 535–36; Hensley 2021, 166; Salles 2015b, 18.

[15] Hence, Stobaeus begins describing Zeno's cosmogony by saying "the cosmic order of the whole" (τὴν τοῦ ὅλου διακόσμησιν) comes about by means of these changes. See Stob. *Ecl*. 1.17.3 (1.152.20–21 W-H).

[16] I once argued that this sentence conflicts with the definition of "element" at (3), and so I interpreted (2) such that it means "'the elements' *de dicto* are generated" (Hensley 2017, 379). That is, bodies first realize the role of being primary immanent components at this stage in the cosmogony (since they compose the cosmic order), and it is in this sense that "the elements" are produced. See Hensley 2017, esp. 362–63 and 379–83, and Hensley 2021, 169. I am now revising this reading in favor of the one described above. Instead of treating "the four elements—fire, water, air, and earth" at (2) as referring to "the four elements" *de dicto* in so far as the stratified elemental regions begin composing the cosmic order, I suggest that we treat this phrase as referring to the stratified regions themselves. Both options seem possible, both reflect the same underlying physical processes, and both resolve the apparent tension between (2) and (3). Furthermore, this new reading is simpler, and it will lead to a resolution of our puzzling

of these regions is what occurs at this point in Zeno and Chrysippus's cosmogonies, and (1) identifies this passage as being cosmogonic.[17]

After citing Zeno, Chrysippus, and Archedemus, Diogenes appears to define the term "element" in (3). Next, our puzzling sentence occurs at (4). We have seen that immediately above, in (2), "the four elements" means something like "the four elemental regions of the cosmic order." Thus, instead of understanding "the four elements" in the puzzling sentence as referring generally to all portions of fire, air, water, and earth, we could instead understand it as referring specifically to those regions. For, this was how it was used in the preceding context. Furthermore, in (6), Diogenes appears to describe the elements in terms of their locations in the cosmic order: fire or aether exists at the periphery, followed by air, then water, and earth is the center. Later in his account of Stoic physics, he explicitly identifies these regions in this stratified arrangement as constituting the cosmic order (Diog. Laert. 7.155). Thus, not only is "the four elemental regions of the cosmic order" a possible understanding of "the four elements" in our puzzling sentence, but it is also the most likely sense of the phrase, given the context.

This does not yet resolve the puzzle associated with the sentence at (4). For, with this hypothesis in hand, the sentence would mean "the four elemental regions of the cosmic order are unqualified substance, i.e. matter." Yet if "unqualified substance, i.e. matter" is the passive principle, the original puzzle arises again. For these elemental regions are destroyed during the

sentence at (4). Salles 2015b, 17–18, suggests that the "water" in the sentence at (2) is produced only in so far as it changes its relative location in the world order; on the other hand, it seems that fire, air, and earth would be produced in so far as they come into existence from a temporary state of non-existence. I find this reading difficult, since it suggests that "produces" (ἀπογεννᾶν) at (2) has one meaning with respect to water and another meaning with respect to fire, air, and earth.

[17] There is a debate whether the fire, air, and water that exist prior to the stage of the cosmogony described in (2) are standard elemental bodies or something else (sometimes called "proto-elements"). See Cooper 2009; Frede 2005; Harriman 2021; Hensley 2021; Salles 2015a; Salles 2015b; Salles 2020. This debate is not relevant to what I am discussing here. The claim that "the four elements" in (2) refers to the four elemental regions of the cosmic order is consistent with "air" and "water" in (1) referring to either standard elements or non-standard, proto-elements.

conflagration, while the passive principle is eternal. Therefore, the aggregate of these regions cannot be identical to the passive principle either.

