Phronesis

A Linguistic Muddle. Sextus' Arguments Against Universals at PH 2.227–8

--Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	
Full Title:	A Linguistic Muddle. Sextus' Arguments Against Universals at PH 2.227–8
Short Title:	Sextus' Arguments Against Universals at PH 2.227–8
Article Type:	Article
Corresponding Author:	Michele Pecorari Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa, ITALY
Corresponding Author's Institution:	Scuola Normale Superiore
First Author:	Michele Pecorari
Order of Authors:	Michele Pecorari
Abstract:	At PH 2.227–8 Sextus argues that certain entities which his adversaries hold to be one and the same for different individuals actually aren't. This he does by, among other things, considering the truth-value of sentences whose subject is a common noun, thereby drawing an interesting connection between metaphysics and semantics. In this paper, I provide a careful analysis of Sextus' arguments at PH 2.227–8 and explore the origins and limits of such a connection. In particular, I argue that the Stoics and their doctrines about universals and common nouns might be directly involved in Sextus' arguments.
Keywords:	Sextus, universals, Stoics, common nouns, essence, realism
Funding Information:	

Title: A Linguistic Muddle. Sextus' Arguments Against Universals at *PH* 2.227–8

Author and affiliation: Michele Pecorari, Scuola Normale Superiore

Abstract: At *PH* 2.227–8 Sextus argues that certain entities which his adversaries hold to be one and the same for different individuals actually aren't. This he does by, among other things, considering the truth-value of sentences whose subject is a common noun, thereby drawing an interesting connection between metaphysics and semantics. In this paper, I provide a careful analysis of Sextus' arguments at *PH* 2.227–8 and explore the origins and limits of such a connection. In particular, I argue that the Stoics and their doctrines about universals and common nouns might be directly involved in Sextus' arguments.

A Linguistic Muddle. Sextus' Arguments Against Universals at *PH* 2.227–8

Abstract: At *PH* 2.227–8 Sextus argues that certain entities which his adversaries hold to be one and the same for different individuals actually aren't. This he does by, among other things, considering the truth-value of sentences whose subject is a common noun, thereby drawing an interesting connection between metaphysics and semantics. In this paper, I provide a careful analysis of Sextus' arguments at *PH* 2.227–8 and explore the origins and limits of such a connection. In particular, I argue that the Stoics and their doctrines about universals and common nouns might be directly involved in Sextus' arguments.

Keywords: Sextus, universals, Stoics, common nouns, essence, realism

PH 2.219–28 is the only passage where Sextus is directly concerned with universals. Even though he promises that he "will speak more diffusely elsewhere" (§219: πλατύτερον [...] ἐν ἄλλοις διαλεξόμεθα) about genera and species, such lengthier discussion is nowhere to be found in the extant Sextan corpus.[1] In particular, I will focus on *PH* 2.227–8, where Sextus considers the following issue: that of an entity which is the *same* for different individuals. This relates to one of the most fundamental features of universals: being something which is wholly present in different individuals while retaining its numerical identity.[2]

In the following, after giving a brief overview of the wider context within which they fall, I will provide a thorough analysis of Sextus' arguments against universals in *PH* 2.227–8. In doing so, I will also try to sketch a more precise outline of their possible dogmatic target and ancestry. As it will become clear, the passage has some Stoic flavour to it, if it has any flavour at all. This might yield some interesting results, both for our understanding of Sextus' arguments and, possibly, for the reconstruction of certain Stoic doctrines regarding common nouns.

---

[1] I would like to thank .... for his precious feedback. I would also like to thank ... for their helpful comments and suggestions, as well as ..., with whom I had pleasant discussions about the paper.

[2] See e.g. Armstrong 1989, 5.

1.   Universals, division and dialectic (*PH* 2.213–28)

Let us start with some context. As I said, Sextus' arguments at *PH* 2.227–8 are part of a lengthier series of attacks against universals, which takes up the whole of *PH* 2.219–28. I will provide a brief overview of the contents of these arguments but, before doing that, I would like to spend a few words explaining what Sextus is up to in this part of *PH* 2 (let us say, starting from §193). Here, Sextus deals with a variety of topics: deduction (§§193–203), induction (§204), definition (§§205–12), division (§213), division of a word into its significations (§214), division of a whole into parts (§§215–18). His main purpose is that of waging an all–out war against dialectic, as he makes clear at §213: given that some of the dogmatics define dialectic as "a science of syllogism, induction, definition and division", and that he has already dealt with syllogism, induction and definition (at §§193–203, §204 and §§205–12, respectively), he only needs to target division, and his battle against dialectic will have been fought, and (supposedly) won.[3] That is exactly what he does starting from §213, and where universals come into play. For, says Sextus (§213), there are four kinds of division: division of a word into its significations, division of a whole into a parts, division of a genus into a species and division of a species into particulars. The first two he moves to deal with right in the following paragraphs. The third one, division of a genus into species, is what gives way to his attacks against universals, starting from §219. The fourth one, division of a species into particulars, does not find any explicit, exclusive treatment. However, Sextus' words at the onset of §219 may very well indicate that he holds his account about genera and species to be sufficient for the fourth kind of division as well: "*There remains* (ὑπολείπεται) the argument concerning genera and species...".

These minor discrepancies aside, the picture is the following: Sextus attacks universals because they are involved in division, and division is an essential part of dialectic, which is his main target in this part of *PH* 2. More precisely, his general goal is that of arguing that universals cannot exist as such, i.e. be one and the same for different individuals, which quite evidently makes division impossible: if there is no single genus which different species share in, there will be nothing to be divided into species (cf. *infra*, 21 n. 30). As a matter of fact, Sextus never speaks about 'universals' (τὰ καθόλου), but he only mentions genera and species, which are involved in the last two kinds of division he expounds at *PH* 2.213. This seems to be a general feature of his philosophical jargon: in his extant works, Sextus *never* uses the otherwise standard terminology (τὰ καθόλου), simply

---

[3] Still, one of the main features of Sextus' line of attack against the dogmatics is that he often provides *multiple* arguments against their theses, which work independently of each other. So, even though he may regard his arguments against dialectic at *PH* 2.193–28 to be effective, he could still put forward some *new* ones against it. The more, the better.

mentioning genera and species, or generic and specific items (such as the generic human; see e.g. *M* 7.269).)

Now, on to *PH* 2.219–28. Leaving §§227–8 aside, his arguments at §§219–26 concern genera and species. Individuals are completely out of the picture, except for a brief mention of Dio at §225, and come into play only at §§227–8. That should not come as a surprise: after all, Sextus is supposed to be dealing with the division of *genera* into *species*, and so it is only natural that his arguments are concerned with genera and species, and not with individuals.[4] Having said that, Sextus' arguments at §§219–26 begin with a dilemma concerning the way genera and species may be said, in a wide sense, to exist: either they are "concepts" (ἐννοήματα), or they have their own subsistence (ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν). This may get some readers to raise their eyebrows, for that universals are concepts is a typical Stoic position. This is not the only passage where Sextus' words seemingly depend on Stoic doctrines or terminology. After this initial dilemma, Sextus tackles the two following issues: participation of different species in a genus (§§220–2), and the properties of a genus in which multiple different species participate (§§223–5), whereby he mentions the 'something', that is, the Stoic *summum genus* (§223).

I shall have more to say about how §§227–8 fit the whole passage dedicated to universals and about the Stoic presence therein. This requires a thorough analysis of Sextus' arguments at §§227–8 which I will provide later on. For now, I shall only note that there is a similarity between Sextus' arguments at §§227–8 and his previous ones about participation: just as the former concern the issue of some entity being *one and the same* for different individuals, so do the latter concern the issue of a genus being *one and the same* for the different species which participate in it. The only difference is, at §227–8 this issue is all the more pressing in that it involves *individuals*, that is, particular, spatiotemporal entities, distinct from one another. This might explain why, despite such similarity, Sextus' line of reasoning at §§227–8 does not resemble his previous criticism of participation. For the latter amounted to a straightforward denial of one of the basic requirements of participation: the genus, says Sextus, simply *cannot* be one and the same for (and in) different species (§220). On

---

[4] One might also think that, since individuals play an important role at §§227–8, that is actually where the fourth, otherwise neglected kind of division (that of a species into individuals) gets its own treatment. However, no textual clue allows such an inference. One alternative which I hold to be more viable is that of thinking that Sextus regards the division of a species into individuals as being somehow dependent on that of a genus into species, so that the refutation of the latter actually implies the refutation of the former: if the division of a genus into species is impossible, then so is that of a species into individuals. Still, Sextus doesn't give us any clues at all, nor is there any evidence that he may have been committed to such a view. The precise place of individuals in Sextus' criticism of universals at *PH* 2.219–28 will give us a good deal of trouble further ahead.

the other hand, his arguments at §§227–8 may be summed up along the following lines: the identity of a universal for different individuals requires certain facts to hold about said individuals; but given that that is not the case, the starting assumption must be abandoned.[5]

2. Sextus' argument at §227

2.1 *A first glance*

After these preliminary remarks, I will now deal with *PH* 2.227. Here, Sextus targets what he calls "the being-human" (τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι). In order to do that, he uses various terms of probable Stoic origin, such as 'προσηγορία' ('appellative', 'common noun'; see D.L. 7.58 = LS 33M = *SVF* Diogenes 22), 'ἀξίωμα' ('proposition'; see D.L. 7.63 = LS 33F and n. 6, on this page) and 'σύνταξις' ('construction; cf. LS 33G = *SVF* 2.183, LS 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22, LS 33q = *SVF* 2.184, LS 33F). Such an abundant presence of Stoic terminology seems to suggest, *prima facie*, that the Stoics themselves are somehow involved in Sextus' argument at §227. I will come back to that later on. For now, an initial assessment of Sextus' argument will be enough. Sextus puts forward a comparison between sentences whose subject is a common noun, such as 'human', and sentences whose subject is a proper noun, such as 'Paris' and 'Alexander':[6]

> ἔτι καὶ τοῦτο θεάσασθαι ἄξιον. ὥσπερ γὰρ, ἐπεὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ Πάρις, οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τὸ μὲν 'Ἀλέξανδρος περιπατεῖ' ἀληθὲς εἶναι, τὸ δὲ 'Πάρις περιπατεῖ' ψεῦδος, οὕτως εἰ τὸ αὐτό ἐστι τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι Θέωνι καὶ Δίωνι, εἰς σύνταξιν ἀξιώματος ἀγομένη ἡ 'ἄνθρωπος' προσηγορία ἢ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων ποιήσει τὸ ἀξίωμα.
>
> Again, this too is worthy of consideration: just as, since Alexander and Paris are the same person, it is not possible for 'Alexander strolls' to be true, and 'Paris strolls' to be false, so if the being-human is the same for Theo and Dio, the appellative 'human', when brought into the construction of a proposition, will make it either true or false of both of them. (§227)

---

[5] That is not to say that Sextus could not have used strategies similar to the ones he used against the participation of species in a genus also in regards to individuals. See e.g. his argument against the Monad, at *PH* 3.158–62.

[6] Actually, Sextus uses the term 'ἀξίωμα', which is a Stoic technical term and may be translated as 'proposition', just like I did in my translation of §227. (On the differences between Stoic ἀξιώματα and propositions, see Castagnoli and Fait 2023, 185–6.) However, since Sextus doesn't seem to abide by the Stoic distinction between signifiers and things signified (see *infra*, 16 n. 21), and speaking of *propositions* whose subjects are common *nouns* makes me quite uncomfortable, I will use 'sentence' to refer to the ἀξιώματα Sextus talks about at §227, whereas I will reserve 'proposition' for actual propositions and actual Stoic ἀξιώματα. Please note that from now on I will use inverted commas to refer to linguistic expressions: e.g., a human is a rational animal, but 'human' is a five-letter word.

Since 'Paris' and 'Alexander' designate one and the same individual, sentences which consist of 'Paris' or 'Alexander' and one same predicate, such as 'Paris strolls' and 'Alexander strolls', will have the same truth-value. (Which is equivalent to saying that 'Paris' and 'Alexander' must be substitutable *salva veritate*, at least in non-modal sentences and in sentences which don't report propositional attitudes.) Sextus argues that the same should hold for common nouns, such as 'human'. At a first glance, Sextus' comparison doesn't seem to work really well: 'Paris' and 'Alexander' are *two* names which designate a *single* individual, whereas 'human', so it seems, is *one* noun which can be used to speak about *two* individuals (two *humans*, that is), such as Theon and Dion. Anyways, Sextus believes that what holds in the case of 'Paris' and 'Alexander' does not hold in the case of 'human':

> οὐ θεωρεῖται δὲ τοῦτο· τοῦ μὲν γὰρ Δίωνος καθημένου Θέωνος δὲ περιπατοῦντος τὸ ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ ἐφ' οὗ μὲν λεγόμενον ἀληθές ἐστιν, ἐφ' οὗ δὲ ψεῦδος. οὐκ ἄρα κοινή ἐστιν ἀμφοτέρων ἡ 'ἄνθρωπος' προσηγορία, οὐδὲ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀμφοῖν, ἀλλ' εἰ ἄρα, ἰδία ἑκατέρου.

> But that is not what we observe. For if Dio sits and Theo strolls, '(A) human strolls' is true of the one, and false of the other. Therefore, the appellative 'human' is not common to both, nor the same for both, but, if anything, peculiar to each. (§227)

So, the identity of "the being-human" (τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι) bears certain implications in respect of sentences whose subject is 'human', i.e. it implies that such sentences must always have the same truth-value; but since that is not the case, the initial assumption must be rejected.

Now, 'the being-human' is an unusual expression, which does not have any parallels in Sextus' corpus.[7] However, the very same construction (neuter definite article, εἶναι and a noun in dative case) is typically employed by Aristotle to refer to essences (see e.g. *Metaph.* Γ 4, 1006ᵃ 28 – ᵇ 34). So, the thought might be entertained that, despite the absence of parallels in Sextus' corpus, 'the being-human' actually refers to an essence and, in particular, an *Aristotelian* one (that is, an essence as it would be made out to be in Aristotle's theory). It would follow, then, that §227 targets Aristotelian doctrines about essence.

---

[7] Like Bury 1933, I accept τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι, which is Philippson's conjecture (see Bury 1933: app. *ad locum*). Mutschmann and Mau 1958 and Annas and Barnes 2000 accept the reading τὸ ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, which is vouched for by the Latin translation (*hominem esse*), whereas τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι is the reading of the Greek manuscripts of the *Outlines of Skepticism* (see Mutschmann and Mau 1958, app. *ad locum*), and is clearly corrupt. In my opinion, τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι is a clear improvement on τὸ ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, in that it explains much better the corrupt reading of the Greek manuscripts. I should also note that the Latin translation *hominem esse* might as well depend on something like τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι, so that τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι might not even be a conjecture at all. I owe this last point to ....

This hypothesis is not impossible, for there is at least one passage (*M* 1.315) where Sextus seems to be aware, at least on a superficial level, of Aristotle's doctrine of essence, which he mentions using the typical Aristotelian jargon (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι). Still, it can't be vouched for with certainty, at least for now. There is no clue – yet – that §227 is specifically concerned with *essences* and, moreover, the terminology itself is not quite univocal. As I mentioned earlier (*supra*, 4), §227 has some *Stoic* flavour to it, with terms such as 'προσηγορία', 'ἀξίωμα' and 'σύνταξις'. So, even assuming that 'the being-human' actually is an *Aristotelian* expression, the terminology of the passage would then point to at least *two* different philosophers or group of philosophers: the Stoics, who may very well be told to be Sextus' *main* general target, and Aristotle (and/or his Peripatetic acolytes), who is clearly not as relevant to Sextus as the Stoics are.[8] We would then need to work out what exactly the interaction between the Stoics and Aristotle might be, that is, what exactly is happening in the passage.

This will give us pause later on. For the time being, since this expression is clearly used to refer to some kind of entity and since this whole section (*PH* 2.219–28) targets universals, we may safely assume that such entity is a universal, or that Sextus holds it to be such. Or rather, we *must* assume that it is, if Sextus' argument is to be an argument against universals at all. If that is the case, the identity Sextus is speaking about ("if the being-human is *the same*...") is clearly numerical: as I have already said, one of the main features of universals is precisely their being wholly present in different entities while retaining their numerical identity, that is, while remaining one and the same entity. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what Sextus' comparison seems to suggest: 'human' is compared to 'Paris' and 'Alexander', which designate *one and the same* individual. In conclusion, then, the argument at §227 clearly concerns a universal which, as such, is taken to be numerically identical for different individuals.[9]

Having said that, we should try to make sense of the argument. It elicits a vague sense of discomfort: we are yet to understand how it works, assuming that it works at all. For a start, here is a summary of it:

---

[8] On the Sextus and the Peripatetics, see Annas 1992.

[9] One might also think that the being-human is somehow distinct from individual humans like Dio and Theo, and that it may be involved in *their* being-humans. This is quite reasonable. For, typically, a universal *F* is ontologically distinct from individual *F*s, and some kind of relation between the universal *F* and individual *F*s holds (e.g. participation), such that the individual *F*s are *F* in virtue of the relation they bear to the universal *F*. Still, Sextus is quite reticent about the being-human, which remains a mysterious entity.

(1) If the being-human is identical for different individuals, e.g. Dio and Theo,

'(A) human strolls' will have the same truth-value (just like 'Paris strolls' and

'Alexander strolls') on every occasion

(2) But '(A) human strolls' doesn't have the same truth-value on every occasion

(C) Therefore, the being-human is not identical for different individuals[10]

The inference from the premises (1),(2) to the conclusion (C) is clearly by *modus tollens*: premise (2) is taken to express the negation of the consequent of premise (1), thereby allowing conclusion (C) to be drawn.

Now, given the inference by *modus tollens*, (C) is the contradictory of the antecedent of premise (1). And since the latter concerns the being-human, (C) concerns the being-human as well. However, Sextus' conclusion at §227 concerns the *noun* 'human', and not the corresponding *entity*, i.e. the being-human: "Therefore, the *appellative* 'human' is not common to both, nor the same for both, but, if anything, peculiar to each". Why the difference? Well, one should wonder what Sextus exactly means, when he says that the noun 'human' "is not common". Probably, he simply means that different tokens of 'human' don't designate one and the same thing, unlike 'Paris' and 'Alexander', but *different* things.[11] If that is the case, Sextus' conclusion amounts precisely to (C), that is, to the fact the being-human is not identical for different individuals. Indeed, it is quite clear that Sextus' main goal, at §227 as well in the whole of the §§219–28 section, is that of arguing against the existence of certain *entities*, namely universals, which he takes to lead to unsolvable problems, if not to contradictions.[12]

---

[10] It is common knowledge that ancient philosophers (or, at least, a good number of them) held the truth-value of sentences to be tensed: that is, they held a sentence to be true or false at time *t*; see e.g. Arist. *Cat.* 5, 4ᵃ 21–6, and S.E. *M* 8.12 = LS 33B = *SVF* 2.166. The underlying assumption seems to be that the tense of a verb, such as 'strolls', implies some sort of deixis, so that saying 'Paris strolls' ultimately amounts to saying 'Paris strolls *now*'. Having said that, this doesn't affect Sextus' argument, nor the analysis that I am providing, in any considerable way: he can safely be taken to be speaking all around about sentences that are true or false *at the same time t*. From now on, I will omit such qualification.

[11] I take designation to be a basic relation holding between linguistic items and things (i.e. what some may prefer to call 'reference'). Anything such as senses or meanings is completely out of the picture. That is because Sextus himself seems to work his argument within a very basic framework of signification, which includes only things and nouns. Some problems which arise from Sextus' argument might perhaps have been avoided by using a more complex framework of signification. See *infra*, 14 n. 16.

[12] I should add that this seems to commit Sextus to the claim that a noun '*F*' is common only if it designates one and the same thing. That is, only if *every token* of that name designates one and the same thing. This is a strong claim, which few (if any) philosophers would be willing to accept. For example, it looks like the Stoics would hold a noun to be common (if and) only if its tokens designate the *same* thing, where 'same' expresses *specific* (i.e. qualitative), and not numerical, identity. At any rate, Sextus' (or his source's) focus on nouns in the conclusion seems quite effective, rhetorically speaking: an appellative, i.e. a *common* noun, is shown to be *peculiar* (!) to each of the things which belong to its extension. Cf. *infra*, 16–20.

2.2 *Premise* (*1*)

We may say that now Sextus' argument is less obscure. But it is a long way from being clear. First of all, we should tackle premise (1). After all, it is the core of the argument. Here it is, again: if (a) the being-human is identical for different individuals, (b) '(A) human strolls' will always have the same truth-value. Now, why should (b) follow from (a)?

Clearly, Sextus' conditional hinges on one simple assumption: that the noun 'human' designates the being-human. In other words, the being-human, which is taken to be a universal, is the *designatum* of every token of 'human'. This is why Sextus puts forward the strange comparison between 'human' on the one hand and 'Paris' and 'Alexander on the other: just as 'Paris' and 'Alexander' designate one and the same individual (the same obviously goes for their respective tokens), so every token of 'human' designates one and the same object, namely the (universal) being-human.

If that is so, we may reasonably expect that, just as 'Paris strolls' and 'Alexander strolls' always have the same truth-value (the same obviously goes for their respective tokens), so every *token* of the type sentence '(A) human strolls' should have the same truth-value. Sextus actually mentions *one single* ἀξίωμα, though. So, why am I speaking of different token nouns, and different token sentences? Well, the comparison between 'human' on the one hand and 'Paris' and 'Alexander on the other should make it quite clear that we must be speaking of different *tokens*: for the comparison to make sense, there have to be *different* nouns which designate the *same* thing. In the case of 'Paris' and 'Alexander', we may content ourselves with type nouns, since we have two of them. But in the case of 'human' we only have one type noun: Sextus' point must then be that different *tokens* of 'human' designate one and the same thing.

Anyway, Sextus' point can be made more general: for every single predicate: tokens of a type sentence '(A) human φ's' (where 'φ' stands for some random predicate) will always have the same truth-value. Even more generally, if we assume that the being-human is not an isolated case, but that for every common noun '*F*' there is some corresponding being-*F* which is the *designatum* of every token of '*F*' (why not?), we can conclude that every token of '(A) *F* φ's' will have the same truth-value.

2.3 Premise (2)

Now we have a more detailed grasp of the assumptions that underlie premise (1). Sextus is assuming that the tokens of 'human' designate one and the same entity and that, if that is the case, the tokens of any sentence of the kind '(A) human φ's' must have the same truth-value. What about premise (2)? There, Sextus says that "if Dio sits and Theo strolls, '(A) human strolls' is true of the one, and false of the other". What kind of sentences does he have in mind? As I did before, I should note that, even though I spoke of sentence*s*, Sextus seems to think about *one single* sentence, which is false of Dio and true of Theo. However, I have concluded that premise (1) must be concerned with different *token* sentences. It is quite reasonable to think, then, that the same holds here. In particular, as I will try to show in due time, it looks like premise (2) must be concerned with some sort of token *deictic* sentences, if it is to make sense at all.

One step at a time, though. Sextus requires '(A) human strolls' ('ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ') to be false of Dio and true of Theo if Dio is sitting and Theo is strolling. Now, intuitively a common noun such as 'human' may be used in a number of ways: for instance, to express a general proposition ('A cat is a small lion'), to talk about a single though indeterminate object ('A cat is meowing outside'), or even to talk about a single determinate object ('The cat is hungry').[13] Sextus' request makes it clear that '(A) human strolls' doesn't express any general proposition, nor does it speak about some single, though indeterminate, human: if such sentence is to be true, for instance, if and only if Dio strolls, it must be speaking about Dio, and *only* about Dio. This confirms my hypothesis that there are *two* different sentences at play here: one about Dio, and one about Theo. For how could a *single* sentence speak about *two* different things, thereby bearing *two* different truth-values, at the same time?

This being said, we should try to understand what kind of sentences Sextus must be speaking about. In this respect, Sextus' request that '(A) human strolls' be false of Dio and true of Theo if Dio is sitting and Theo is strolling comes quite handy. For, as I have already said, it implies that there are two token sentences, each which concerns *only* one between Dio and Theo. This is quite interesting: isn't 'human' a common noun, and isn't a fundamental feature of common nouns precisely that they

---

[13] This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Moreover, I am aware that the different uses of common nouns depend also on their being paired with definite or indefinite articles. I will pursue similar problems in the following. For now, I shall content myself with noting that 'ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ' has no definite article. In this respect, it resembles Aristotle's indefinite sentences, such as 'ἔστι ἄνθρωπος λευκός' (Arist. *Int.* 7, 17^b 7–12), and, more relevantly, the sentences one may extract from the Stoic Nobody argument, such as 'ἄνθρωπος [...] ἔστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις' (see *infra*, 27–8).

may be used to talk about many different things? If that is so, how can 'human' be used to talk, e.g., about Dio, and *only* Dio?

Well, first of all, it is clear that, if 'human' is to be part of a sentence which speaks about Dio, it is necessary that a token of it may somehow be able to designate Dio. I am saying 'somehow' because, as we saw, Sextus takes every token of 'human' to designate, strictly speaking, the being-human, and not Dio or Theo. This will cause us some problems later on. We will need to enquire whether and how it is possible that one and the same token of 'human' may designate the being-human *and*, at the same time, (somehow) designate an individual like Dio or Theo. Let us leave it at that, at least for now. Still, this is not enough for our purposes. That is precisely because such a token may designate Dio *as well as* Theo and other humans. We need something else to *fix* the reference on Dio, so to speak. Given that Sextus doesn't particularly help us, the most economical assumption is that this something else is supplied by the context of utterance. For instance, let us imagine that someone is looking out of the window, and that the street is completely empty. Then, at some point, Dio strolls by. They utter '(A) human strolls'. In this case, one might think that such sentence speaks about Dio, and *only* about him. What makes it the case is precisely the fact that there is nobody else around: if someone else, e.g. Theo, were strolling by, we wouldn't know whom the sentence is about. An act of deixis may have the same effect. For instance, the speaker may be pointing to Dio while uttering the sentence.

So, we can conclude generally that there are two necessary conditions, jointly sufficient, for a sentence of the kind '(A) $F \varphi$'s' to speak *exclusively* about an individual x: first of all, a token of 'F' may designate x and, secondly, the context and/or some act of deixis single out x as the only possible *designatum* of that token of 'F', if uttered in that context. Of course, Sextus does not mention anything along these lines: he doesn't even come close to it. Still, this is what he should be taken to be committed to, if we are to make sense of premise (2) despite the scarcity of details he provides.

This account puts us in a good position to understand what kind of sentences are at play here. As we said, the two tokens of '(A) human strolls' can speak *exclusively* about Dio and Theo, respectively, only in that the context of utterance and/or some act of deixis allow it to be the case. Therefore, they must be some kind of deictic sentences. In particular, given that we took them to be two different *tokens* of the same type sentence, we should conclude that premise (2) concerns two tokens of a deictic type sentence '(A) human strolls', which – I propose – should be taken to be themselves liable to be uttered multiple times: we will then have '(A) human$_D$ strolls', which speaks

about Dio and is true if and only if Dio strolls, and '(A) human$_T$ strolls', which speaks about Theo and is true if and only if Theo strolls.[14]

I should point out that such indexicality is quite important for Sextus' argument. That is because, for obvious reasons, deictic type sentences are the only ones whose tokens might have different truth-values, which is what is required in premise (2). They are the only ones that can get the job done, so to speak. (For instance, assuming that 'This$_D$ strolls' and 'This$_T$ strolls' are two tokens of a type sentence 'This strolls', they may have different truth-values, depending on what Dio and Theo are doing.) On the other hand, tokens of non-deictic type sentences cannot have different truth-values. Every token of 'Paris strolls' will have the same truth-value, depending on what Paris is doing. So even if my proposal should turn out to be incorrect, it seems that, in the absence of better options, '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' should nevertheless be taken to involve *some* degree of indexicality.

2.4 *A clearer picture*

We can now try and outline a clearer picture of Sextus' argument at §227. We concluded (§2.2) that in premise (1) Sextus assumes that every token of 'human' designates the being-human (which is one and the same for Dio and Theo), and thereby requires every token of '(A) human strolls' to have the same truth-value, like 'Paris strolls' and 'Alexander strolls'. Then, we concluded (§2.3) that in premise (2) two different sentences must be at play: '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls', which after rather careful consideration I have taken to be two different tokens of a *deictic* type sentence. So, if the conclusions I have reached until now are correct, the clearest and most charitable reading of Sextus' argument is the following:

> Assuming that every token of 'human' designates the being-human, if the being-
> human is one and the same for all humans, then every token of '(A) human strolls'
> (and more generally, of any type sentence of the kind '(A) human φ's') will have
> the same truth-value **(1)**. But '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' have

---

[14] In Stoic terms, a deictic sentence (such as 'This strolls') expresses a simple definite proposition (see Bobzien 2009, 89–90). The similarity between sentences such as '(A) human strolls' (at least according what Sextus requires of it in premise (2)) and Stoic simple definite propositions which has hitherto emerged may get Sextus into trouble, and us with him: as I already said, there is convincing evidence that §227 somehow depends on a Stoic source, and according to the Stoics (see S.E. *M* 8.93–8 = LS 34H = *SVF* 2.205; D.L. 7.69–70 = LS 34K = *SVF* 2.204) '(A) human strolls' doesn't correspond to a simple definite proposition, but to a simple middle or categoric one, which has different truth conditions; see Alex. *in APr.* 402.15–17, Brunschwig 1984, Crivelli 1994 and *infra*, 25 n. 35.

two different truth-values, if Dio sits and Theo is strolling **(2)**. Therefore, the

being-human is not one and the same for all humans **(C)**.

In short, Sextus' idea is that our utterances of 'human' don't designate one and the same thing, but *different* things. And if we take into account Sextus' underlying assumption, namely that every token of 'human' designates the being-human, this amounts to saying the being-human is not a universal. All of this has to do, somehow, with the fact that tokens sentences of the kind '(A) human φ's' may have different truth-values in certain contexts.

2.5 *Problems*

This is the clearest picture we can get of Sextus' argument. Finally, we are in a good position to flesh out the vague discomfort that may have beset us when first reading §227: Sextus' argument is clearly non-conclusive, and therefore it fails.

This depends on the fact that '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' are not the (tokens of) sentences which are called into question in premise (1), in spite of their being superficially identical. So, premise (2) doesn't express the actual negation of the consequent of premise (1); it only appears to do so. Sextus would seem to run into some sort of fallacy of equivocation.

As a matter of fact, premise (1) seems to be concerned with (tokens of) a sentence, '(A) human strolls', which is taken to speak about the being-human. It follows that, since the being-human is taken to be a universal, '(A) human strolls' is, in fact, a sentence about a universal. Now, sentences about universals have their peculiar truth conditions. For instance, assuming that 'The F φ's' is some sentence about the universal F, we might say that it is true if and only if *at least one* individual F φ's (following Aristotle; see *Cat.* 5, 3^{a} 4–6 and Ademollo 2022, 37–9), or it is true if and only if *every* individual F φ's (following the Stoics; see *M* 7.246 = LS 30F = *SVF* 2.65 and Caston 1999, 187–92). Sextus doesn't give any truth conditions of the sort at §227 (even though he faces similar problems at §§223–6). At any rate, it is quite clear that if '(A) human strolls' is to be a sentence about a universal, it can't be true *of Dio* and false *of Theo*. A sentence about a universal is simply true or false, depending on the *totality* of the facts which concern the domain of individuals it ranges over. In this respect, the conditional in premise (1) is not only true; it is *trivially* so. Requiring all of its tokens to have the same truth-value is just like requiring all the tokens 'Paris strolls' to have same truth-value: since they *all* speak about Paris, this is quite clearly the case. (After all, there seems to be a sense in which a

common noun '*F*', when it is being used to speak about the universal *F*, is the *proper* noun of the universal *F*; it is, one could say, the *proper* noun of a *common* entity.)

This makes clear that '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' in premise (2) aren't the (tokens of) sentences which are required for the negation of the consequent of premise (1) to hold. They simply can't be: they concern single individuals, Dio and Theo, thereby bearing the corresponding truth-value, and they don't speak about the universal being-human. This they do, moreover, probably by involving some kind of indexicality. So Sextus' argument is non-conclusive, and therefore it fails.

2.6 *Further problems*

At this point, one thing is certain: Sextus' argument is non-conclusive. Still, there is something more to be said. It is finally time to tackle the problem I brought up earlier. Sextus seems to be committed to two different assumptions: the assumption that every token of 'human' designates the universal being-human and the assumption that tokens of 'human' may be used to speak about single humans, e.g. in sentences such as '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls'. This is the overall picture:

(i)   Every token of 'human' designates the being-human

(ii)   The being-human is one and the same for different humans (presumably, for *all* humans)

(iii) A token of 'human' may be the subject of a sentence which speaks about a single, determinate human (e.g. Dio)

Now, given the analysis of sentences in (iii) which I have given earlier, a token of 'human' may be used to speak about a single human, e.g. Dio, only if it is (somehow) able to designate Dio. The question I am asking, then, is the following: is it really possible that one and the same token of a common noun '*F*' may designate both the universal *F and* an individual *F*? In other words, can one and the same token of a common noun '*F*' have *two* different *designata*, namely the universal *F* and an individual *F*?[15]

The stakes are high. If we were to find out that such double designation isn't, in fact, possible, then the assumptions (i), (ii) and (iii) would not actually be compatible, so that we would have to

---

[15] It may very well be the case that for Sextus such double designation should be not only *possible*, but also *necessary*. In other words, he might think that a token of a common noun '*F*' can be used to speak about some single individual *F only if* it designates both the universal *F* and said individual *F*. §227 doesn't really give any further evidence, but for my present purposes possibility is enough.

draw one further conclusion: not only is Sextus' argument non-conclusive, but it also depends on *inconsistent* assumptions regarding the semantics of common nouns. As a matter a fact, that one and that same token of a noun may have two different *designata* is far from obvious. And even more so, I might add, if such *designata* are a universal *F* and an individual *F*, that is, two ontologically heterogenous objects. If that is to be the case, and if we are to be charitable to Sextus, a more precise semantics of common nouns is needed which might make sense of his assumptions.

2.7 *A Stoic semantics of common nouns*

Unfortunately, Sextus doesn't provide us with any such thing. If we are to be charitable to Sextus' argument and to try to make more sense of it, we have to do his work for him, again. Thus, my next task shall be that of outlining a semantics of common nouns which might get the job done.

There are many possible candidates. However, it is more convenient to take into account doctrines which may have been available, in principle, to Sextus.[16] In particular, I shall consider (one possible reconstruction of) the Stoic semantics of common nouns.[17] All in all, it may very well be the *best* candidate. For first of all, as we shall see, it seems to allow for a double designation to common nouns to take place in a fairly convincing fashion. Secondly, as I have already noted, there is some *prima facie* evidence for thinking that the Stoics are somehow involved in Sextus' argument, possibly as its target or as its source: at §227, Sextus uses terms such as 'προσηγορία', 'ἀξίωμα' and 'σύνταξις', which are proven to be Stoic technical terms;[18] the opening passage of the whole section, §219, has a

---

[16] This does not mean that other, more recent theories may nevertheless get the job done. For example, Kripke's distinction between semantic reference and speaker's reference (see Kripke 1977) may provide an interesting solution to the problem: such double designation may depend on the way the speaker intends to use the token of the common noun in question. As a matter fact, Kripke himself addresses some very similar problems regarding the fact that a speaker may use 'man' and sentences such as 'A man φ's' to speak about some single, determinate man she has in mind; see Kripke 2013, 138–43. Still, this seems to be very far from what Sextus is thinking about at §227: speaker's intentions are clearly out of the picture he draws.

[17] For instance, one might think that what Aristotle says at *Categories* 5, 3^b 10–24 looks quite interesting. For he seems to hold that tokens of a common noun, such as 'human', may be used to speak about primary substances, such as Dio and Theo, and secondary substances, such as the universal human, alike. I must note, however, that what we are after is an account according to which the *very same* token of a common noun may entertain such double designation. On the other hand, what Aristotle seems to have in mind is the much plainer idea that *different* tokens of a common noun may be used to speak about different things.

[18] Still, I should note that Sextus seems to use 'προσηγορία' and 'ἀξίωμα' both in a narrow and in a wide sense. This is true especially in the case of 'ἀξίωμα': sometimes he refers to *utterances* as ἀξιώματα, which from a Stoic perspective is incorrect; see e.g. *PH* 2.109, with which, however, cf. *M* 8.79–84. In any case, when he is targeting the Stoics, he is very careful in distinguishing what signifies and what is signified, like any good Stoic would do (see *PH* 2.81, 2.104 = LS 35C, 2.107, *M* 8.12 = LS 33B = *SVF* 2.166), even when his goal is precisely that of refuting the Stoic doctrine of the ἀξίωμα as an incorporeal entity (*M* 8.79). On the other hand, a wide sense of 'προσηγορία' seems sometimes to be at play (see e.g. *PH* 3.99 and maybe *M* 9.36), as well as a narrow, more technical sense (see e.g. *M* 1.133, 238), which however may not actually bear any particular connection with the Stoic doctrine of common nouns.

strong Stoic flavour, with terms such as 'ἐννόημα' (see Aet. 4.11.16–4.12.19 = LS 30j and 39B = *SVF* 2.83 and 2.54, D.L. 7.60–1 = LS 30C), 'φαντασία' (see Aet. 4.12.1–7 = LS 39B = *SVF* 2.54), 'ἡγεμονικόν' (see *M* 7.234 = LS 53F, Aet. 4.21.1–4 = LS 53H = *SVF* 2.836) and maybe, in this context, 'ὑπόστασις' (see LS 27); and at §223 Sextus mentions the Stoic *summum genus*, the something (τι).

So it may very well be the case that Sextus' assumptions about common nouns ultimately depend on something like the Stoic semantics of common nouns. Before showing what exactly such semantics amounts to, I should spend some time talking about one of the salient features of the Stoic philosophy of language: the distinction between what signifies and what is signified. Such distinction is connected to the fundamental assumption of Stoic metaphysics: being is equivalent to being able to act and be acted upon, and being able to act and be acted upon is equivalent to being a body.[19] From this assumption there follows the main distinction of Stoic metaphysics: that between things that exist (ὄντα), i.e. bodies, and things that don't exist but merely subsist (ὑφεστηκότα), i.e. the incorporeals. Bodies (i.e. ὄντα) and incorporeals are subsumed under one *summum genus*, that is, the something (τι): the distinction between the two is exclusive and exhaustive of the *summum genus*.[20]

In short, the Stoics distinguish between what signifies and what is signified, that is, between concrete utterances and inscriptions, which are corporeal and therefore exist, and the things which are signified by such utterances and inscriptions. The latter are the so-called λεκτά ('sayables'): they are incorporeal and therefore they don't exist, but merely subsist (see *M* 8.11–12 = LS 33B = *SVF* 2.166; D.L. 7.56 = LS 33H). The class of signifiers includes, e.g., nouns and verbs, whereas the class of things signified (λεκτά) includes predicates (κατηγορήματα) and propositions (ἀξιώματα), i.e. meanings of sentences. For instance, the Stoics distinguish the (corporeal) verb and the (incorporeal) predicate: the latter is signified by the first (see D.L. 7.58 = LS 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22).

This picture is beset by a *crux interpretum*: the nominative case (ὀρθὴ πτῶσις). Diogenes Laertius (7.70 = LS 34K = *SVF* 2.204) reports that it is one of the constituents of a (simple middle or predicative) proposition, along with the incorporeal predicate. The problem is that, while in the latter case there is a clear correspondence between what signifies (the corporeal verb) and what is

---

[19] Such assumption probably depends on a certain reading of the *Gigantomachia* in Plato's *Sophist*; see Brunschwig 1988, Ademollo (forth. a) and, in general, Bronowski 2019, ch. 3.