However, as we noted above, there are senses of "matter" in Stoic philosophy that do not refer to the passive principle. Chrysippus himself seems to sometimes use "matter" to refer to such an object. To see this, consider the following fragment from his *On Providence* recorded by Plutarch:

> ἐνταῦθα μὲν οὖν ἀποφαίνεται πάντας τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς τρέφεσθαι πλὴν τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τοῦ Διός, ἐν δὲ τῷ πρώτῳ περὶ Προνοίας τὸν Δία φησὶν αὔξεσθαι μέχρι ἂν εἰς αὐτὸν ἅπαντα καταναλώσῃ· 'ἐπεὶ γὰρ ὁ θάνατος μέν ἐστι ψυχῆς χωρισμὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἡ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου ψυχὴ οὐ χωρίζεται μὲν αὔξεται δὲ συνεχῶς μέχρι ἂν εἰς αὐτὴν ἐξαναλώσῃ τὴν ὕλην, οὐ ῥητέον ἀποθνήσκειν τὸν κόσμον.'
>
> Here, then, [Chrysippus] declares that there is nourishment of all the gods except the cosmos and Zeus, but in the first book of *On Providence*, he says that Zeus goes on growing until all things have been consumed in his growth: 'For, since death is the separation of the soul from the body and the soul of the cosmos is not separated but goes on growing continually until it has completely absorbed matter, the cosmos must not be said to die.' (Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 39 [1052c], trans. Cherniss with changes)[18]

[18] For passages from Plutarch, I am using the text from Cherniss 1976.

According to the Stoics, the cosmos itself is a living being or animal.[19] As such, it has a body and a soul.[20] During the conflagration, the soul of the cosmos consumes its body. However, the Stoics want to maintain that the cosmos does not die, and Chrysippus argues for this conclusion in the following way:[21] (i) death is the separation of the soul from the body; (ii) the cosmos's soul does not separate from the cosmos's body; (iii) therefore, the cosmos does not die. Chrysippus's argument for (ii) is as follows: the soul of the cosmos grows continually until it absorbs or consumes matter. We must assume that an absorption is not a separation. Thus, the soul and body of the cosmos do not separate.

Chrysippus says that the soul of the cosmos consumes "matter" (ὕλην). This term must refer to the body of the cosmos. For his reasoning is that since the cosmos's soul consumes or uses up its body, it does not separate from it.[22] This cannot be validly inferred unless "matter" means "cosmos's body." So, it appears that Chrysippus, at least once, uses the term "matter" to mean "the body of the cosmos."

We could therefore understand "matter" in our puzzling sentence to mean "body of the cosmos." For Chrysippus uses the term in this way, and he was cited by Diogenes Laertius in the immediate context. Putting aside "unqualified substance" for now, and with our prior understanding of "the four elements" in hand, the sentence would mean the following: the four elemental regions of the cosmic order, taken together, are the body of the cosmos.

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[19] Arius Didymus (fr. 29) in Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 15.15.1; Chalcid. *In Tim.* 292; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.21–22; Diog. Laert. 7.142; Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.88–91, 104**.**

[20] The Stoics maintain that an animal is composed of a body and a soul. See Hierocles 4.38–40; Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.234.

[21] For discussion of this argument and its underlying logic, see Long 2021, 132–140; Salles 2009.

[22] Chrysippus only says that "the soul of the cosmos is not separated" (ἡ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου ψυχὴ οὐ χωρίζεται) and not that it is not separated *from its body*. However, given the principle put forward at the beginning of the fragment—"death is the separation of the soul from the body" (ὁ θάνατος μέν ἐστι ψυχῆς χωρισμὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος)—we should supply "the body" as the object that the soul of the cosmos is not separated from.

Should we understand the puzzling sentence in this way? One reason to do so is that this is, in fact, Chrysippus's view. Plutarch provides another fragment from Chrysippus's *On Providence*:

> λέγει δ' ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ περὶ Προνοίας· 'διόλου μὲν γὰρ ὤν ὁ κόσμος πυρώδης εὐθὺς καὶ ψυχή ἐστιν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἡγεμονικόν· ὅτε δέ, μεταβαλὼν εἴς τε τὸ ὑγρὸν καὶ τὴν ἐναπολειφθεῖσαν ψυχήν, τρόπον τινὰ εἰς σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν μετέβαλεν ὥστε συνεστάναι ἐκ τούτων, ἄλλον τινὰ ἔσχε λόγον.'
>
> In the first book of *On Providence* he says: 'For when the cosmos is totally fiery, it is directly also its own soul and ruling part. But when, having changed into the moisture and the soul that has been left behind in it, it changes in some way into body and soul so that it is composed out of these, it has another form of reason.' (Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 41 [1053b])