[20] This is the standard picture of Stoic metaphysics. However, it is possible that εἶναι should not be taken to have been used by the Stoics in a technical sense, i.e. as applying only to bodies. Still, bodies are never said to subsist; see Bronowski 2019, 127–8.

signified (the incorporeal predicate), no such clear correspondence seems to be hinted at by the sources we have. In short, we don't really understand *what* a nominative case is. There are at least three candidates: (i) corporeal qualities, both common and peculiar, which are reported (D.L. 7.58 = LS 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22, below) to be the *designata* of nouns, both common and proper (Frede 1994: 112; see also 1977: 304 and 1978: 347–51); (ii) the nouns themselves, which are concrete utterances and therefore corporeal (LS 1, 200); (iii) incomplete λεκτά, which, so to speak, are to nouns as (incorporeal) predicates are to (corporeal) verbs (Barnes 1999a, 207–9, Durand 2018, 72–84, Alessandrelli 2022, 680–1). However, such λεκτά are never mentioned by the most relevant sources for the Stoic theory of meaning (see e.g. D.L. 7.63 = LS 33F and 7.64 = LS 33G = *SVF* 2.183; but see also *M* 11.29 and Clem. *Str.* viii.9.26.5).[21]

At any rate, it is finally time to tackle the Stoic doctrine which may be read into §227. The most relevant text is the aforementioned report of Diogenes Laertius about Diogenes of Babylonia:

> ἔστι δὲ προσηγορία μὲν κατὰ τὸν Διογένη μέρος λόγου σημαῖνον κοινὴν ποιότητα, οἷον
> 'ἄνθρωπος,' 'ἵππος' ὄνομα δέ ἐστι μέρος λόγου δηλοῦν ἰδίαν ποιότητα, οἷον 'Διογένης',
> 'Σωκράτης'.
>
> According to Diogenes [of Babylonia], an appellative is a part of speech which
> signifies a common quality, such as 'human', 'horse'; a noun is part of speech
> which indicates a peculiar quality, such as 'Diogenes', 'Socrates'. (D.L. 7.58 = LS
> 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22)

According to this report, common and proper nouns designate common and proper qualities, respectively.[22]

---

[21] In short, the main problem for interpretation (iii) is that of bringing together the claim that nominative cases are λεκτά with the aforementioned report of Diogenes Laertius about qualities being what nouns signify. Barnes himself (1999a, 207 n. 176) saw the problem. For an attempt at reconciling this line of interpretation with Diogenes' report, see Durand 2018: 82–4. I should also note that §227 may be thought to provide evidence in favour of interpretation (ii): if Sextus' argument is rich in Stoic terms, such that it might ultimately depend on Stoic doctrines (we'll see about that in a moment), then his saying that an *appellative* (a common noun!) such as 'human' is employed in the construction of a *proposition* might be taken to point at the fact the he has a Stoic doctrine similar to (ii) in mind. In other words, when Sextus speaks about a *noun* being part of a *proposition*, assuming that the hypothesis about the Stoics being the source for §227 is correct, he might be taken to depend on something like the doctrine sketched at (ii). However, it is way more economical to think that Sextus is simply imprecise. First and foremost because the hypothesis that §227 reflects a Stoic doctrine is yet to be proved. And even if it was, it may very well be the case that the Stoic doctrine it reflects is *not* closer to (ii) rather than to any other interpretation.

[22] Actually, Diogenes uses two different verbs: 'to signify' ('σημαίνειν') and 'to indicate' ('δηλοῦν'). This might be taken to prove that the Stoics actually distinguished the signification of common nouns (which "signify" a common quality) from the signification of proper nouns (which "indicate" a peculiar quality); see Brunschwig 1984: 44–5. Still, 'σημαίνειν' and 'δηλοῦν' are often used interchangeably, both in Aristotle (see Irwin 1982, 243 n. 4) and in Plato (see Ademollo 2011, 173 with n. 66).

The Stoics hold qualities to be portions of *pneuma*. As such, they are corporeal, and therefore able to act as causes on things which are able to be acted upon, that is, on bodies. In particular, a quality is able to make an individual *qualified* by being present in it (LS 28N = *SVF* 2.390; Sen. *Ep.* 117.13 = 33E). Such presence should be understood in purely *physical* terms: a quality is present in an individual in that it occupies the same space which is occupied by that individual, and further is part of the compound of *pneuma* and matter which that individual consists of.

The causal agency which is attributed to qualities is strictly connected to their being physically present in individuals, bodies in bodies. For the Stoic assumption that all and only bodies exist has some serious consequences for universals: given that they clearly aren't bodies, they don't exist. Rather, they are said to be "concepts" (ἐννοήματα), namely the intentional objects of certain mental states, the conceptions (ἔννοιαι).[23] And given that, in the strict sense, they don't exist, universals can't act as causes on bodies. Therefore, it is qualities, and first and foremost *common* qualities that are called to fill the causal gap which is left by universals: an individual x is F not because it participates in the species F, but because a body, i.e. the common quality F, is physically present in it. For instance, Socrates is human because a portion of *pneuma*, namely the common quality corresponding to humanity, is present in him. So, the fact that different individuals share the same property F may be analysed as the fact that different individuals have different portions of *pneuma*, all of which are the common quality F: x is F because it has a portion of *pneuma* which is the common quality F, and y is F because it has a portion of *pneuma* which is different (i.e. numerically distinct) from the one x has and is the common quality F.[24] Common qualities aren't universals.

---

[23] That concepts should be taken to be intentional objects of conceptions is David Sedley's reasonable hypothesis; see Sedley 1985; *contra* Caston (forth.), 33 n. 54. The place of universals in Stoic metaphysics is quite problematic; see Brunschwig 1988, Caston 1999, Bailey 2014, Bronowski 2019, ch. 3.

[24] See Caston 1999, 182–7, Menn 1999, 217–23 and 222 n.10. Still, the fact remains that there must be some kind of identity holding of different instances of the same common quality. Even though Dio is human because there is a certain portion of *pneuma* in him, and Theo is human because there is a certain portion of *pneuma* in him, different from the one Dio has, still both portions of *pneuma* must be the *same* common quality, namely humanity, if we are to say that *both* Dio and Theo are human without any homonymy to be involved. Caston (1999, 184) thinks that this may depend on the fact that both portions of *pneuma* bear some kind of relation to a universal (i.e. the universal human), which allows some kind of qualitative identity to hold of the two of them. However, it might be strange that universals, which don't exist (and probably don't even subsist) and can't act as causes, end up being that which allows different portions of *pneuma* to be the *same* common quality. It may be more reasonable to hold that universals are rather what allows us to *say* that two numerically different portions of *pneuma* are the same common quality. On the other hand, such identity may be connected to the Stoic metaphysical doctrine that qualities are streams of *pneuma* extending throughout the world. In particular, there is an interesting passage, *M* 8.41, where Sextus says that *sensible* things are either *genera* or *species*, taking the former to be "the common features that extend among the particulars" (αἱ ἐνδιήκουσαι ἐν τοῖς κατὰ μέρος κοινότητες), such has the human. This passage looks rather Stoic in jargon and content, and seems to support the reading that a Stoic common quality is a stream of *pneuma* extending throughout different individuals. Thus, the fact that Dio's portion of *pneuma* and Theo's portion of *pneuma* are the same common quality may be analysed as the fact

Things are a little different in the case of peculiar qualities. In short, a peculiar quality is a single portion of *pneuma*, which is present in one, and only one, individual, and ultimately grounds its identity.[25]

Having said that, the fact that qualities (common and peculiar) are the *designata* of tokens of nouns (common and proper, respectively) has some relevant consequences for the semantics of sentences. Given that the quality is different from (though strictly related to) the qualified individual, a distinction should be made between the *designata* of nouns and the qualified individuals themselves, e.g. between the *designatum* of 'Dio' (his peculiar quality), and Dio himself. This implies that, given a generic sentence consisting of a subject term and a predicate term, we should distinguish the subject of that sentence (namely, the *designatum* of the subject term) from that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true.[26] For instance, let us take one of the sentences in premise (2) of Sextus' argument, e.g. '(A) human$_D$ strolls': we would have that that token of 'human' designates the humanity (a common quality, i.e. a portion of *pneuma*) present in Dio, but that the sentence is true if and only *Dio*, and not the humanity in him, strolls.[27]

A partially similar distinction can be seen to hold for predicates. As I said, an individual x is F because the common quality F is present in it. However, according to the Stoics, in a given sentence 'x is F, 'is F' signifies an incorporeal predicate, and not the common quality F. This has to do with the Stoic theory of causality, according to which "every cause is a body which becomes a cause, for a

---

that they are different physical parts of the same stream of *pneuma*. This view of common qualities seems to bear some resemblance to the contemporary theory of universals as concrete particular, spatio-temporally extended objects, according to which, for instance, the colour red is the particular spatio-temporal thing which has as its parts all red things; cf. Quine 1950.

[25] See Sedley 1983.

[26] Cf. Frede 1978, 349–50 and Brunschwig 1984, 48–9. Frede (1978, 350) suggests that such distinction (namely that between the subject of a sentence and that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true) has some parallels in Aristotle's treatment of indefinite sentences in the *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, such as '(A) human is pale', where 'human' is taken to designate the universal human. As a matter of fact, the truth-value of such sentences depends on facts which concern *individual* humans: '(A) human is pale' is true if and only if at least one individual human is pale and, generally '(A) F φ's', where 'F' is taken to designate the universal F, is true if and only if at least one individual F φ's. However, I am not sure that this comparison actually is sound. Aristotle is entitled to think that facts about individual Fs *do* imply further facts about the universal F; that the fact that individual Fs have property G implies the fact the universal F *actually* has property G, even though in the problematic way in which universals have properties (leaving aside their formal properties, i.e. the properties they have insofar they are universals, such as that of being eternal, or being a genus, etc.); see *Cat.* 5, 3^a 4–6, and Ademollo 2022, 37–9. So, the underlying intuition may very well be that '(A) F φ's' (where 'F' is taken to designate the universal F) is true if and only if the universal F φ's, and the universal F φ's if and only if at least one individual F φ's. Such intuition implies no distinction between the subject of a sentence and that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true.

[27] The Stoics wouldn't probably agree on applying such truth conditions to sentences like '(A) human strolls'. In their view, a sentence of this sort corresponds to a simple middle or predicative proposition, which has different truth conditions. I will come back to that later; see *infra*, 27 n. 35.

body, of something incorporeal: for instance, [...] fire, which is a body, is cause for the wood of the incorporeal predicate (κατηγορήματος) 'being burnt'" (*M* 9.211 = LS 55B = *SVF* 2.341). To quote Frede (1980, 234), "a cause is a body which does something or other and by doing so brings it about that another body is affected in such a way that something comes to be true of it".[28]

We may now sketch a unified picture of the role of qualities in the semantics of nouns and predicates. Given a (common or peculiar) quality *Z*,

- the (common or proper) noun '*Z*' designates quality *Z*
- quality *Z* causes, for every individual *x* in which it is present, *x* to be *Z* and the incorporeal predicate 'is *Z*' to hold of *x*

This looks quite reasonable. According to this picture, every correct application of a noun to a subject implies that the corresponding incorporeal predicate be true of that subject, and vice versa. For instance, if the noun 'human' may correctly be applied to Dio, then the incorporeal predicate 'is human' will hold of Dio, and vice versa. The same may go for proper nouns, with some minor adjustments: if 'Dio' may correctly be applied to *this*, then the incorporeal predicate 'is Dio' holds of *this*, and vice versa.

This, in an outline, is the Stoic doctrine we may read into §227.[29] But why should it allow what we are looking for, namely that one and the same token of a common noun '*F*' may have what I called a double designation? It is quite easy to see why. Let me recall the sentence I have analysed before, '(A) human_D strolls'. As I said, according to what may be reasonably inferred from Diogenes Laertius' report, the token of 'human' designates the corresponding common quality in Dio, but the sentence is true if and only if Dio, and not the common quality present in him, strolls. This is interesting: the sentence can, somehow, be about Dio even though, strictly speaking, he *isn't* its subject. We might then think that, if this is so, that is because said token actually designates the corresponding common quality *and also*, in some derivative way, Dio himself. However, such secondary designation is far from being problematic or obscure. That token of 'human' designates something which is in Dio, and actually is a constituent part of him, so that it easy to see how it may designate him as well:

---

[28] See Frede 1980, 229–34, Barnes 1983, 170–5.

[29] As I already said, the Stoic doctrine of the semantics of nouns is liable to different reconstructions, many of which aren't compatible with the one I have provided here. Some might also think that saying that qualities are the *designata* of nouns amounts to accepting interpretation (i) above (*supra*, 15–17). However, that isn't necessarily the case: one might accept interpretation (iii) and think that, while qualities are the *designata* of nouns, incorporeal λεκτά are what nouns *mean*. Maybe this might also resolve the contrast between interpretation (iii) and Diogenes' report (see *supra*, 16 n. 21). Still, the problem is complex.

that token of 'human' is, so to speak, already *directed* at him. Therefore, the secondary designation of that token of 'human' not only is compatible with its primary designation, but also follows quite clearly from it.

2.8 *Much ado about nothing?*

It looks like (this reconstruction of) the Stoic semantics of common nouns might be a suitable candidate for the job. Should we then think that the search is over, and conclude that Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns depend on such doctrine, or on one similar to it? Not unless we are willing to pay a high cost for it. It is quite easy to see why. A token of a common noun '*F*' may designate *both* the common quality *F* and the correspondingly qualified individual only in that the common quality *F isn't* a universal: it belongs exclusively to Dio, of whom it is, physically speaking, a constituent part. Therefore, if such a semantics is to work for Sextus' argument, so that it may allow the double designation to which Sextus is ultimately committed to take place, it is necessary that there should be many, numerically non-identical being-human*s*, each of which belongs exclusively to a different individual: a being-human *of Dio*, which is what the tokens of 'human' designate when we use 'human' to speak about Dio, and a being-human *of Theo*, which is distinct from the being-human of Dio and is what the tokens of 'human' designate when we use 'human' to speak about Theo. This obviously clashes with one of the main assumptions (if not *the* main assumption) of Sextus' argument: that the being-human is a universal, i.e. that it is one and the same for all humans (= assumption (ii) above; see *supra*, 13).

Actually, it is worse than that: Sextus' main goal is precisely that of proving that the being-human *isn't* one and the same for all humans, i.e. that it isn't a universal. So, if we are willing to make sense of Sextus' assumptions regarding common nouns in this way, namely by thinking that he depends on the Stoic semantics of common nouns such as I have reconstructed it, the picture we get is tragic: if the underlying assumptions to Sextus' argument are to be consistent, the argument should assume what it is intended to prove, i.e. that the being-human *isn't* one and the same for all humans, and do away with its starting assumption, i.e. that the being-human *is* one and the same for all humans. In other words, if Sextus' argument is to be based upon a coherent semantics of common nouns, it can't be about universals, and thus it is completely off-target. This is what our search of a way of making sense of Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns has led us to: a quite uncharitable conclusion for a resolution inspired by the principle of charity.

2.9 The Stoics, yet again

This Stoic excursus confirms that attributing a double designation to the tokens of common nouns is far from being obvious, especially if one *designatum* is an individual and one *designatum* is taken to be a universal: the Stoic semantics of common nouns may allow such double designation to take place in a seemingly effortless way precisely because common qualities *aren't* universals. Not that this Stoic doctrine is the only way Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns may be accounted for. However, it was without any doubt *the best* candidate, both because it fits (partially, at least) with Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns and because various terms at §227 seem to hint at the Stoic themselves. And yet even the best candidate seems to be struggling a lot: as I have just shown, reading the Stoic semantics of common nouns into §227 comes at great costs. This being the case, I won't pursue this enquiry any further. I will now move on, and try to outline the possible target of Sextus' argument, as well as to tackle the Stoic presence in the passage. This will undoubtedly provide us with new elements for our general assessment of Sextus' argument and of its underlying assumptions.

For a start, given that Sextus intends his argument to be directed against universals, we may safely assume that he is targeting philosophers who hold universals to exist as such in one way or the other, i.e. universals to be *one and the same* for different individuals.[30] Such philosophers may be labelled as 'realists'. Realist philosophers would certainly endorse Sextus' starting assumption (the being-human is one and the same for all humans), and find unpalatable the argument's conclusion (the contradictory of the starting assumption). In this sense, the 'realist' label may be applied to the Stoics as well. This may seem strange: the Stoics are quite far from claiming that universals exist (in the Stoic technical sense of 'to exist'), as they hold them to be concepts, i.e. mental constructs which might not even be said to subsist (see *supra*, 17). Nevertheless, Sextus targets Stoics at the very start of *PH* 2.219–28: it seems that, to him, the Stoic claim that universals are concepts still amounts to a *positive* claim about universals, i.e. a claim according to which there is some item which is one and

---

[30] Sextus' target at §227–8 is not the existence of universals in itself, but rather their sameness and oneness for different individuals, which may also depend on the fact that his main goal at §§219–28 is that of arguing against *division* (see *supra*, 2). This not to say that Sextus' arguments against universals do not have any bearing whatsoever on their existence. On the contrary, it seems like the sameness and oneness for different individuals of universals constitute one of the basic requirements, if not the most basic, for any entity to be regarded as a universal at all. In this sense, to argue against the sameness and oneness for different individuals of universals implies arguing against their *existence* as such, too.

the same for different individuals (or species, in the case of genera), whichever place in reality is assigned to it. Therefore, there are good reasons to label the Stoics as realists about to universals, at least in this weaker and restricted sense.[31]

So, we might assume that Sextus' argument targets realists about universals. That is pretty much all we can get out of §227. For our enquiry to advance any further, we need to take into careful consideration Sextus' terminology in the whole section *PH* 2.219–28. Leaving aside for a moment the aforementioned Stoic terms, I shall now focus on the expression 'the being-human' (τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι). As I said, this expression has no parallels in Sextus' extant works. However, it bears a striking similarity to the Aristotelian jargon of essence, and Sextus does seem to be aware of such Aristotelian doctrines, at least on a superficial level, so that 'the being-human' might be thought to actually refer to an Aristotelian essence. Be that as it may, it is quite clear that such expression refers to *some sort* of entity which is assumed by Sextus to be a universal. Thus, it is *prima facie* reasonable to take the being-human as some sort of universal human. What is interesting, however, is that Sextus has already dealt with the universal human before §227: he has mentioned numerous times the species human and the genus animal, to which he referred as "the human" (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) and "the animal" (τὸ ζῷον). Such change of terminology occurs at §227, where Sextus seems to carry on his treatment of universals without any noticeable interruption: "Again, this too is worthy of consideration...". So, if the being-human is nothing but the universal human (if it wasn't, why should Sextus want to prove that it isn't one and the same for all humans?), how is it related to the species human (i.e. the universal human) which Sextus has already talked about? In order to try to answer these questions, I shall resort to the Stoics, once again.

---

[31] Sextus is not alone in this. Porphyry (*Intr.* 1.10–15) lists different ways in which genera and species may be said, in a very wide sense, to exist. Among the positions he lists, there is one according to which genera and species "depend on bare thoughts (ἐπινοίαις) alone" (transl. Barnes 2003). This might recall the typically Stoic doctrine of universals as concepts (though see Barnes 2003, 37–43), especially in the light of the fact that this possibly Stoic position is the second horn of a dilemma whose first horn is that genera and species "subsist" (ὑφέστηκεν), and that to subsist is taken by Porphyry to be equivalent, in a very Stoic fashion, to being either a body or an incorporeal (cf. also Alex. *In Top.* 359.12–16 = *SVF* 2.329 = LS 30 D). Be that as it may, it is interesting to note that Porphyry draws no distinction whatsoever between the possibly Stoic position and other positions listed by him which *we* would be more inclined to label as 'realist'. In other words, to say that genera and species depend on bare thoughts, or that they are concepts, does not amount for him to a straightforward denial of their reality: it is just one of the possible positions which one may adopt in regards of place in reality of universals, which still constitutes a *positive* claim about them. What I have been saying about the existence and oneness of Stoic universals seems also to be consistent with Alexander's (*in Top.* 359.12–16 = *SVF* 2.329 = LS 30 D) claim that Stoic concepts, even though they are not something (in the Stoic technical sense of 'something'), may nevertheless be told to be *one*.

As I have already noted, it is a *prima facie* reasonable assumption that the Stoics should be somehow involved in the messy landscape of §227, given the presence of Stoic terms there. However, Sextus targets Stoics at the very start of *PH* 2.219–28, precisely for their views about universals. It might then seem strange that Sextus should go back to his initial target, which he is supposed to have already refuted (even though this wouldn't be too far from his usual attacking strategies; see *supra*, 2 n. 3), using, furthermore, different terminology.