The claim that the body of the cosmos is the cosmic order, which is a stratified arrangement of elemental regions, is confirmed by a close reading of the passage above. In *On Providence*, Chrysippus describes the conflagration and cosmogony. During a period of conflagration, the universe is totally constituted by fire. At this point, Chrysippus says that the cosmos is only a soul—and, in fact, only a ἡγεμονικόν. Then the cosmogony occurs, which begins with great mass of fire turning into "moisture," which is water.[23] At this point, Chrysippus says that the cosmos has changed so that it is now a body and a soul, when it had first been only

[23] "Moisture" (τὸ ὑγρόν) is water. As partial proof, consider the fact that Diogenes calls the body into which the conflagration's fire initially changes "water" (ὕδωρ) (Diog. Laert. 7.136). Then, he describes how god remains behind "in the moisture" (ἐν τῷ ὑγρῷ) at this same stage. Additionally, Chrysippus himself describes the change from the conflagration's fire as "through air into water" (δι' ἀέρος εἰς ὕδωρ) (Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 41 [1053a]). So, it seems that Chrysippus and the Stoics describe the watery body into which the conflagration initially changes as both "moisture" and "water". For a different view, see Frede 2005, 228.

a soul. Thus the same change is described in two ways: (a) from only soul (b) to body and soul, and (a) from fire (b) to water. The soul, which existed in some form during the conflagration, and which is "left behind in" the water, is at least partially constituted by fire. For, first, Chrysippus believes that souls are made of *pneuma*, which is a blend of fire and air;[24] second, fire is the only substance that Chrysippus names from the prior stage that could be "left behind in" the water. Then what is the body that jointly composes the cosmos at the latter stage along with the soul? Presumably, it is the water.

This water then undergoes further changes until the complete cosmic order comes into existence, with the elements arranged in the way that Diogenes Laertius describes in (6) above. Plutarch quotes a passage from Chrysippus's *On Nature* that describes these changes:

> λέγει γὰρ ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ περὶ Φύσεως· 'ἡ δὲ πυρὸς μεταβολή ἐστι τοιαύτη· δι' ἀέρος εἰς ὕδωρ τρέπεται· κἀκ τούτου, γῆς ὑφισταμένης, ἀὴρ ἀναθυμιᾶται· λεπτυνομένου δὲ τοῦ ἀέρος, ὁ αἰθὴρ περιχεῖται κύκλῳ, οἱ δ' ἀστέρες ἐκ θαλάττης μετὰ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνάπτονται.'
> For in the first book of his *On Nature* he says: 'The change of fire is as follows: it turns through air into water. And from this, when earth settles down, air evaporates. And when the air thins, the aether is spread around in a circle, and the stars along with the sun are kindled from the sea.' (Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 41 [1053a])

Once the conflagration's fire dies, Chrysippus claims that the subsequent water changes into the stratified arrangement of elemental regions—that is, the cosmic order. For earth settles down

[24] On the claim that souls are pneuma, see Chalcid. *In Tim.* 220; Diog. Laert. 7.156; Gal. *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (*PHP*) 2.8.48; Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 2.70. On the claim that pneuma is a compound of fire and air, see Alexander of Aphrodisias *De mixtione* 10 (224.14–22) and 11 (225.6–8); Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.117; Gal. *PHP* 5.3.8.

from the water, air evaporates off from the water, and fire or aether then spreads around the periphery. Chrysippus first identifies the body of the cosmos with the mass of water that follows the conflagration; since this water transforms into the cosmic order, this stratified arrangement of elements that arises from the water appears to take on the role of the body of the cosmos.

Thus, we have confirmed that Chrysippus endorses the view that the cosmic order is the body of the cosmos. Given his use of the term "matter" as referring to the body of the cosmos, we can understand the puzzling sentence from 7.137 as expressing this fact. It does not identify the aggregate of the four elements with the passive principle. Instead, it identifies the four elemental regions of the cosmic order as being the body of the cosmos. In fact, given that 7.136–137 is a passage describing the Stoic cosmogony and subsequent cosmic order, and since Chrysippus treats the cosmogony as the blending of an animal's soul and body, this reading of the puzzling sentence makes good sense of the context. We can thus retain the standard reading of the puzzling sentence at 7.137 without attributing contradictory views to the Stoics.