Yet, it might very well be that the Stoics are in fact targeted at §227, but *not* for their views about universals. Let me explain how. It looks like their strong stance against universals didn't prevent the Stoics from developing a normal apparatus of species and genera, so to speak.[32] For instance, we find that "a genus is a collection of inseparable concepts" (πλειόνων καὶ ἀναφαιρέτων ἐννοημάτων σύλληψις), and that the genus animal "includes particular animals" (περιείληφε τὰ κατὰ μέρος ζῷα), where the "particular animals" should be understood to be the different species of animals, and that a species is "that which is contained within a genus (τὸ ὑπὸ γένους περιεχόμενον), just like the human is contained within the animal" (D.L. 7.60–1 = LS 30C). This apparatus allows the division of a genus into species to take place (D.L. 7.61 = LS 32 C).

On the other hand, according to the Stoics universals cannot act as causes in respect of individuals, i.e. spatiotemporal corporeal particular entities.[33] This is important: many theories of universals, especially ancient one, hold them to be causes. An outstanding example of such theories is the Platonic theory of forms, which was actually targeted by the Stoics themselves (see e.g. Simpl. *in Cat.* 105.8–16 = LS 30E = *SVF* 2.278, Syrian. *in Metaph.* 105.21–5 = LS 30H = *SVF* 2.364, Stob. *Ecl.* 1.12.3.5–9, and *infra*, 25–7): form *F* is the cause, for individuals which are *F*, of their being *F*. According to the Stoic picture, such causal agency in respect of individuals should be assigned to common qualities.[34]

---

[32] Leaving aside the specific fashion of realism about universals I have sketched earlier on (see *supra*, 21–2) in regards to Sextus' arguments – according to which holding some item to be one and the same for different individuals, whatever be the place in reality assigned to it, is sufficient to be labelled as realists about universals –, Stoics may very well be said to be reductionist about universals, even though Caston (1999) wouldn't agree on that.

[33] Stoics seem to have conceived species of single individuals, such as the one corresponding to Socrates (see D.L. 7.60–1 = LS 30C). They are still concepts, though. And as concepts, they can't have any causal agency. See Durand 2018: 69–71.

[34] Apparently, this doesn't prevent the Stoics from conceiving some kind of relation between the individuals which *F* and the species (concept) *F*. Some sources even say that the former *participate* in the latter; see Stob. 1.136,21–137,6 = LS 30A = *SVF* 1.65. Still, such participation shouldn't be held to have any causal relevance: as I said, the individuals which are *F* are such *because of* the presence of a common quality in them.

So, the metaphysical picture I have outlined thus far is twofold: it comprises a normal apparatus of genera and species, but when it comes to individuals and to facts which concern them, a different kind of entity, namely common qualities, is invoked and assigned causal agency. The symbiosis of the being-human and the species human at *PH* 2.219–28 might be then thought to fit such picture. In other words, given that §227 is the first place where Sextus mentions individuals (aside from the brief mention of Dio in §225), the sudden appearance of the being-human might be thought to depend on the typically Stoic need to introduce a different kind of entity alongside universals in order to explain facts which concern individuals. Therefore, the being-human might be taken to be a Stoic common quality under disguise, so to speak.

This line of interpretation is attractive. Still, it has two advantages and two disadvantages. The first advantage is that it allows for a coherent reading of the whole section *PH* 2.219–28, both terminologically and thematically speaking: at §§219–26 Sextus confronts universals, i.e. genera and species, whereby he alludes to some typically Stoic views, such as that of universals as concepts (§219) and that of the something as the *summum genus* (§223); then, at §227 he moves on to attacking a different kind of entities, distinct from species and genera, namely the Stoic common qualities, hence the change of terminology. The second advantage is that it fits well with the hypothesis that the Stoic semantics of common nouns is somehow involved in the passage. As I said, such semantics could be made to work for Sextus' passage, thereby making sense of his assumptions about common nouns, if the *designatum* of common nouns, i.e. the being-human, were something like a Stoic common quality. So, we would have a nice overall picture: at §227 Sextus is targeting the Stoic doctrine of common qualities, and in the process of doing so resorts to the annexed semantics of common nouns.

At the same time, this is also the great disadvantage of this line of interpretation: Sextus' argument is about Stoic common qualities and this, as we have seen already (*supra*: 20), would imply that it is completely off target. For Sextus would assume that a Stoic common quality is numerically identical for different individuals, whereas it *isn't*, and try to infer a conclusion which he holds to be unpalatable to his target, whereas the Stoics would be perfectly fine with saying that, e.g., Dio's common quality is different from Theo's, at least numerically speaking. Moreover, this interpretation requires us to discard the aforementioned hypothesis that 'the being-human' depends on Aristotelian jargon (see *supra*, 5–6) and to assume that such expression refers to Stoic common qualities, whereas there seems to be no evidence that the Stoics used such terminology for common

qualities. So, the coherent reading which this interpretation allows for comes at great costs: it requires us to give up the only way we found to make sense of the strange expression used by Sextus ('the being-human') and to give a very uncharitable reading of Sextus' argument. Great costs which, nevertheless, someone might be willing to pay.[35]

However, there is an alternative. It might be held that the Stoics are indeed involved in the passage, but not as *target* of Sextus' argument: rather, they may very well be its *source*. In other words, we might think that Sextus' argument against universals depends on a *Stoic* argument against universals. This would imply that Sextus' argument actually is against universals, as it should be, and that the assumptions about common nouns which emerge therein are genuinely Stoic. Moreover, this fits well with the Stoic views on universals, and, further, with the fact that we are aware of a Stoic argument against universals: the Nobody (Οὖτις) argument, which seems to argue against the inclusion of universals such as the universal human – a very similar example to Sextus', coincidentally (or not: see *infra*, 26) – among τινα.[36] I will not go into the details of the argument right now, but since I shall have more to say about it and its connection with Sextus' argument, I will lay out its text here (see Simpl. *in Cat.*, p. 105.11 = LS 30E = *SVF* 2.278 and D.L. 7.187): "If someone is in Athens, she is not in Megara. But human is in Athens. Therefore, human is not in Megara" (εἴ τίς ἐστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν Μεγάροις· <ἄνθρωπος δέ ἐστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος ἐν Μεγάροις>).

At any rate, that Sextus' argument might be read as actually being against universals is the main advantage of this second line of interpretation. It has two disadvantages, though. The first, immediate one is that it doesn't really account for the change of terminology at §227. This is because, if the argument is to concern universals, the being-human should in fact be nothing other than the universal human, i.e. the *species* human Sextus has already talked about before. So, the problem remains: why does he use this new and strange expression to refer to something he has already mentioned?

---

[35] There is also the fact that, according to Stoic doctrines, a sentence such as '(A) human strolls' corresponds to a simple middle or predicative proposition (see *M* 8.97 = LS 34H = *SVF* 2.205, D.L. 7.70 = LS 34K = *SVF* 2.204, and Brunschwig 1986, Ebert 1991, Barnes 1993, Bobzien 2009, 88–9). While the sentences Sextus has in mind in premise (2) of the argument, i.e. '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls', must be somehow deictic, and are true if and only if the single determinate individual they speak about strolls, the corresponding Stoic simple middle or predicative proposition isn't deictic and doesn't speak of a single determinate individual: in short, it is true if and only *at least* one human strolls (see Alex. *in APr.* 402.15–7, Brunschwig 1984, 47–53, Crivelli 1994). So, Sextus' analysis of the truth conditions of an ἀξίωμα such as '(A) human strolls' seems to conflict with the standard Stoic classification of simple propositions. But this might not be a problem at all, provided that we take a different line of interpretation; see *infra*, 27.

[36] See Caston 1999, Crivelli 2007, Ademollo (forth. a).

A possible way of going about this difficulty is to slightly correct this line of interpretation, by taking into account the possible presence of Aristotelian jargon in the passage (see *supra*, 5–6). What I mean is, we could take seriously this hypothesis and hold that the target of the (supposedly) Stoic argument are, indeed, Aristotelian *essences*. This would explain the change in terminology relative to the previous sections and also allow for a coherent reading of the whole section *PH* 2.219–28: at §§219–26 Sextus targets genera and species, and at §227 he moves on to attack different, though related, entities. i.e. essences. Read this way, the argument at §227 could look as somehow cognate with the Nobody argument: just as the latter targets Platonic Forms, so the former targets Aristotelian essences. We would then find ourselves with *two* Stoic arguments directed against metaphysical doctrines held by predecessors of the Stoics, Plato and Aristotle respectively.

This is quite interesting, because there are indeed some similarities between the two arguments: apart from the fact that either one concerns the universal human, which must have been a usual example in such debates (even though the very name of the *Nobody* argument seems to require that it deal with the universal *human*), they both rely on premises consisting (partially or totally) of sentences of the form 'ἄνθρωπος φ's', such as 'ἄνθρωπος ἔστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις' and 'ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ'. In particular, it has been argued (see Crivelli 2007, 105–6) that the Nobody argument presupposes a non-standard Stoic analysis of such sentences, according to which they are to be treated as (expressing) Stoic definite propositions, i.e. as *deictic* sentences. In other words, 'Human is in Athens' ('ἄνθρωπος ἔστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις') should be taken to be equivalent to 'This is in Athens', with 'this' ranging exclusively over the domain of *humans* and designating specifically the universal human.[37] This fits extraordinarily well with the analysis of the sentences in Sextus' premise (2), '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls', which I have put forward (see *supra*, 9–11), and, if true, shows that in contexts such as this one the Stoics were willing to set aside their standard analysis of propositions – according to which '(A) human strolls' should be analysed as a simple middle or predicative proposition, thereby being subject to truth-conditions different from those which Sextus' argument presupposes (see *supra*, 25 n. 35) – and to adopt a non-standard one which suited best their needs.

---

[37] This seems to resonate well with Alex. *in APr.* 402.20–3, which contains an interesting remark regarding sentences such as 'This (οὗτος) strolls': when the object of deixis is female, 'This (οὗτος) strolls' and 'This (οὗτος) doesn't stroll' are said to both be false. Thus, the idea seems to emerge that, broadly speaking, the meaning of a deictic word may imply a restriction on the domain of things over which it ranges, thereby resulting in falsity when such restriction is not abided by. Still, we are dealing with sentences which according to standard Stoic analysis could be classified as (expressing) *definite* propositions; see Barnes 1999b, 41–5, Durand 2018, 109–16.

I now come to the second disadvantage of this line of interpretation. It consists in the fact that it implies attributing to the Stoics an argument as bad as Sextus'. Not that the Nobody argument is perfect: its effectiveness as a *reductio* against its Platonic target depends on the fact that she be committed to treating Forms as quasi-individuals (see Caston 99, 201–2, Crivelli 2007, 100–4, Ademollo (forth.), 23). Moreover, it seems that, if the Nobody is to work as an *anti-realist* argument against universals – this time taking 'realism' and 'anti-realism' in the more usual sense –, i.e. to infer that they are completely unreal, it needs to rely on the further assumption that only particulars exists, which may imply a *petitio principii*.[38] However, there is a difference between an argument potentially being *ineffective*, like the Nobody argument, and an argument being, at best, *non-conclusive*, like Sextus'. This might suggest caution in attributing such a bad argument to the Stoics. Again, not that they should be held to be infallible. But certain logically faulty moves may seem to suit Sextus more than, say, Chrysippus.

These are the two main options available. Both may allow us to make some sense of the Stoic presence in the passage, and both have advantages as well as disadvantages. All in all, I think that the second line of interpretation is better, for it allows for a coherent of the argument's terminology, content and position in the wider context of *PH* 2.219–28, while also resonating well with what we know about the Stoic criticism of universals. And interestingly so, I might add. For this interpretation, if true, implies that Sextus' Stoic argument against Aristotelian essences requires essences to be taken to be the *designata* of tokens of common nouns, thereby establishing an intriguing conflation between essences and Stoic common qualities.

It goes without saying that the evidence for this is scarce and far from being conclusive, but I believe that §228 can be taken to support this reading, as I shall try to show in due time. At any rate, there is an important result which this detailed study of §227 has led us to. For both interpretations single out the Stoic semantics of common nouns as the more probable source of Sextus' assumptions regarding common nouns at §227, be they his own or not. In particular, the double designation of common nouns to which Sextus is ultimately committed seems to recall, if anything, one of the main features of the Stoic semantics of common nouns, according to one of its possible reconstructions (see *supra*, 16–20): the distinction between the subject of a sentence (the *designatum* of its subject

---

[38] Cf. for instance Ademollo (forth.), 23: "This contradiction (*scil.* that the form of human both is and is not in Megara) forces the Platonist to acknowledge that the form of human is not a 'someone' (τις), i.e. not a particular: it is *not a someone* (οὔ τις), hence a '*non–someone*' (οὔτις). This however means that it is completely unreal, in the light of the Stoic theory according to which '*something*' (τι) is the supreme genus of reality". See also Caston 1999, 203.

term) and that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true. It seems then that §227 might have some bearing on our reconstruction of the relevant Stoic doctrines, whichever interpretation we opt for.

3. Sextus' arguments at §228

3.1 *A first glance*

It is now time to finally move to §228. Here, Sextus targets the so-called "common accidents" or "common properties" (κοινὰ συμβεβηκότα), the examples he gives of such entities being sight and breath. Yet again, it is quite hard to understand what *exactly* he has in mind. At any rate, he holds what he is going to say about common accidents to be similar to what he has said about the being-human at §227:

> Παραπλήσια δὲ λέγεται καὶ περὶ τῶν κοινῶν συμβεβηκότων. εἰ γὰρ ἓν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συμβέβηκε Δίωνί τε καὶ Θέωνι τὸ ὁρᾶν, ἐὰν καθ' ὑπόθεσιν φθαρῇ μὲν Δίων, Θέων δὲ περιῇ καὶ ὁρᾷ, ἤτοι τὴν ὅρασιν τοῦ ἐφθαρμένου Δίωνος ἄφθαρτον μένειν ἐροῦσιν, ὅπερ ἀπεμφαίνει, <ἢ> τὴν αὐτὴν ὅρασιν ἐφθάρθαι τε καὶ μὴ ἐφθάρθαι λέξουσιν, ὅπερ ἄτοπον· οὐκ ἄρα ἡ Θέωνος ὅρασις ἡ αὐτή ἐστι τῇ Δίωνος, ἀλλ' εἰ ἄρα, ἰδία ἑκατέρου.
>
> Similar remarks (*scil.* to the ones made at §227) are made in regards of common accidents. For if seeing is one and the same for Dio and Theo, then if we suppose that Dio has died, whereas Dio survives and sees, either they will say that the sight of dead Dio remains undestroyed, which is incongruous, or they will affirm that the same sight both has been and has not been destroyed, which is absurd. Therefore, Theo's sight is not the same as Dio's but, if anything, it is peculiar to each. (§228; transl. Annas and Barnes, with modifications)[39]

---

[39] I should note the terminology changes, both here and in the later argument about breath. Sextus switches from expressions constructed with a neuter article and an infinitive, namely "seeing" and "breathing" (τὸ ὁρᾶν, τὸ ἀναπνεῖν), to nouns, namely "sight" and "breath" (ὅρασις, ἀναπνοή). In my opinion, such change in terminological shouldn't be taken to hint at any deeper philosophical meaning. Still, there are some parallels which might be worth mentioning. The first one is *PH* 3.14. There, Sextus discusses rival theories of causation, distinguishing between χύσις and τὸ χεῖσθαι: the first is a corporeal body (effect), whereas the latter is an incorporeal Stoic predicate (cf. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 8.9.26.3–4 = LS 55C and *supra*, 16–20). It seems hard to me that a such a distinction may be read into §228. The second parallel is *PH* 3.49, where Sextus discusses dispositions and privations. There, sight (ὅρασις) is held to be the disposition (ἕξις) whose privation is blindness (τυφλότης). A few lines below, though, Sextus mentions "being blind" (τὸ τυφλὸν εἶναι): "Someone who didn't have any conception of sight could not say that so-and-so does not possess sight – which is exactly what being blind amounts to (ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ τυφλὸν εἶναι)". This change of terminology doesn't seem to have any deeper meaning, just like the one at §228.

This is what Sextus has to say about sight. His argument is structured as a conditional in which the antecedent expresses the starting assumption and the consequent expresses the two horns of a dilemma: the negation of both horns of the dilemma allows Sextus to infer the conclusion, i.e. the contradictory of the starting assumption, by *modus tollens*. This strategy is indeed very similar to the one we found at §227 (and to the one you may find at §219–26, for that matter).

The starting assumption is that a common accident is one and the same for all individuals in which it inheres. Assuming then that one of the subjects in which it inheres dies, it follows that the common accident either (i) survives or (ii) it doesn't. If (i), we will have that a common accident may exist *without* its underlying subject, which Sextus takes to be incongruous. If (ii), we will have to claim that the common accident ceases to exist in respect of the subject that has passed away, but that it survives in respect of other subjects which survive.[40] However, we assumed that the common accident is one and the same for all individuals in which it inheres. And the same thing, where 'same' expresses numerical identity, cannot undergo contradictory affections at the same time ("the same sight both has been and has not been destroyed"). So, what we normally experience, namely that people – but the same might go for animals – carry on seeing even if someone has passed away (whereby their sight ceases to exist as well), is taken by Sextus to imply a violation of the principle of non–contradiction (PNC). Quite interestingly then, Sextus is (dialectically) committed to PNC, and this is not the only passage where that seems to be the case (cf. for instance §§224–6).[41]

At any rate, it should be quite clear now that Sextus' argument requires a strong type identity to be at play, namely *numerical* identity. Only numerical identity can make it the case that what Sextus says actually implies that PNC is violated. So, the starting assumption of the argument is that a common accident is *numerically* identical for all subjects in which it inheres. This recalls the starting assumption of §227, namely that the being-human is numerically identical for different individuals. §227 and §228 are similar, after all.

What I said about sight goes also for Sextus' following example, breath, although with some slight modifications:

---

[40] In the case of sight, it is also important that the surviving subjects should also keep on *seeing*: Sextus assumes that Theo survives *and sees*. If Theo were to undergo some kind of Oedipus-style situation, i.e. to survive but be blind, Sextus' argument would work differently. Things are different in the case of breath. That is simply because, quite intuitively, breathing is a necessary condition of surviving: for *x* to survive, i.e. to live, *x* has to breath. But maybe modern medicine has changed things a bit.

[41] On Sextus' dialectical commitment to the PNC, see Machuca 2012.

καὶ γὰρ εἰ ταὐτὸν συμβέβηκε Δίωνί τε καὶ Θέωνι τὸ ἀναπνεῖν, οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τὴν ἐν

Θέωνι ἀναπνοὴν εἶναι, τὴν ἐν Δίωνι δὲ μὴ εἶναι· ἐνδέχεται δὲ τοῦ μὲν φθαρέντος τοῦ δὲ

περιόντος· οὐκ ἄρα ἡ αὐτή ἐστιν.

Also, if breathing is the same for Dio and Theo, it is not possible for the breath in

Theo to exist and the one in Dio not to exist. But it is possible, if the one is dead

and the other survives. Therefore, it is not the same. (§228)

This is the general picture. I shall now take a closer look at Sextus' arguments. Given that the argument about breath is simpler, though very similar to the one about sight, I will start from the former, and then move to the latter.

3.2 Breath

Sextus' arguments at §228 elicit some kind of discomfort, just like the one at §227. However, this time around it is easier to address and flesh out such discomfort, given that no assumptions about common nouns are involved which we are to make sense of.

For a start, it is not clear what a common accident even is supposed to be. Given that the arguments assume that a common accident possesses numerical identity and purports to prove that it doesn't, a common accident must be taken to be some kind of universal. What is strange is that the previous section (§§219–26) too is about universals, as well as §227 (or at least, Sextus *wants* it to be about universals). So, yet again, why the change of terminology? One possible answer comes quite easily. After all, in philosophical prose 'συμβεβηκός' usually refers to accidental attributes, as opposed to essential and/or necessary ones. So, the *prima facie* reasonable hypothesis would be this: common accidents are universal accidents (something like the things which are said of a subject and are in a subject in the meta–ontology of Aristotle's *Categories* 2). The only strange thing is, the usual examples of accidents are attributes such as being white, or being musical (whatever that means). Instead, Sextus' examples of common accidents are breath and sight, the latter of which elsewhere (see *supra*, 27 n. 40) he takes to be a disposition (ἕξις).[42]

---

[42] A different possibility involves calling into play Epicurus and his followers. As a matter of fact, it looks like 'συμβεβηκός' is a proper piece of Epicurean terminology, used to refer to properties belonging to atoms and aggregates, both essential and accidental (see e.g. LS 7B). Such use is attested elsewhere in Sextus' works (see *M* 10.219–21 = LS 7C, and possibly *M* 7.269–71). This might suggest that Sextus' arguments at §228 actually target Epicurean properties. However, properties as they are made out to be by Epicurus do not seem to be a fitting target for Sextus' argument. For

Be that as it may, it is interesting to note that Sextus' arguments may work with attributes such as being white and being musical *as well*. In general, they work – and this is trivial – with *any* attribute whose relation with the subject to which it inheres is such that the demise of its subject may give rise to the following question, upon which Sextus' arguments turn: does the attribute survive the demise of its subject, or not? But what kind of attributes are these? Well, to answer to this latter question, I need to call into play an old distinction: that between accidental and essential attributes or, to borrow Alan Code's (1986) terminology, that between what something *has* and what something *is*.[43] It seems to me that only accidental attributes, i.e. (according to the notion just expounded) attributes which are merely had by their subject, may be liable to Sextus' line of argument. For essential attributes definitely seem to escape it. Let us assume, for instance, that Dio is *essentially* human. What happens, then, were he to die? Well, in that case we would not wonder, probably, whether his humanity has now been destroyed or not. Intuitively, what we could say would be only that *a human being* has died. And the human being we would be talking about would be exactly Dio.

So, Sextus' arguments at §228 would seem to be effective against every attribute which his opponents are inclined to regard as accidental, in the sense of 'accidental' just expounded. This does not mean that the same line of argument cannot be used against humanity. Indeed, it can be used against it, but this requires that humanity be taken to be an accidental attribute, which may prove quite costly, for some philosophers.[44] Therefore, there seem to be good theoretical reasons to take common accidents to be universal accidents, or something akin to these. This supports the interpretation of §227 I put forward in the previous section, according to which §227 targets essences, possibly reflecting – if anything – a Stoic argument against Aristotelian doctrines. For the contrast that would thereby ensue between §227, which concerns essences, and §228, which concerns universal accidents, works well and looks itself Aristotelian, at least on a superficial level. It would follow that the whole section *PH* 2.219–28 has the following overall structure: §§219–26

---

not only is their existence strictly dependent on the subject to which they inhere, but – I take it – they are also particular and *not* universal (see Sedley 1999, 362–82 and Bronowski 2013).

[43] It goes without saying that different distinctions between accidental and essential attributes may be drawn: for instance, one may take all *necessary* attributes of a thing to be its essential attributes. The distinction I am working with is quite coherent with what Aristotle says at *Metaph.* Δ 30, 1025ᵃ 30–4, where he famously assumes that there are necessary attributes of a thing which nonetheless are *not* essential attributes of it.

[44] It follows that the line of argument of §228 *can* in principle be used against the items which Sextus targets at §227, though at the cost of (possibly) heavy concessions. What about the opposite scenario? Can Sextus' line of argument at §227 be put to work extensively against accidental attributes? Well, it seems that for this to be the case, Sextus would need to employ something like paronyms. For instance, given an accidental attribute F, his argument would turn upon sentences such as '(A) F^* φ's', where F^* is a paronym of F.

target genera and species (in particular, Sextus' examples are animal and human, namely genera and species of *substances*); §227 targets entities such as the being-human, which may be taken to be an Aristotelian essence; §228 targets common accidents, i.e. universal accidents. This fits together quite well.

This being said, all we need to know to evaluate Sextus' brief argument is that breath must be taken to be a universal. Here's a summary of it:

(1) If breath is one and the same for different individuals, e.g. Dio and Theo, then

it is not possible that the breath in Theo should exist and the breath in Dio

should not exist

(2) But this is possible, if Dio dies and Theo survives

(C) Therefore, breath is not one and the same for different individuals

The underlying assumption in premise (2) is that, if Dio dies, his breath ceases to exist with him, whereas Theo (and everyone else, for that matter) may survive and carry on breathing. This makes sense. The problem is that it is *his* breath which ceases to exist: if Dio dies, *Dio's* breath pops out of existence, so to speak, alongside Dio himself. It is no coincidence then that in premise (1) Sextus himself mentions *Dio's* breath ("the breath in Dio) *and Theo's* breath ("the breath in Theo"). This is strange, though: didn't we assume, in the very same premise, that breath is *one and the same* for everyone? How should we account for the abrupt transition from the universal breath to Dio's and Theo's breath*s*?

This transition looks far from innocent. As a matter of fact, if the breath in the antecedent of premise (1) is a universal, Sextus isn't allowed to distinguish *Dio's* breath from *Theo's*. The universal breath isn't *anybody's* breath.[45] Having said that, the transition from the universal breath to Dio's and Theo's breaths seem to hinge on the following assumption: if the universal breath inheres in Dio and Theo, then there exist such things as *Dio's* breath and *Theo's* breath. This is not wrong. As a matter of fact, Dio's breath and Theo's breath look a lot like contemporary tropes, which may be described as particular and non-repeatable instances of properties, such as the red in *this* rose. In this respect, it is quite reasonable to assume that the inherence of the universal breath in Dio and Theo implies that each of them has his own particular breath (i.e. is own particular trope).[46]

---

[45] It could *at most* be thought belong to something like the universal human, or the universal animal. But it can't in any way whatsoever be taken to belong to some *individual*, like Sextus does.

[46] Both Plato and Aristotle may allow entities very similar to contemporary tropes in their ontology. As for Plato, some passages in the *Parmenides* and in the *Phaedo* seem to hint at forms which are *immanent* in individuals; see

The distinction between the universal breath and its tropes allows us to single out the problem affecting Sextus' argument at its very core: Sextus seems to conflate the universal breath and its tropes, i.e. Dio's and Theo's breath. This is the only way a fact we experience every day, namely that people keep on breathing even if someone has passed away, might be made out to be troublesome for the identity of the universal breath. To understand why that is the case, let us imagine that there is indeed a universal breath which inheres in Dio and Theo, so that each of them has his own trope. Imagine then that Dio passes away: what happens now? Intuitively, Dio's breath ceases to exist. But this doesn't imply that the universal breath or Theo's breath should be affected. Dio's death is troublesome for the universal breath and Theo's breath only if Dio's breath is somehow identified with the universal breath and Theo's breath. That way, we will have what Sextus wants: one and the same entity exists (in Theo) and doesn't exist (in Dio) at the same time, which is a clear violation of PNC.[47]

To confirm this, let us turn to premise (1). To quote Sextus, "if breathing is the same for Dio and Theo, it is not possible for the breath in Theo to exist and the one in Dio not to exist". If it involves three different entities, namely the universal breath and its two tropes in Dio and Theo, the consequent doesn't follow from the antecedent: even if the universal breath is one and the same for Dio and Theo, nothing prevents Dio's breath from ceasing to exist while Theo's survives. On the other hand, if there is only one single entity involved, namely the universal breath, Sextus shouldn't even mention Dio's breath and Theo's breath in the consequent: as I said, the universal breath isn't anybody's breath, and so it cannot be taken to cease to exist when someone passes away.

3.3 *Sight*

This goes also for Sextus' argument about sight. It is slightly more complicated, in that it involves a dilemma in the consequent of premise (1):

(1) If sight is one and the same for different individuals, e.g. Dio and Theo, then

if Dio dies and Theo survives and sees, either (A) the sight of dead Dio still

exists or (B) the same sight exists and doesn't exist

Ademollo 2013, 83–5. As for Aristotle, the things "which are in a subject but are not said of a subject" in the meta-ontology of *Cat.* 2 may be held to be particular and non-repeatable instances of properties, i.e. tropes; see Wedin 2000, 38–66, Matthews 2009, 144–54 and Ademollo (forth. b), 45–9.

[47] That the one and the same thing exists and doesn't exist is an *extreme* breach of PNC. Still, Sextus may have problems with any claim of the form 'x is F and isn't F', where 'F' stands for any property.

(2) (1A) is incongruous

(3) (1B) is absurd

(C) Therefore, sight isn't one and the same for different individuals

The underlying assumption of (1A–B) is, again, that if someone passes away their sight might cease to exist as well, while other people can happily carry on seeing. Just like in the case of breath, there is a transition from the universal sight to *Dio's* sight.[48] It hinges, probably, on the assumption that, if the universal sight inheres in Dio and Theo, each of them has his own sight. The problem is, yet again, that Dio's sight is *Dio's*: it a particular, non-repeatable instance which belongs exclusively to Dio. Therefore, it shouldn't be identified with the universal sight: Dio possesses *his own* sight only in that the universal sight inheres in him, but his own sight is different from the universal sight.

The two horns of the dilemma depend exactly on a such an identification. Let us distinguish, yet again, three entities: the universal sight and its two tropes which belong to Dio and Theo, respectively. We will then have that, if Dio dies, *his* sight ceases to exist, but this won't affect neither Theo's nor the universal sight. If the questions are to be put forward, 'Can Dio's sight survive his passing away?', or 'Can the same sight both be destroyed and survive at the same time?', Dio's sight needs to be identified with the universal sight and with Theo's.

3.4 Concluding remarks

It is possible that such an identification, in both of these arguments, is favoured by the starting assumption, that a common accident is one and the same for different individuals: Sextus might be prone to think that, if sight/breath is one and the same for Dio and Theo, then Dio's sight/breath is in fact the same as Theo's, and therefore, it is the *universal* sight/breath (given that it is the same for both). However, this is incorrect, as I hopefully showed. And someone who held common accidents to exist might simply deny that the universal sight/breath is affected by Dio's death (or, actually, death*s*: he is made to pass away twice in a few lines), like Sextus' arguments require. Still, Sextus seems to have got what he wanted: even after the thorough analysis of §228 I have carried out shows, that seems to be a sense in which Dio's sight/breath is *not* the same as Theo's, in that there are numerically different instances of the same universal attribute.

---

[48] In this case, it is the opponents who will have to introduce it: "either *they will say* that the sight of dead Dio remains undestroyed [...[or *they will affirm* that [...]...". Still, it is clear that this is what Sextus takes to follow from the premises, whether it is him or the opponents who actually have to state it.

At this point, we could wonder, yet again, who Sextus' target is. As I have already said, we may safely assume that he is targeting philosophers who are realists in respect of universals, or of *this kind* of universals, assuming that common accidents are universal accidents. On the other hand, our interpretation of §227 may give us some hints for §228: if §227 actually is about Aristotelian essences, and the contrast between essential and accidental properties is itself typically Aristotelian, a reasonable inference might be that the target of this section is likewise Aristotelian.

References

Ademollo, F. (2013). Plato's Conception of the Forms: Some Remarks. In: Chiaradonna and Galluzzo 2013, pp. 41–85.

Ademollo, F. (2022). Anti-Platonism in Aristotle's *Categories*. In: Ademollo, F., Amerini, F. and De Risi, V., eds., *Thinking and Calculating. Essays in Logic, Its History and Its Philosophical Applications in Honour of Massimo Mugnai*. Cham, pp. 31–52.

Ademollo, F. (forth. a). Stoic Reactions to Plato's *Sophist*.

Ademollo, F. (forth. b). *Categories* 1–3' (presented at the 22° Symposium Aristotelicum, Oslo, 2022).

Armstrong, D.M (1989). *Universals. An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder (CO).

Alessandrelli, M. (2016). L'ontologia stoica del qualcosa. *ILIESI digitale. Memorie* 2, Roma.

Alessandrelli, M. (2022). Bronowski, *The Stoics on Lekta. Gnomon* 94(8), pp. 676–86 (review of Bronowski 2019).

Algra, K., Barnes, J., Mansfeld, J. and Schofield, M., eds. (1999). *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Cambridge.

Annas, J. (1992). Sextus Empiricus and the Peripatetics. *Elenchos* 13, pp. 201–31.

Annas, J., and Barnes, J., eds (2000). *Sextus Empiricus. Outlines of Scepticism*. Cambridge.

Bailey, D.T.J. (2014). The Structure of Stoic Metaphysics. *OSAP* 46, pp. 253–309.

Barnes, J. (1990). *The Toils of Scepticism*. Cambridge.

Barnes, J. (1993). A Big, Big D?. *The Classical Review* 43(2), pp. 304–6 (review of Ebert 1991).

Barnes, J. (1999a). Meaning. In: Algra et al. 1999, pp. 193–213.

Barnes, J. (1999b). Aristotle and Stoic logic. In: Ierodiakonou K., ed., *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*. Oxford, pp. 23–53.

Barnes, J. (2003). *Porphyry. Introduction*. Oxford.

Barnes, J (2007). *Truth, etc.: Six Lectures on Ancient Logic*. Oxford–New York.

Barnes, J. (2012). *Logical Matters: Essays in Ancient Philosophy II*. Oxford.

Blank, D. and Atherton, C. (2003). The Stoic Contribution to Traditional Grammar. In: Inwood 2003, pp. 310–27.

Bobzien, S. (2003). Logic. In: Inwood 2003, pp. 85–123.

Bronowski, A. (2013). Epicureans and Stoics on Universals. In Chiaradonna and Galluzzo 2013, pp. 255–97

Bronowski, A. (2019). *The Stoics on* Lekta. *All There Is to Say*. Oxford.

Brunschwig, J. (1984). Remarques sur la théorie stoïcienne du nom propre. *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 6(1), pp. 3–19. Reprinted as 'Remarks on the Stoic Theory of the Proper Noun' in Brunschwig 1994, pp. 39–56 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Brunschwig, J. (1986). Quelques remarques sur la conception stoicienne du nom propre. *Histoire tpistemologie Langage* 6, pp. 3–19. Reprinted as 'Remarks on the Classification of Simple Propositions in Hellenistic Logic', in Brunschwig 1994, pp. 57–71.

Brunschwig, J. (1988). La théorie stoïcienne du genre suprême et l'ontologie platonicienne. In: Barnes, J. and Mignucci, M., eds., *Matter and Metaphysics. Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum*. Napoli, pp. 19–127. Reprinted as 'The Stoic Theory of the Supreme Genus and Platonic Ontology' in Brunschwig 1994, pp. 92–157 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Brunschwig, J. (1994). *Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*. Cambridge.

Bury, R.G., ed. (1933). *Sextus Empiricus I. Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. London.

Castagnoli, L. and Fait, P., ed. (2023). *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Logic*. Cambridge.

Caston, V. (1999). Something and Nothing: The Stoics on Concepts and Universals. *OSAP* 17, pp. 145–213.

Caston, V. (forth.). The Stoics on Mental Representation.

Chiaradonna, R. and Galluzzo, G., eds. (2013). *Universals in Ancient Philosophy*. Pisa.

Code, A. (1986). Aristotle: Essence and Accident. In: Grandy, R.E. and Warner, R., eds., *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality. Intentions, Categories, Ends*. Oxford, pp. 411–40.

Crivelli, P. (1994). Indefinite Propositions and Anaphora in Stoic Logic. *Phronesis* 39, pp. 187–206.

Crivelli, P. (2007). The Stoics on Definitions and Universals. *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 18, pp. 89–122.

Durand, M. (2018). *Language and Reality: Stoic Semantic Reconstructed*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto.

Ebert, T. (1991). *Dialektiker und frühe Stoiker bei Sextus Empiricus: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der Aussagenlogik*, Göttingen.

Frede, M. (1977). The origins of traditional grammar. In: Butts, R.E. and Hintikka, J., eds., *Historical and Philosophical Dimensions of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science*. Dordrecht, pp. 51–79. Reprinted in Frede 1987, pp. 338–59 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Frede, M. (1978). Principles of Stoic grammar. In: Rist, J., ed., *The Stoics*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: 27–75. Reprinted in Frede 1987, pp. 301–37 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Frede, M. (1987). *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Minneapolis.

Frede, M. (1994). The Stoic Notion of a Lekton. In: Everson, S., ed., *Language*. Cambridge, pp. 109–28.

Kripke, S. (1977). Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference. *Midwest Studies* 2, pp. 255–76.

Kripke, S. (2013). *Reference and Existence*. Oxford.

Long, A.A. (1971). *Problems in Stoicism*. London.

Machucha, D. (2012). Pyrrhonism and the Law of Non–Contradiction. In: Machuca, D., ed., *Phyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*. Dordrecht, pp. 51–77.

Mates, B. (1996). *The Skeptic Way*. Oxford.

Matthews, G.B. (2009). Aristotelian Categories. In: Agnostopoulos, G., ed., *A Companion to Aristotle*, Chichester (U.K.), pp. 144–61.

Menn, S. (1999). The Stoic Theory of Categories. *OSAP* 17, pp. 215–47.

Mutschmann, H., and Mau, J., eds. (1958). *Sexti Empirici Opera. Vol. I: Pyrroneion Hypotyposeon*. Leipzig.

Quine, W.V.O. (1950). Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis. *JPh* 47 (22), pp. 621–33.

Sedley, D. (1983). The Stoic Criterion of Identity. *Phronesis* 27, pp. 255–75.

Sedley, D. (1985). The Stoic Theory of Universals. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (5), pp. 87–92.

Sedley, D. (1999). Hellenistic Physics and Metaphysics. In: Algra et al. 1999, pp. 355–411.

Wedin, M. (2000). *Aristotle's Theory of Substance*: *the* Categories *and* Metaphysics *Zeta*. Oxford.

37

A Linguistic Muddle. Sextus' Arguments Against Universals at *PH* 2.227–8

Abstract: At *PH* 2.227–8 Sextus argues that certain entities which his adversaries hold to be one and the same for different individuals actually aren't. This he does by, among other things, considering the truth-value of sentences whose subject is a common noun, thereby drawing an interesting connection between metaphysics and semantics. In this paper, I provide a careful analysis of Sextus' arguments at *PH* 2.227–8 and explore the origins and limits of such a connection. In particular, I argue that the Stoics and their doctrines about universals and common nouns might be directly involved in Sextus' arguments.

Keywords: Sextus, universals, Stoics, common nouns, essence, realism

PH 2.219–28 is the only passage where Sextus is directly concerned with universals. Even though he promises that he "will speak more diffusely elsewhere" (§219: πλατύτερον [...] ἐν ἄλλοις διαλεξόμεθα) about genera and species, such lengthier discussion is nowhere to be found in the extant Sextan corpus.[1] In particular, I will focus on *PH* 2.227–8, where Sextus considers the following issue: that of an entity which is the *same* for different individuals. This relates to one of the most fundamental features of universals: being something which is wholly present in different individuals while retaining its numerical identity.[2]

In the following, after giving a brief overview of the wider context within which they fall, I will provide a thorough analysis of Sextus' arguments against universals in *PH* 2.227–8. In doing so, I will also try to sketch a more precise outline of their possible dogmatic target and ancestry. As it will become clear, the passage has some Stoic flavour to it, if it has any flavour at all. This might yield some interesting results, both for our understanding of Sextus' arguments and, possibly, for the reconstruction of certain Stoic doctrines regarding common nouns.

---

[2] See e.g. Armstrong 1989, 5.

1.   Universals, division and dialectic (*PH* 2.213–28)

Let us start with some context. As I said, Sextus' arguments at *PH* 2.227–8 are part of a lengthier series of attacks against universals, which takes up the whole of *PH* 2.219–28. I will provide a brief overview of the contents of these arguments but, before doing that, I would like to spend a few words explaining what Sextus is up to in this part of *PH* 2 (let us say, starting from §193). Here, Sextus deals with a variety of topics: deduction (§§193–203), induction (§204), definition (§§205–12), division (§213), division of a word into its significations (§214), division of a whole into parts (§§215–18). His main purpose is that of waging an all–out war against dialectic, as he makes clear at §213: given that some of the dogmatics define dialectic as "a science of syllogism, induction, definition and division", and that he has already dealt with syllogism, induction and definition (at §§193–203, §204 and §§205–12, respectively), he only needs to target division, and his battle against dialectic will have been fought, and (supposedly) won.[3] That is exactly what he does starting from §213, and where universals come into play. For, says Sextus (§213), there are four kinds of division: division of a word into its significations, division of a whole into a parts, division of a genus into a species and division of a species into particulars. The first two he moves to deal with right in the following paragraphs. The third one, division of a genus into species, is what gives way to his attacks against universals, starting from §219. The fourth one, division of a species into particulars, does not find any explicit, exclusive treatment. However, Sextus' words at the onset of §219 may very well indicate that he holds his account about genera and species to be sufficient for the fourth kind of division as well: "*There remains* (ὑπολείπεται) the argument concerning genera and species...".