However, the puzzling sentence does not merely say that the four elements are matter; it says that they are, taken together, "unqualified substance, i.e. matter." We do not have evidence that Chrysippus uses "unqualified substance" to refer to the body of the cosmos. In fact, this phrase seems to be used specifically in reference to the passive principle earlier in Diogenes' report. So how do we make sense of this?

Here is a speculative solution. Diogenes Laertius is not an unreliable source for Stoicism. That is, his goal is not to challenge or critique the Stoics; he attempts to represent them accurately. However, the Stoics are difficult philosophers. They refuse to use terms univocally. For example, "matter" is used variously to refer to the passive principle, primary matter, the

body of the cosmos, and qualified materials such as gold and bronze.[25] Perhaps Chrysippus's *Physics*, which is cited in 7.136, states that the four elemental regions of the cosmic order are "matter." Seeing this, Diogenes Laertius understandably assumes that this is the passive principle, since this is the term's most common referent in Stoicism. Thus, having already named the passive principle "unqualified substance, i.e. matter" earlier in his account, he uses this construction again to refer to what is, in his understanding, the same object.[26] In fact, the original Chrysippean view is that the four elements are "matter" only in the sense of the body of the cosmos, where this is not identical to the passive principle. Thus, Chrysippus and the Stoics would not have called the four elemental regions of the cosmic order "unqualified substance." This is Diogenes' mistake.

This speculative solution will allow us to retain the standard reading of the text, it does not require any emendations or additions, and the puzzling sentence can be understood as reflecting views that Chrysippus himself endorsed. Thus, retaining the standard text, with this interpretation in mind, is the best option in my view. The second-best option is Sedley's emended reading of the B manuscript. Still, even if this reading is preferred, understanding "the

[25] On the passive principle, see Diog. Laert. 7.134 above. For primary matter, see Chalcid. *In Tim.* 290; Diog. Laert. 7.150; Stob. *Ecl*. 1.11.5a (1.132.27–133.11 W-H). For the body of the cosmos, see Plut. *Stoic. rep.* 39 (1052c). For qualified materials, see Chalcid. *In Tim.* 290. The Stoics use other terms in many ways. See, for example, the three ways that "cosmos" is used at Diog. Laert. 7.137–138 and the three ways that Chrysippus uses the term "element" at Stob. *Ecl*. 1.10.16c (1.129.1–130.20 W-H), which generate additional puzzles.

[26] An anonymous reviewer suggests to me that we might expect "matter, i.e. unqualified substance" here instead of "unqualified substance, i.e. matter," if I am correct that (a) Chrysippus or another Stoic called the body of the cosmos "matter," (b) Diogenes Laertius has read this in one of his sources, and (c) Diogenes decides to once again use "unqualified substance." That is, we might expect "unqualified substance" as the gloss on "matter" here and not vice versa. Perhaps this is true, but it is not certain. We can expect Diogenes to make editorial choices in how he presents Stoicism. Given this, he might have chosen to use certain stock terms consistently to refer to the same theoretical entities. Perhaps Diogenes has assumed that whenever he sees "matter" in a particular Stoic work, it refers to the passive principle. Consequently, he makes the editorial choice to use "unqualified substance, i.e. matter" again, since he had already established this as the name of the passive principle at 7.134. Thus, in the puzzling sentence at 7.137, he is not placing "matter" in quotation marks as it were, with "unqualified substance" being a gloss positioned incorrectly. Rather, according to my hypothesis, Diogenes Laertius reuses his own phrase to refer to what is, in his understanding, the same object.

four elements" to mean the four elemental regions of the cosmic order and understanding "matter" to mean "body of the cosmos" sheds light on what the original Stoic theory behind Diogenes' report is. Thus, by using Chrysippus's own words, we can better understand the condensed reports on Stoic physics from Diogenes Laertius's *Lives*. Whether we adopt my interpretation of the standard reading or Sedley's alternative, the puzzling sentence at 7.137 does not make nonsense of Stoic physics.[27]

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