These minor discrepancies aside, the picture is the following: Sextus attacks universals because they are involved in division, and division is an essential part of dialectic, which is his main target in this part of *PH* 2. More precisely, his general goal is that of arguing that universals cannot exist as such, i.e. be one and the same for different individuals, which quite evidently makes division impossible: if there is no single genus which different species share in, there will be nothing to be divided into species (cf. *infra*, 21 n. 30). As a matter of fact, Sextus never speaks about 'universals' (τὰ καθόλου), but he only mentions genera and species, which are involved in the last two kinds of division he expounds at *PH* 2.213. This seems to be a general feature of his philosophical jargon: in his extant works, Sextus *never* uses the otherwise standard terminology (τὰ καθόλου), simply

---

[3] Still, one of the main features of Sextus' line of attack against the dogmatics is that he often provides *multiple* arguments against their theses, which work independently of each other. So, even though he may regard his arguments against dialectic at *PH* 2.193–28 to be effective, he could still put forward some *new* ones against it. The more, the better.

mentioning genera and species, or generic and specific items (such as the generic human; see e.g. *M* 7.269).)

Now, on to *PH* 2.219–28. Leaving §§227–8 aside, his arguments at §§219–26 concern genera and species. Individuals are completely out of the picture, except for a brief mention of Dio at §225, and come into play only at §§227–8. That should not come as a surprise: after all, Sextus is supposed to be dealing with the division of *genera* into *species*, and so it is only natural that his arguments are concerned with genera and species, and not with individuals.[4] Having said that, Sextus' arguments at §§219–26 begin with a dilemma concerning the way genera and species may be said, in a wide sense, to exist: either they are "concepts" (ἐννοήματα), or they have their own subsistence (ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν). This may get some readers to raise their eyebrows, for that universals are concepts is a typical Stoic position. This is not the only passage where Sextus' words seemingly depend on Stoic doctrines or terminology. After this initial dilemma, Sextus tackles the two following issues: participation of different species in a genus (§§220–2), and the properties of a genus in which multiple different species participate (§§223–5), whereby he mentions the 'something', that is, the Stoic *summum genus* (§223).

I shall have more to say about how §§227–8 fit the whole passage dedicated to universals and about the Stoic presence therein. This requires a thorough analysis of Sextus' arguments at §§227–8 which I will provide later on. For now, I shall only note that there is a similarity between Sextus' arguments at §§227–8 and his previous ones about participation: just as the former concern the issue of some entity being *one and the same* for different individuals, so do the latter concern the issue of a genus being *one and the same* for the different species which participate in it. The only difference is, at §227–8 this issue is all the more pressing in that it involves *individuals*, that is, particular, spatiotemporal entities, distinct from one another. This might explain why, despite such similarity, Sextus' line of reasoning at §§227–8 does not resemble his previous criticism of participation. For the latter amounted to a straightforward denial of one of the basic requirements of participation: the genus, says Sextus, simply *cannot* be one and the same for (and in) different

---

[4] One might also think that, since individuals play an important role at §§227–8, that is actually where the fourth, otherwise neglected kind of division (that of a species into individuals) gets its own treatment. However, no textual clue allows such an inference. One alternative which I hold to be more viable is that of thinking that Sextus regards the division of a species into individuals as being somehow dependent on that of a genus into species, so that the refutation of the latter actually implies the refutation of the former: if the division of a genus into species is impossible, then so is that of a species into individuals. Still, Sextus doesn't give us any clues at all, nor is there any evidence that he may have been committed to such a view. The precise place of individuals in Sextus' criticism of universals at *PH* 2.219–28 will give us a good deal of trouble further ahead.

species (§220). On the other hand, his arguments at §§227–8 may be summed up along the following lines: the identity of a universal for different individuals requires certain facts to hold about said individuals; but given that that is not the case, the starting assumption must be abandoned.[5]

2. Sextus' argument at §227

2.1 *A first glance*

After these preliminary remarks, I will now deal with *PH* 2.227. Here, Sextus targets what he calls "the being-human" (τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι). In order to do that, he uses various terms of probable Stoic origin, such as 'προσηγορία' ('appellative', 'common noun'; see D.L. 7.58 = LS 33M = *SVF* Diogenes 22), 'ἀξίωμα' ('proposition'; see D.L. 7.63 = LS 33F and n. 6, on this page) and 'σύνταξις' ('construction; cf. LS 33G = *SVF* 2.183, LS 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22, LS 33q = *SVF* 2.184, LS 33F). Such an abundant presence of Stoic terminology seems to suggest, *prima facie*, that the Stoics themselves are somehow involved in Sextus' argument at §227. I will come back to that later on. For now, an initial assessment of Sextus' argument will be enough. Sextus puts forward a comparison between sentences whose subject is a common noun, such as 'human', and sentences whose subject is a proper noun, such as 'Paris' and 'Alexander':[6]

> ἔτι καὶ τοῦτο θεάσασθαι ἄξιον. ὥσπερ γὰρ, ἐπεὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ Πάρις, οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τὸ μὲν 'Ἀλέξανδρος περιπατεῖ' ἀληθὲς εἶναι, τὸ δὲ 'Πάρις περιπατεῖ' ψεῦδος, οὕτως εἰ τὸ αὐτό ἐστι τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι Θέωνι καὶ Δίωνι, εἰς σύνταξιν ἀξιώματος ἀγομένη ἡ 'ἄνθρωπος' προσηγορία ἢ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων ποιήσει τὸ ἀξίωμα.

> Again, this too is worthy of consideration: just as, since Alexander and Paris are the same person, it is not possible for 'Alexander strolls' to be true, and 'Paris strolls' to be false, so if the being-human is the same for Theo and Dio, the

---

[5] That is not to say that Sextus could not have used strategies similar to the ones he used against the participation of species in a genus also in regards to individuals. See e.g. his argument against the Monad, at *PH* 3.158–62.

[6] Actually, Sextus uses the term 'ἀξίωμα', which is a Stoic technical term and may be translated as 'proposition', just like I did in my translation of §227. (On the differences between Stoic ἀξιώματα and propositions, see Castagnoli and Fait 2023, 185–6.) However, since Sextus doesn't seem to abide by the Stoic distinction between signifiers and things signified (see *infra*, 16 n. 21), and speaking of *propositions* whose subjects are common *nouns* makes me quite uncomfortable, I will use 'sentence' to refer to the ἀξιώματα Sextus talks about at §227, whereas I will reserve 'proposition' for actual propositions and actual Stoic ἀξιώματα. Please note that from now on I will use inverted commas to refer to linguistic expressions: e.g., a human is a rational animal, but 'human' is a five-letter word.

appellative 'human', when brought into the construction of a proposition, will

make it either true or false of both of them. (§227)

Since 'Paris' and 'Alexander' designate one and the same individual, sentences which consist of 'Paris' or 'Alexander' and one same predicate, such as 'Paris strolls' and 'Alexander strolls', will have the same truth-value. (Which is equivalent to saying that 'Paris' and 'Alexander' must be substitutable *salva veritate*, at least in non-modal sentences and in sentences which don't report propositional attitudes.) Sextus argues that the same should hold for common nouns, such as 'human'. At a first glance, Sextus' comparison doesn't seem to work really well: 'Paris' and 'Alexander' are *two* names which designate a *single* individual, whereas 'human', so it seems, is *one* noun which can be used to speak about *two* individuals (two *humans*, that is), such as Theon and Dion. Anyways, Sextus believes that what holds in the case of 'Paris' and 'Alexander' does not hold in the case of 'human':

οὐ θεωρεῖται δὲ τοῦτο· τοῦ μὲν γὰρ Δίωνος καθημένου Θέωνος δὲ περιπατοῦντος τὸ ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ ἐφ' οὗ μὲν λεγόμενον ἀληθές ἐστιν, ἐφ' οὗ δὲ ψεῦδος. οὐκ ἄρα κοινή ἐστιν ἀμφοτέρων ἡ 'ἄνθρωπος' προσηγορία, οὐδὲ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀμφοῖν, ἀλλ' εἰ ἄρα, ἰδία ἑκατέρου.

But that is not what we observe. For if Dio sits and Theo strolls, '(A) human strolls' is true of the one, and false of the other. Therefore, the appellative 'human' is not common to both, nor the same for both, but, if anything, peculiar to each. (§227)

So, the identity of "the being-human" (τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι) bears certain implications in respect of sentences whose subject is 'human', i.e. it implies that such sentences must always have the same truth-value; but since that is not the case, the initial assumption must be rejected.

Now, 'the being-human' is an unusual expression, which does not have any parallels in Sextus' corpus.[7] However, the very same construction (neuter definite article, εἶναι and a noun in dative case) is typically employed by Aristotle to refer to essences (see e.g. *Metaph.* Γ 4, 1006ᵃ 28 – ᵇ 34). So, the thought might be entertained that, despite the absence of parallels in Sextus' corpus, 'the being-

---

[7] Like Bury 1933, I accept τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι, which is Philippson's conjecture (see Bury 1933: app. *ad locum*). Mutschmann and Mau 1958 and Annas and Barnes 2000 accept the reading τὸ ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, which is vouched for by the Latin translation (*hominem esse*), whereas τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι is the reading of the Greek manuscripts of the *Outlines of Skepticism* (see Mutschmann and Mau 1958, app. *ad locum*), and is clearly corrupt. In my opinion, τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι is a clear improvement on τὸ ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, in that it explains much better the corrupt reading of the Greek manuscripts. I should also note that the Latin translation *hominem esse* might as well depend on something like τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι, so that τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι might not even be a conjecture at all. I owe this last point to ....

human' actually refers to an essence and, in particular, an *Aristotelian* one (that is, an essence as it would be made out to be in Aristotle's theory). It would follow, then, that §227 targets Aristotelian doctrines about essence.

This hypothesis is not impossible, for there is at least one passage (*M* 1.315) where Sextus seems to be aware, at least on a superficial level, of Aristotle's doctrine of essence, which he mentions using the typical Aristotelian jargon (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι). Still, it can't be vouched for with certainty, at least for now. There is no clue – yet – that §227 is specifically concerned with *essences* and, moreover, the terminology itself is not quite univocal. As I mentioned earlier (*supra*, 4), §227 has some *Stoic* flavour to it, with terms such as 'προσηγορία', 'ἀξίωμα' and 'σύνταξις'. So, even assuming that 'the being-human' actually is an *Aristotelian* expression, the terminology of the passage would then point to at least *two* different philosophers or group of philosophers: the Stoics, who may very well be told to be Sextus' *main* general target, and Aristotle (and/or his Peripatetic acolytes), who is clearly not as relevant to Sextus as the Stoics are.[8] We would then need to work out what exactly the interaction between the Stoics and Aristotle might be, that is, what exactly is happening in the passage.

This will give us pause later on. For the time being, since this expression is clearly used to refer to some kind of entity and since this whole section (*PH* 2.219–28) targets universals, we may safely assume that such entity is a universal, or that Sextus holds it to be such. Or rather, we *must* assume that it is, if Sextus' argument is to be an argument against universals at all. If that is the case, the identity Sextus is speaking about ("if the being-human is *the same*...") is clearly numerical: as I have already said, one of the main features of universals is precisely their being wholly present in different entities while retaining their numerical identity, that is, while remaining one and the same entity. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what Sextus' comparison seems to suggest: 'human' is compared to 'Paris' and 'Alexander', which designate *one and the same* individual. In conclusion, then, the argument at §227 clearly concerns a universal which, as such, is taken to be numerically identical for different individuals.[9]

---

[8] On the Sextus and the Peripatetics, see Annas 1992.

[9] One might also think that the being-human is somehow distinct from individual human*s* like Dio and Theo, and that it may be involved in *their* being-humans. This is quite reasonable. For, typically, a universal *F* is ontologically distinct from individual *F*s, and some kind of relation between the universal *F* and individual *F*s holds (e.g. participation), such that the individual *F*s are *F* in virtue of the relation they bear to the universal *F*. Still, Sextus is quite reticent about the being-human, which remains a mysterious entity.

Having said that, we should try to make sense of the argument. It elicits a vague sense of discomfort: we are yet to understand how it works, assuming that it works at all. For a start, here is a summary of it:

(1) If the being-human is identical for different individuals, e.g. Dio and Theo, '(A) human strolls' will have the same truth-value (just like 'Paris strolls' and 'Alexander strolls') on every occasion

(2) But '(A) human strolls' doesn't have the same truth-value on every occasion

(C) Therefore, the being-human is not identical for different individuals[10]

The inference from the premises (1),(2) to the conclusion (C) is clearly by *modus tollens*: premise (2) is taken to express the negation of the consequent of premise (1), thereby allowing conclusion (C) to be drawn.

Now, given the inference by *modus tollens*, (C) is the contradictory of the antecedent of premise (1). And since the latter concerns the being-human, (C) concerns the being-human as well. However, Sextus' conclusion at §227 concerns the *noun* 'human', and not the corresponding *entity*, i.e. the being-human: "Therefore, the *appellative* 'human' is not common to both, nor the same for both, but, if anything, peculiar to each". Why the difference? Well, one should wonder what Sextus exactly means, when he says that the noun 'human' "is not common". Probably, he simply means that different tokens of 'human' don't designate one and the same thing, unlike 'Paris' and 'Alexander', but *different* things.[11] If that is the case, Sextus' conclusion amounts precisely to (C), that is, to the fact the being-human is not identical for different individuals. Indeed, it is quite clear that Sextus' main goal, at §227 as well in the whole of the §§219–28 section, is that of arguing against the

---

[10] It is common knowledge that ancient philosophers (or, at least, a good number of them) held the truth-value of sentences to be tensed: that is, they held a sentence to be true or false at time *t*; see e.g. Arist. *Cat.* 5, 4ᵃ 21–6, and S.E. *M* 8.12 = LS 33B = *SVF* 2.166. The underlying assumption seems to be that the tense of a verb, such as 'strolls', implies some sort of deixis, so that saying 'Paris strolls' ultimately amounts to saying 'Paris strolls *now*'. Having said that, this doesn't affect Sextus' argument, nor the analysis that I am providing, in any considerable way: he can safely be taken to be speaking all around about sentences that are true or false *at the same time t*. From now on, I will omit such qualification.

[11] I take designation to be a basic relation holding between linguistic items and things (i.e. what some may prefer to call 'reference'). Anything such as senses or meanings is completely out of the picture. That is because Sextus himself seems to work his argument within a very basic framework of signification, which includes only things and nouns. Some problems which arise from Sextus' argument might perhaps have been avoided by using a more complex framework of signification. See *infra*, 14 n. 16.

existence of certain *entities*, namely universals, which he takes to lead to unsolvable problems, if not to contradictions.[12]

2.2 *Premise* (*1*)

We may say that now Sextus' argument is less obscure. But it is a long way from being clear. First of all, we should tackle premise (1). After all, it is the core of the argument. Here it is, again: if (a) the being-human is identical for different individuals, (b) '(A) human strolls' will always have the same truth-value. Now, why should (b) follow from (a)?

Clearly, Sextus' conditional hinges on one simple assumption: that the noun 'human' designates the being-human. In other words, the being-human, which is taken to be a universal, is the *designatum* of every token of 'human'. This is why Sextus puts forward the strange comparison between 'human' on the one hand and 'Paris' and 'Alexander on the other: just as 'Paris' and 'Alexander' designate one and the same individual (the same obviously goes for their respective tokens), so every token of 'human' designates one and the same object, namely the (universal) being-human.

If that is so, we may reasonably expect that, just as 'Paris strolls' and 'Alexander strolls' always have the same truth-value (the same obviously goes for their respective tokens), so every *token* of the type sentence '(A) human strolls' should have the same truth-value. Sextus actually mentions *one single* ἀξίωμα, though. So, why am I speaking of different token nouns, and different token sentences? Well, the comparison between 'human' on the one hand and 'Paris' and 'Alexander on the other should make it quite clear that we must be speaking of different *tokens*: for the comparison to make sense, there have to be *different* nouns which designate the *same* thing. In the case of 'Paris' and 'Alexander', we may content ourselves with type nouns, since we have two of them. But in the case of 'human' we only have one type noun: Sextus' point must then be that different *tokens* of 'human' designate one and the same thing.

---

[12] I should add that this seems to commit Sextus to the claim that a noun '*F*' is common only if it designates one and the same thing. That is, only if every *token* of that name designates one and the same thing. This is a strong claim, which few (if any) philosophers would be willing to accept. For example, it looks like the Stoics would hold a noun to be common (if and) only if its tokens designate the *same* thing, where 'same' expresses *specific* (i.e. qualitative), and not numerical, identity. At any rate, Sextus' (or his source's) focus on nouns in the conclusion seems quite effective, rhetorically speaking: an appellative, i.e. a *common* noun, is shown to be *peculiar* (!) to each of the things which belong to its extension. Cf. *infra*, 16–20.

8

Anyway, Sextus' point can be made more general: for every single predicate: tokens of a type sentence '(A) human φ's' (where 'φ' stands for some random predicate) will always have the same truth-value. Even more generally, if we assume that the being-human is not an isolated case, but that for every common noun '*F*' there is some corresponding being-*F* which is the *designatum* of every token of '*F*' (why not?), we can conclude that every token of '(A) *F* φ's' will have the same truth-value.

2.3 *Premise* (2)

Now we have a more detailed grasp of the assumptions that underlie premise (1). Sextus is assuming that the tokens of 'human' designate one and the same entity and that, if that is the case, the tokens of any sentence of the kind '(A) human φ's' must have the same truth-value. What about premise (2)? There, Sextus says that "if Dio sits and Theo strolls, '(A) human strolls' is true of the one, and false of the other". What kind of sentences does he have in mind? As I did before, I should note that, even though I spoke of sentence*s*, Sextus seems to think about *one single* sentence, which is false of Dio and true of Theo. However, I have concluded that premise (1) must be concerned with different *token* sentences. It is quite reasonable to think, then, that the same holds here. In particular, as I will try to show in due time, it looks like premise (2) must be concerned with some sort of token *deictic* sentences, if it is to make sense at all.

One step at a time, though. Sextus requires '(A) human strolls' ('ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ') to be false of Dio and true of Theo if Dio is sitting and Theo is strolling. Now, intuitively a common noun such as 'human' may be used in a number of ways: for instance, to express a general proposition ('A cat is a small lion'), to talk about a single though indeterminate object ('A cat is meowing outside'), or even to talk about a single determinate object ('The cat is hungry').[13] Sextus' request makes it clear that '(A) human strolls' doesn't express any general proposition, nor does it speak about some single, though indeterminate, human: if such sentence is to be true, for instance, if and only if Dio strolls, it must be speaking about Dio, and *only* about Dio. This confirms my hypothesis that there are *two*

---

[13] This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Moreover, I am aware that the different uses of common nouns depend also on their being paired with definite or indefinite articles. I will pursue similar problems in the following. For now, I shall content myself with noting that 'ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ' has no definite article. In this respect, it resembles Aristotle's indefinite sentences, such as 'ἔστι ἄνθρωπος λευκός' (Arist. *Int.* 7, 17^{b} 7–12), and, more relevantly, the sentences one may extract from the Stoic Nobody argument, such as 'ἄνθρωπος [...] ἔστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις' (see *infra*, 27–8).

different sentences at play here: one about Dio, and one about Theo. For how could a *single* sentence speak about *two* different things, thereby bearing *two* different truth-values, at the same time?

This being said, we should try to understand what kind of sentences Sextus must be speaking about. In this respect, Sextus' request that '(A) human strolls' be false of Dio and true of Theo if Dio is sitting and Theo is strolling comes quite handy. For, as I have already said, it implies that there are two token sentences, each which concerns *only* one between Dio and Theo. This is quite interesting: isn't 'human' a common noun, and isn't a fundamental feature of common nouns precisely that they may be used to talk about many different things? If that is so, how can 'human' be used to talk, e.g., about Dio, and *only* Dio?

Well, first of all, it is clear that, if 'human' is to be part of a sentence which speaks about Dio, it is necessary that a token of it may somehow be able to designate Dio. I am saying 'somehow' because, as we saw, Sextus takes every token of 'human' to designate, strictly speaking, the being-human, and not Dio or Theo. This will cause us some problems later on. We will need to enquire whether and how it is possible that one and the same token of 'human' may designate the being-human *and*, at the same time, (somehow) designate an individual like Dio or Theo. Let us leave it at that, at least for now. Still, this is not enough for our purposes. That is precisely because such a token may designate Dio *as well as* Theo and other humans. We need something else to *fix* the reference on Dio, so to speak. Given that Sextus doesn't particularly help us, the most economical assumption is that this something else is supplied by the context of utterance. For instance, let us imagine that someone is looking out of the window, and that the street is completely empty. Then, at some point, Dio strolls by. They utter '(A) human strolls'. In this case, one might think that such sentence speaks about Dio, and *only* about him. What makes it the case is precisely the fact that there is nobody else around: if someone else, e.g. Theo, were strolling by, we wouldn't know whom the sentence is about. An act of deixis may have the same effect. For instance, the speaker may be pointing to Dio while uttering the sentence.

So, we can conclude generally that there are two necessary conditions, jointly sufficient, for a sentence of the kind '(A) $F\varphi$'s' to speak *exclusively* about an individual x: first of all, a token of 'F' may designate x and, secondly, the context and/or some act of deixis single out x as the only possible *designatum* of that token of 'F', if uttered in that context. Of course, Sextus does not mention anything along these lines: he doesn't even come close to it. Still, this is what he should be taken to be committed to, if we are to make sense of premise (2) despite the scarcity of details he provides.

This account puts us in a good position to understand what kind of sentences are at play here. As we said, the two tokens of '(A) human strolls' can speak *exclusively* about Dio and Theo, respectively, only in that the context of utterance and/or some act of deixis allow it to be the case. Therefore, they must be some kind of deictic sentences. In particular, given that we took them to be two different *tokens* of the same type sentence, we should conclude that premise (2) concerns two tokens of a deictic type sentence '(A) human strolls', which – I propose – should be taken to be themselves liable to be uttered multiple times: we will then have '(A) human$_D$ strolls', which speaks about Dio and is true if and only if Dio strolls, and '(A) human$_T$ strolls', which speaks about Theo and is true if and only if Theo strolls.[14]

I should point out that such indexicality is quite important for Sextus' argument. That is because, for obvious reasons, deictic type sentences are the only ones whose tokens might have different truth-values, which is what is required in premise (2). They are the only ones that can get the job done, so to speak. (For instance, assuming that 'This$_D$ strolls' and 'This$_T$ strolls' are two tokens of a type sentence 'This strolls', they may have different truth-values, depending on what Dio and Theo are doing.) On the other hand, tokens of non-deictic type sentences cannot have different truth-values. Every token of 'Paris strolls' will have the same truth-value, depending on what Paris is doing. So even if my proposal should turn out to be incorrect, it seems that, in the absence of better options, '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' should nevertheless be taken to involve *some* degree of indexicality.

2.4 *A clearer picture*

We can now try and outline a clearer picture of Sextus' argument at §227. We concluded (§2.2) that in premise (1) Sextus assumes that every token of 'human' designates the being-human (which is one and the same for Dio and Theo), and thereby requires every token of '(A) human strolls' to have the same truth-value, like 'Paris strolls' and 'Alexander strolls'. Then, we concluded (§2.3) that in premise (2) two different sentences must be at play: '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls',

---

[14] In Stoic terms, a deictic sentence (such as 'This strolls') expresses a simple definite proposition (see Bobzien 2009, 89–90). The similarity between sentences such as '(A) human strolls' (at least according what Sextus requires of it in premise (2)) and Stoic simple definite propositions which has hitherto emerged may get Sextus into trouble, and us with him: as I already said, there is convincing evidence that §227 somehow depends on a Stoic source, and according to the Stoics (see S.E. *M* 8.93–8 = LS 34H = *SVF* 2.205; D.L. 7.69–70 = LS 34K = *SVF* 2.204) '(A) human strolls' doesn't correspond to a simple definite proposition, but to a simple middle or categoric one, which has different truth conditions; see Alex. *in APr.* 402.15–17, Brunschwig 1984, Crivelli 1994 and *infra*, 25 n. 35.

which after rather careful consideration I have taken to be two different tokens of a *deictic* type sentence. So, if the conclusions I have reached until now are correct, the clearest and most charitable reading of Sextus' argument is the following:

> Assuming that every token of 'human' designates the being-human, if the being-human is one and the same for all humans, then every token of '(A) human strolls' (and more generally, of any type sentence of the kind '(A) human φ's') will have the same truth-value **(1)**. But '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' have two different truth-values, if Dio sits and Theo is strolling **(2)**. Therefore, the being-human is not one and the same for all humans **(C)**.

In short, Sextus' idea is that our utterances of 'human' don't designate one and the same thing, but *different* things. And if we take into account Sextus' underlying assumption, namely that every token of 'human' designates the being-human, this amounts to saying the being-human is not a universal. All of this has to do, somehow, with the fact that tokens sentences of the kind '(A) human φ's' may have different truth-values in certain contexts.

2.5 *Problems*

This is the clearest picture we can get of Sextus' argument. Finally, we are in a good position to flesh out the vague discomfort that may have beset us when first reading §227: Sextus' argument is clearly non-conclusive, and therefore it fails.

This depends on the fact that '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' are not the (tokens of) sentences which are called into question in premise (1), in spite of their being superficially identical. So, premise (2) doesn't express the actual negation of the consequent of premise (1); it only appears to do so. Sextus would seem to run into some sort of fallacy of equivocation.

As a matter of fact, premise (1) seems to be concerned with (tokens of) a sentence, '(A) human strolls', which is taken to speak about the being-human. It follows that, since the being-human is taken to be a universal, '(A) human strolls' is, in fact, a sentence about a universal. Now, sentences about universals have their peculiar truth conditions. For instance, assuming that 'The $F\varphi$'s' is some sentence about the universal F, we might say that it is true if and only if *at least one* individual $F\varphi$'s (following Aristotle; see *Cat.* 5, 3$^{\mathrm{a}}$ 4–6 and Ademollo 2022, 37–9), or it is true if and only if *every* individual $F\varphi$'s (following the Stoics; see *M* 7.246 = LS 30F = *SVF* 2.65 and Caston 1999, 187–92). Sextus doesn't give any truth conditions of the sort at §227 (even though he faces similar problems at

§§223–6). At any rate, it is quite clear that if '(A) human strolls' is to be a sentence about a universal, it can't be true *of Dio* and false *of Theo*. A sentence about a universal is simply true or false, depending on the *totality* of the facts which concern the domain of individuals it ranges over. In this respect, the conditional in premise (1) is not only true; it is *trivially* so. Requiring all of its tokens to have the same truth-value is just like requiring all the tokens 'Paris strolls' to have same truth-value: since they *all* speak about Paris, this is quite clearly the case. (After all, there seems to be a sense in which a common noun '*F*', when it is being used to speak about the universal *F*, is the *proper* noun of the universal *F*; it is, one could say, the *proper* noun of a *common* entity.)

This makes clear that '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls' in premise (2) aren't the (tokens of) sentences which are required for the negation of the consequent of premise (1) to hold. They simply can't be: they concern single individuals, Dio and Theo, thereby bearing the corresponding truth-value, and they don't speak about the universal being-human. This they do, moreover, probably by involving some kind of indexicality. So Sextus' argument is non-conclusive, and therefore it fails.

2.6 *Further problems*

At this point, one thing is certain: Sextus' argument is non-conclusive. Still, there is something more to be said. It is finally time to tackle the problem I brought up earlier. Sextus seems to be committed to two different assumptions: the assumption that every token of 'human' designates the universal being-human and the assumption that tokens of 'human' may be used to speak about single humans, e.g. in sentences such as '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls'. This is the overall picture:

(i) Every token of 'human' designates the being-human

(ii) The being-human is one and the same for different humans (presumably,
for *all* humans)

(iii) A token of 'human' may be the subject of a sentence which speaks about
a single, determinate human (e.g. Dio)

Now, given the analysis of sentences in (iii) which I have given earlier, a token of 'human' may be used to speak about a single human, e.g. Dio, only if it is (somehow) able to designate Dio. The question I am asking, then, is the following: is it really possible that one and the same token of a common noun '*F*' may designate both the universal *F and* an individual *F*? In other words, can one

and the same token of a common noun '*F*' have *two* different *designata*, namely the universal *F* and an individual *F*?[15]

The stakes are high. If we were to find out that such double designation isn't, in fact, possible, then the assumptions (i), (ii) and (iii) would not actually be compatible, so that we would have to draw one further conclusion: not only is Sextus' argument non-conclusive, but it also depends on *inconsistent* assumptions regarding the semantics of common nouns. As a matter a fact, that one and that same token of a noun may have two different *designata* is far from obvious. And even more so, I might add, if such *designata* are a universal *F* and an individual *F*, that is, two ontologically heterogenous objects. If that is to be the case, and if we are to be charitable to Sextus, a more precise semantics of common nouns is needed which might make sense of his assumptions.

2.7 *A Stoic semantics of common nouns*

Unfortunately, Sextus doesn't provide us with any such thing. If we are to be charitable to Sextus' argument and to try to make more sense of it, we have to do his work for him, again. Thus, my next task shall be that of outlining a semantics of common nouns which might get the job done.

There are many possible candidates. However, it is more convenient to take into account doctrines which may have been available, in principle, to Sextus.[16] In particular, I shall consider (one possible reconstruction of) the Stoic semantics of common nouns.[17] All in all, it may very well be the *best* candidate. For first of all, as we shall see, it seems to allow for a double designation to common nouns to take place in a fairly convincing fashion. Secondly, as I have already noted, there is some *prima facie* evidence for thinking that the Stoics are somehow involved in Sextus' argument, possibly

---

[15] It may very well be the case that for Sextus such double designation should be not only *possible*, but also *necessary*. In other words, he might think that a token of a common noun '*F*' can be used to speak about some single individual *F only if* it designates both the universal *F* and said individual *F*. §227 doesn't really give any further evidence, but for my present purposes possibility is enough.

[16] This does not mean that other, more recent theories may nevertheless get the job done. For example, Kripke's distinction between semantic reference and speaker's reference (see Kripke 1977) may provide an interesting solution to the problem: such double designation may depend on the way the speaker intends to use the token of the common noun in question. As a matter fact, Kripke himself addresses some very similar problems regarding the fact that a speaker may use 'man' and sentences such as 'A man φ's' to speak about some single, determinate man she has in mind; see Kripke 2013, 138–43. Still, this seems to be very far from what Sextus is thinking about at §227: speaker's intentions are clearly out of the picture he draws.

[17] For instance, one might think that what Aristotle says at *Categories* 5, 3^b 10–24 looks quite interesting. For he seems to hold that tokens of a common noun, such as 'human', may be used to speak about primary substances, such as Dio and Theo, and secondary substances, such as the universal human, alike. I must note, however, that what we are after is an account according to which the *very same* token of a common noun may entertain such double designation. On the other hand, what Aristotle seems to have in mind is the much plainer idea that *different* tokens of a common noun may be used to speak about different things.

as its target or as its source: at §227, Sextus uses terms such as 'προσηγορία', 'ἀξίωμα' and 'σύνταξις', which are proven to be Stoic technical terms;[18] the opening passage of the whole section, §219, has a strong Stoic flavour, with terms such as 'ἐννόημα' (see Aet. 4.11.16–4.12.19 = LS 30j and 39B = *SVF* 2.83 and 2.54, D.L. 7.60–1 = LS 30C), 'φαντασία' (see Aet. 4.12.1–7 = LS 39B = *SVF* 2.54), 'ἡγεμονικόν' (see *M* 7.234 = LS 53F, Aet. 4.21.1–4 = LS 53H = *SVF* 2.836) and maybe, in this context, 'ὑπόστασις' (see LS 27); and at §223 Sextus mentions the Stoic *summum genus*, the something (τι).

So it may very well be the case that Sextus' assumptions about common nouns ultimately depend on something like the Stoic semantics of common nouns. Before showing what exactly such semantics amounts to, I should spend some time talking about one of the salient features of the Stoic philosophy of language: the distinction between what signifies and what is signified. Such distinction is connected to the fundamental assumption of Stoic metaphysics: being is equivalent to being able to act and be acted upon, and being able to act and be acted upon is equivalent to being a body.[19] From this assumption there follows the main distinction of Stoic metaphysics: that between things that exist (ὄντα), i.e. bodies, and things that don't exist but merely subsist (ὑφεστηκότα), i.e. the incorporeals. Bodies (i.e. ὄντα) and incorporeals are subsumed under one *summum genus*, that is, the something (τι): the distinction between the two is exclusive and exhaustive of the *summum genus*.[20]

In short, the Stoics distinguish between what signifies and what is signified, that is, between concrete utterances and inscriptions, which are corporeal and therefore exist, and the things which are signified by such utterances and inscriptions. The latter are the so-called λεκτά ('sayables'): they are incorporeal and therefore they don't exist, but merely subsist (see *M* 8.11–12 = LS 33B = *SVF* 2.166; D.L. 7.56 = LS 33H). The class of signifiers includes, e.g., nouns and verbs, whereas the class of things signified (λεκτά) includes predicates (κατηγορήματα) and propositions (ἀξιώματα), i.e. meanings of

---

[18] Still, I should note that Sextus seems to use 'προσηγορία' and 'ἀξίωμα' both in a narrow and in a wide sense. This is true especially in the case of 'ἀξίωμα': sometimes he refers to *utterances* as ἀξιώματα, which from a Stoic perspective is incorrect; see e.g. *PH* 2.109, with which, however, cf. *M* 8.79–84. In any case, when he is targeting the Stoics, he is very careful in distinguishing what signifies and what is signified, like any good Stoic would do (see *PH* 2.81, 2.104 = LS 35C, 2.107, *M* 8.12 = LS 33B = *SVF* 2.166), even when his goal is precisely that of refuting the Stoic doctrine of the ἀξίωμα as an incorporeal entity (*M* 8.79). On the other hand, a wide sense of 'προσηγορία' seems sometimes to be at play (see e.g. *PH* 3.99 and maybe *M* 9.36), as well as a narrow, more technical sense (see e.g. *M* 1.133, 238), which however may not actually bear any particular connection with the Stoic doctrine of common nouns.

[19] Such assumption probably depends on a certain reading of the *Gigantomachia* in Plato's *Sophist*; see Brunschwig 1988, Ademollo (forth. a) and, in general, Bronowski 2019, ch. 3.

[20] This is the standard picture of Stoic metaphysics. However, it is possible that εἶναι should not be taken to have been used by the Stoics in a technical sense, i.e. as applying only to bodies. Still, bodies are never said to subsist; see Bronowski 2019, 127–8.

sentences. For instance, the Stoics distinguish the (corporeal) verb and the (incorporeal) predicate: the latter is signified by the first (see D.L. 7.58 = LS 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22).

This picture is beset by a *crux interpretum*: the nominative case (ὀρθὴ πτῶσις). Diogenes Laertius (7.70 = LS 34K = *SVF* 2.204) reports that it is one of the constituents of a (simple middle or predicative) proposition, along with the incorporeal predicate. The problem is that, while in the latter case there is a clear correspondence between what signifies (the corporeal verb) and what is signified (the incorporeal predicate), no such clear correspondence seems to be hinted at by the sources we have. In short, we don't really understand *what* a nominative case is. There are at least three candidates: (i) corporeal qualities, both common and peculiar, which are reported (D.L. 7.58 = LS 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22, below) to be the *designata* of nouns, both common and proper (Frede 1994: 112; see also 1977: 304 and 1978: 347–51); (ii) the nouns themselves, which are concrete utterances and therefore corporeal (LS 1, 200); (iii) incomplete λεκτά, which, so to speak, are to nouns as (incorporeal) predicates are to (corporeal) verbs (Barnes 1999a, 207–9, Durand 2018, 72–84, Alessandrelli 2022, 680–1). However, such λεκτά are never mentioned by the most relevant sources for the Stoic theory of meaning (see e.g. D.L. 7.63 = LS 33F and 7.64 = LS 33G = *SVF* 2.183; but see also *M* 11.29 and Clem. *Str.* viii.9.26.5).[21]

At any rate, it is finally time to tackle the Stoic doctrine which may be read into §227. The most relevant text is the aforementioned report of Diogenes Laertius about Diogenes of Babylonia:

> ἔστι δὲ προσηγορία μὲν κατὰ τὸν Διογένη μέρος λόγου σημαῖνον κοινὴν ποιότητα, οἶον
> 'ἄνθρωπος,' 'ἵππος' ὄνομα δέ ἐστι μέρος λόγου δηλοῦν ἰδίαν ποιότητα, οἷον 'Διογένης',
> 'Σωκράτης'.

> According to Diogenes [of Babylonia], an appellative is a part of speech which
> signifies a common quality, such as 'human', 'horse'; a noun is part of speech

---

[21] In short, the main problem for interpretation (iii) is that of bringing together the claim that nominative cases are λεκτά with the aforementioned report of Diogenes Laertius about qualities being what nouns signify. Barnes himself (1999a, 207 n. 176) saw the problem. For an attempt at reconciling this line of interpretation with Diogenes' report, see Durand 2018: 82–4. I should also note that §227 may be thought to provide evidence in favour of interpretation (ii): if Sextus' argument is rich in Stoic terms, such that it might ultimately depend on Stoic doctrines (we'll see about that in a moment), then his saying that an *appellative* (a common noun!) such as 'human' is employed in the construction of a *proposition* might be taken to point at the fact the he has a Stoic doctrine similar to (ii) in mind. In other words, when Sextus speaks about a *noun* being part of a *proposition*, assuming that the hypothesis about the Stoics being the source for §227 is correct, he might be taken to depend on something like the doctrine sketched at (ii). However, it is way more economical to think that Sextus is simply imprecise. First and foremost because the hypothesis that §227 reflects a Stoic doctrine is yet to be proved. And even if it was, it may very well be the case that the Stoic doctrine it reflects is *not* closer to (ii) rather than to any other interpretation.

which indicates a peculiar quality, such as 'Diogenes', 'Socrates'. (D.L. 7.58 = LS 33M = *SVF* 3 Diogenes 22)

According to this report, common and proper nouns designate common and proper qualities, respectively.[22]

The Stoics hold qualities to be portions of *pneuma*. As such, they are corporeal, and therefore able to act as causes on things which are able to be acted upon, that is, on bodies. In particular, a quality is able to make an individual *qualified* by being present in it (LS 28N = *SVF* 2.390; Sen. *Ep.* 117.13 = 33E). Such presence should be understood in purely *physical* terms: a quality is present in an individual in that it occupies the same space which is occupied by that individual, and further is part of the compound of *pneuma* and matter which that individual consists of.

The causal agency which is attributed to qualities is strictly connected to their being physically present in individuals, bodies in bodies. For the Stoic assumption that all and only bodies exist has some serious consequences for universals: given that they clearly aren't bodies, they don't exist. Rather, they are said to be "concepts" (ἐννοήματα), namely the intentional objects of certain mental states, the conceptions (ἔννοιαι).[23] And given that, in the strict sense, they don't exist, universals can't act as causes on bodies. Therefore, it is qualities, and first and foremost *common* qualities that are called to fill the causal gap which is left by universals: an individual x is F not because it participates in the species F, but because a body, i.e. the common quality F, is physically present in it. For instance, Socrates is human because a portion of *pneuma*, namely the common quality corresponding to humanity, is present in him. So, the fact that different individuals share the same property F may be analysed as the fact that different individuals have different portions of *pneuma*, all of which are the common quality F: x is F because it has a portion of *pneuma* which is the common quality F, and y is F because it has a portion of *pneuma* which is different (i.e. numerically distinct) from the one x has and is the common quality F.[24] Common qualities aren't universals.

---

[22] Actually, Diogenes uses two different verbs: 'to signify' ('σημαίνειν') and 'to indicate' ('δηλοῦν'). This might be taken to prove that the Stoics actually distinguished the signification of common nouns (which "signify" a common quality) from the signification of proper nouns (which "indicate" a peculiar quality); see Brunschwig 1984: 44–5. Still, 'σημαίνειν' and 'δηλοῦν' are often used interchangeably, both in Aristotle (see Irwin 1982, 243 n. 4) and in Plato (see Ademollo 2011, 173 with n. 66).

[23] That concepts should be taken to be intentional objects of conceptions is David Sedley's reasonable hypothesis; see Sedley 1985; *contra* Caston (forth.), 33 n. 54. The place of universals in Stoic metaphysics is quite problematic; see Brunschwig 1988, Caston 1999, Bailey 2014, Bronowski 2019, ch. 3.

[24] See Caston 1999, 182–7, Menn 1999, 217–23 and 222 n.10. Still, the fact remains that there must be some kind of identity holding of different instances of the same common quality. Even though Dio is human because there is a certain portion of *pneuma* in him, and Theo is human because there is a certain portion of *pneuma* in him, different from the one Dio has, still both portions of *pneuma* must be the *same* common quality, namely humanity, if we are to say that

Things are a little different in the case of peculiar qualities. In short, a peculiar quality is a single portion of *pneuma*, which is present in one, and only one, individual, and ultimately grounds its identity.[25]

Having said that, the fact that qualities (common and peculiar) are the *designata* of tokens of nouns (common and proper, respectively) has some relevant consequences for the semantics of sentences. Given that the quality is different from (though strictly related to) the qualified individual, a distinction should be made between the *designata* of nouns and the qualified individuals themselves, e.g. between the *designatum* of 'Dio' (his peculiar quality), and Dio himself. This implies that, given a generic sentence consisting of a subject term and a predicate term, we should distinguish the subject of that sentence (namely, the *designatum* of the subject term) from that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true.[26] For instance, let us take one of the sentences in premise (2) of Sextus' argument, e.g. '(A) human$_D$ strolls': we would have

---

both Dio and Theo are human without any homonymy to be involved. Caston (1999, 184) thinks that this may depend on the fact that both portions of *pneuma* bear some kind of relation to a universal (i.e. the universal human), which allows some kind of qualitative identity to hold of the two of them. However, it might be strange that universals, which don't exist (and probably don't even subsist) and can't act as causes, end up being that which allows different portions of *pneuma* to be the *same* common quality. It may be more reasonable to hold that universals are rather what allows us to *say* that two numerically different portions of *pneuma* are the same common quality. On the other hand, such identity may be connected to the Stoic metaphysical doctrine that qualities are streams of *pneuma* extending throughout the world. In particular, there is an interesting passage, *M* 8.41, where Sextus says that *sensible* things are either *genera* or *species*, taking the former to be "the common features that extend among the particulars" (αἱ ἐνδιήκουσαι ἐν τοῖς κατὰ μέρος κοινότητες), such has the human. This passage looks rather Stoic in jargon and content, and seems to support the reading that a Stoic common quality is a stream of *pneuma* extending throughout different individuals. Thus, the fact that Dio's portion of *pneuma* and Theo's portion of *pneuma* are the same common quality may be analysed as the fact that they are different physical parts of the same stream of *pneuma*. This view of common qualities seems to bear some resemblance to the contemporary theory of universals as concrete particular, spatio-temporally extended objects, according to which, for instance, the colour red is the particular spatio-temporal thing which has as its parts all red things; cf. Quine 1950.

[25] See Sedley 1983.

[26] Cf. Frede 1978, 349–50 and Brunschwig 1984, 48–9. Frede (1978, 350) suggests that such distinction (namely that between the subject of a sentence and that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true) has some parallels in Aristotle's treatment of indefinite sentences in the *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, such as '(A) human is pale', where 'human' is taken to designate the universal human. As a matter of fact, the truth-value of such sentences depends on facts which concern *individual* humans: '(A) human is pale' is true if and only if at least one individual human is pale and, generally '(A) F φ's', where 'F' is taken to designate the universal F, is true if and only if at least one individual F φ's. However, I am not sure that this comparison actually is sound. Aristotle is entitled to think that facts about individual Fs *do* imply further facts about the universal F; that the fact that individual Fs have property G implies the fact the universal F *actually* has property G, even though in the problematic way in which universals have properties (leaving aside their formal properties, i.e. the properties they have insofar they are universals, such as that of being eternal, or being a genus, etc.); see *Cat.* 5, 3^a 4–6, and Ademollo 2022, 37–9. So, the underlying intuition may very well be that '(A) F φ's' (where 'F' is taken to designate the universal F) is true if and only if the universal F φ's, and the universal F φ's if and only if at least one individual F φ's. Such intuition implies no distinction between the subject of a sentence and that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true.

that that token of 'human' designates the humanity (a common quality, i.e. a portion of *pneuma*) present in Dio, but that the sentence is true if and only *Dio*, and not the humanity in him, strolls.[27]

A partially similar distinction can be seen to hold for predicates. As I said, an individual x is F because the common quality F is present in it. However, according to the Stoics, in a given sentence 'x is F', 'is F' signifies an incorporeal predicate, and not the common quality F. This has to do with the Stoic theory of causality, according to which "every cause is a body which becomes a cause, for a body, of something incorporeal: for instance, [...] fire, which is a body, is cause for the wood of the incorporeal predicate (κατηγορήματος) 'being burnt'" (*M* 9.211 = LS 55B = *SVF* 2.341). To quote Frede (1980, 234), "a cause is a body which does something or other and by doing so brings it about that another body is affected in such a way that something comes to be true of it".[28]

We may now sketch a unified picture of the role of qualities in the semantics of nouns and predicates. Given a (common or peculiar) quality Z,

- the (common or proper) noun 'Z' designates quality Z
- quality Z causes, for every individual x in which it is present, x to be Z and the incorporeal predicate 'is Z' to hold of x

This looks quite reasonable. According to this picture, every correct application of a noun to a subject implies that the corresponding incorporeal predicate be true of that subject, and vice versa. For instance, if the noun 'human' may correctly be applied to Dio, then the incorporeal predicate 'is human' will hold of Dio, and vice versa. The same may go for proper nouns, with some minor adjustments: if 'Dio' may correctly be applied to *this*, then the incorporeal predicate 'is Dio' holds of *this*, and vice versa.

This, in an outline, is the Stoic doctrine we may read into §227.[29] But why should it allow what we are looking for, namely that one and the same token of a common noun 'F' may have what I called a double designation? It is quite easy to see why. Let me recall the sentence I have analysed before, '(A) human_D strolls'. As I said, according to what may be reasonably inferred from Diogenes Laertius'

---

[27] The Stoics wouldn't probably agree on applying such truth conditions to sentences like '(A) human strolls'. In their view, a sentence of this sort corresponds to a simple middle or predicative proposition, which has different truth conditions. I will come back to that later; see *infra*, 27 n. 35.

[28] See Frede 1980, 229–34, Barnes 1983, 170–5.

[29] As I already said, the Stoic doctrine of the semantics of nouns is liable to different reconstructions, many of which aren't compatible with the one I have provided here. Some might also think that saying that qualities are the *designata* of nouns amounts to accepting interpretation (i) above (*supra*, 15–17). However, that isn't necessarily the case: one might accept interpretation (iii) and think that, while qualities are the *designata* of nouns, incorporeal λεκτά are what nouns *mean*. Maybe this might also resolve the contrast between interpretation (iii) and Diogenes' report (see *supra*, 16 n. 21). Still, the problem is complex.

report, the token of 'human' designates the corresponding common quality in Dio, but the sentence is true if and only if Dio, and not the common quality present in him, strolls. This is interesting: the sentence can, somehow, be about Dio even though, strictly speaking, he *isn't* its subject. We might then think that, if this is so, that is because said token actually designates the corresponding common quality *and also*, in some derivative way, Dio himself. However, such secondary designation is far from being problematic or obscure. That token of 'human' designates something which is in Dio, and actually is a constituent part of him, so that it easy to see how it may designate him as well: that token of 'human' is, so to speak, already *directed* at him. Therefore, the secondary designation of that token of 'human' not only is compatible with its primary designation, but also follows quite clearly from it.

2.8 *Much ado about nothing?*

It looks like (this reconstruction of) the Stoic semantics of common nouns might be a suitable candidate for the job. Should we then think that the search is over, and conclude that Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns depend on such doctrine, or on one similar to it? Not unless we are willing to pay a high cost for it. It is quite easy to see why. A token of a common noun '*F*' may designate *both* the common quality *F* and the correspondingly qualified individual only in that the common quality *F isn't* a universal: it belongs exclusively to Dio, of whom it is, physically speaking, a constituent part. Therefore, if such a semantics is to work for Sextus' argument, so that it may allow the double designation to which Sextus is ultimately committed to take place, it is necessary that there should be many, numerically non-identical being-human*s*, each of which belongs exclusively to a different individual: a being-human *of Dio*, which is what the tokens of 'human' designate when we use 'human' to speak about Dio, and a being-human *of Theo*, which is distinct from the being-human of Dio and is what the tokens of 'human' designate when we use 'human' to speak about Theo. This obviously clashes with one of the main assumptions (if not *the* main assumption) of Sextus' argument: that the being-human is a universal, i.e. that it is one and the same for all humans (= assumption (ii) above; see *supra*, 13).

Actually, it is worse than that: Sextus' main goal is precisely that of proving that the being-human *isn't* one and the same for all humans, i.e. that it isn't a universal. So, if we are willing to make sense of Sextus' assumptions regarding common nouns in this way, namely by thinking that he depends on the Stoic semantics of common nouns such as I have reconstructed it, the picture we

get is tragic: if the underlying assumptions to Sextus' argument are to be consistent, the argument should assume what it is intended to prove, i.e. that the being-human *isn't* one and the same for all humans, and do away with its starting assumption, i.e. that the being-human *is* one and the same for all humans. In other words, if Sextus' argument is to be based upon a coherent semantics of common nouns, it can't be about universals, and thus it is completely off-target. This is what our search of a way of making sense of Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns has led us to: a quite uncharitable conclusion for a resolution inspired by the principle of charity.

2.9 *The Stoics, yet again*

This Stoic excursus confirms that attributing a double designation to the tokens of common nouns is far from being obvious, especially if one *designatum* is an individual and one *designatum* is taken to be a universal: the Stoic semantics of common nouns may allow such double designation to take place in a seemingly effortless way precisely because common qualities *aren't* universals. Not that this Stoic doctrine is the only way Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns may be accounted for. However, it was without any doubt *the best* candidate, both because it fits (partially, at least) with Sextus' assumptions concerning common nouns and because various terms at §227 seem to hint at the Stoic themselves. And yet even the best candidate seems to be struggling a lot: as I have just shown, reading the Stoic semantics of common nouns into §227 comes at great costs. This being the case, I won't pursue this enquiry any further. I will now move on, and try to outline the possible target of Sextus' argument, as well as to tackle the Stoic presence in the passage. This will undoubtedly provide us with new elements for our general assessment of Sextus' argument and of its underlying assumptions.

For a start, given that Sextus intends his argument to be directed against universals, we may safely assume that he is targeting philosophers who hold universals to exist as such in one way or the other, i.e. universals to be *one and the same* for different individuals.[30] Such philosophers may be labelled as 'realists'. Realist philosophers would certainly endorse Sextus' starting assumption (the

---

[30] Sextus' target at §227–8 is not the existence of universals in itself, but rather their sameness and oneness for different individuals, which may also depend on the fact that his main goal at §§219–28 is that of arguing against *division* (see *supra*, 2). This not to say that Sextus' arguments against universals do not have any bearing whatsoever on their existence. On the contrary, it seems like the sameness and oneness for different individuals of universals constitute one of the basic requirements, if not the most basic, for any entity to be regarded as a universal at all. In this sense, to argue against the sameness and oneness for different individuals of universals implies arguing against their *existence* as such, too.

being-human is one and the same for all humans), and find unpalatable the argument's conclusion (the contradictory of the starting assumption). In this sense, the 'realist' label may be applied to the Stoics as well. This may seem strange: the Stoics are quite far from claiming that universals exist (in the Stoic technical sense of 'to exist'), as they hold them to be concepts, i.e. mental constructs which might not even be said to subsist (see *supra*, 17). Nevertheless, Sextus targets Stoics at the very start of *PH* 2.219–28: it seems that, to him, the Stoic claim that universals are concepts still amounts to a *positive* claim about universals, i.e. a claim according to which there is some item which is one and the same for different individuals (or species, in the case of genera), whichever place in reality is assigned to it. Therefore, there are good reasons to label the Stoics as realists about to universals, at least in this weaker and restricted sense.[31]

So, we might assume that Sextus' argument targets realists about universals. That is pretty much all we can get out of §227. For our enquiry to advance any further, we need to take into careful consideration Sextus' terminology in the whole section *PH* 2.219–28. Leaving aside for a moment the aforementioned Stoic terms, I shall now focus on the expression 'the being-human' (τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι). As I said, this expression has no parallels in Sextus' extant works. However, it bears a striking similarity to the Aristotelian jargon of essence, and Sextus does seem to be aware of such Aristotelian doctrines, at least on a superficial level, so that 'the being-human' might be thought to actually refer to an Aristotelian essence. Be that as it may, it is quite clear that such expression refers to *some sort* of entity which is assumed by Sextus to be a universal. Thus, it is *prima facie* reasonable to take the being-human as some sort of universal human. What is interesting, however, is that Sextus has already dealt with the universal human before §227: he has mentioned numerous times the species human and the genus animal, to which he referred as "the human" (ὁ ἄνθρωπος) and "the animal" (τὸ

---

[31] Sextus is not alone in this. Porphyry (*Intr.* 1.10–15) lists different ways in which genera and species may be said, in a very wide sense, to exist. Among the positions he lists, there is one according to which genera and species "depend on bare thoughts (ἐπινοίαις) alone" (transl. Barnes 2003). This might recall the typically Stoic doctrine of universals as concepts (though see Barnes 2003, 37–43), especially in the light of the fact that this possibly Stoic position is the second horn of a dilemma whose first horn is that genera and species "subsist" (ὑφέστηκεν), and that to subsist is taken by Porphyry to be equivalent, in a very Stoic fashion, to being either a body or an incorporeal (cf. also Alex. *In Top.* 359.12–16 = *SVF* 2.329 = LS 30 D). Be that as it may, it is interesting to note that Porphyry draws no distinction whatsoever between the possibly Stoic position and other positions listed by him which *we* would be more inclined to label as 'realist'. In other words, to say that genera and species depend on bare thoughts, or that they are concepts, does not amount for him to a straightforward denial of their reality: it is just one of the possible positions which one may adopt in regards of place in reality of universals, which still constitutes a *positive* claim about them. What I have been saying about the existence and oneness of Stoic universals seems also to be consistent with Alexander's (*in Top.* 359.12–16 = *SVF* 2.329 = LS 30 D) claim that Stoic concepts, even though they are not something (in the Stoic technical sense of 'something'), may nevertheless be told to be *one*.

ζῷον). Such change of terminology occurs at §227, where Sextus seems to carry on his treatment of universals without any noticeable interruption: "Again, this too is worthy of consideration...". So, if the being-human is nothing but the universal human (if it wasn't, why should Sextus want to prove that it isn't one and the same for all humans?), how is it related to the species human (i.e. the universal human) which Sextus has already talked about? In order to try to answer these questions, I shall resort to the Stoics, once again.

As I have already noted, it is a *prima facie* reasonable assumption that the Stoics should be somehow involved in the messy landscape of §227, given the presence of Stoic terms there. However, Sextus targets Stoics at the very start of *PH* 2.219–28, precisely for their views about universals. It might then seem strange that Sextus should go back to his initial target, which he is supposed to have already refuted (even though this wouldn't be too far from his usual attacking strategies; see *supra*, 2 n. 3), using, furthermore, different terminology.

Yet, it might very well be that the Stoics are in fact targeted at §227, but *not* for their views about universals. Let me explain how. It looks like their strong stance against universals didn't prevent the Stoics from developing a normal apparatus of species and genera, so to speak.[32] For instance, we find that "a genus is a collection of inseparable concepts" (πλειόνων καὶ ἀναφαιρέτων ἐννοημάτων σύλληψις), and that the genus animal "includes particular animals" (περιείληφε τὰ κατὰ μέρος ζῷα), where the "particular animals" should be understood to be the different species of animals, and that a species is "that which is contained within a genus (τὸ ὑπὸ γένους περιεχόμενον), just like the human is contained within the animal" (D.L. 7.60–1 = LS 30C). This apparatus allows the division of a genus into species to take place (D.L. 7.61 = LS 32 C).

On the other hand, according to the Stoics universals cannot act as causes in respect of individuals, i.e. spatiotemporal corporeal particular entities.[33] This is important: many theories of universals, especially ancient one, hold them to be causes. An outstanding example of such theories is the Platonic theory of forms, which was actually targeted by the Stoics themselves (see e.g. Simpl. *in Cat.* 105.8–16 = LS 30E = *SVF* 2.278, Syrian. *in Metaph.* 105.21–5 = LS 30H = *SVF* 2.364, Stob. *Ecl.*

---

[32] Leaving aside the specific fashion of realism about universals I have sketched earlier on (see *supra*, 21–2) in regards to Sextus' arguments – according to which holding some item to be one and the same for different individuals, whatever be the place in reality assigned to it, is sufficient to be labelled as realists about universals –, Stoics may very well be said to be reductionist about universals, even though Caston (1999) wouldn't agree on that.

[33] Stoics seem to have conceived species of single individuals, such as the one corresponding to Socrates (see D.L. 7.60–1 = LS 30C). They are still concepts, though. And as concepts, they can't have any causal agency. See Durand 2018: 69–71.

1.12.3.5–9, and *infra*, 25–7): form *F* is the cause, for individuals which are *F*, of their being *F*. According to the Stoic picture, such causal agency in respect of individuals should be assigned to common qualities.[34]

So, the metaphysical picture I have outlined thus far is twofold: it comprises a normal apparatus of genera and species, but when it comes to individuals and to facts which concern them, a different kind of entity, namely common qualities, is invoked and assigned causal agency. The symbiosis of the being-human and the species human at *PH* 2.219–28 might be then thought to fit such picture. In other words, given that §227 is the first place where Sextus mentions individuals (aside from the brief mention of Dio in §225), the sudden appearance of the being-human might be thought to depend on the typically Stoic need to introduce a different kind of entity alongside universals in order to explain facts which concern individuals. Therefore, the being-human might be taken to be a Stoic common quality under disguise, so to speak.

This line of interpretation is attractive. Still, it has two advantages and two disadvantages. The first advantage is that it allows for a coherent reading of the whole section *PH* 2.219–28, both terminologically and thematically speaking: at §§219–26 Sextus confronts universals, i.e. genera and species, whereby he alludes to some typically Stoic views, such as that of universals as concepts (§219) and that of the something as the *summum genus* (§223); then, at §227 he moves on to attacking a different kind of entities, distinct from species and genera, namely the Stoic common qualities, hence the change of terminology. The second advantage is that it fits well with the hypothesis that the Stoic semantics of common nouns is somehow involved in the passage. As I said, such semantics could be made to work for Sextus' passage, thereby making sense of his assumptions about common nouns, if the *designatum* of common nouns, i.e. the being-human, were something like a Stoic common quality. So, we would have a nice overall picture: at §227 Sextus is targeting the Stoic doctrine of common qualities, and in the process of doing so resorts to the annexed semantics of common nouns.

At the same time, this is also the great disadvantage of this line of interpretation: Sextus' argument is about Stoic common qualities and this, as we have seen already (*supra*: 20), would imply that it is completely off target. For Sextus would assume that a Stoic common quality is numerically

---

[34] Apparently, this doesn't prevent the Stoics from conceiving some kind of relation between the individuals which *F* and the species (concept) *F*. Some sources even say that the former *participate* in the latter; see Stob. 1.136,21–137,6 = LS 30A = *SVF* 1.65. Still, such participation shouldn't be held to have any causal relevance: as I said, the individuals which are *F* are such *because of* the presence of a common quality in them.

identical for different individuals, whereas it *isn't*, and try to infer a conclusion which he holds to be unpalatable to his target, whereas the Stoics would be perfectly fine with saying that, e.g., Dio's common quality is different from Theo's, at least numerically speaking. Moreover, this interpretation requires us to discard the aforementioned hypothesis that 'the being-human' depends on Aristotelian jargon (see *supra*, 5–6) and to assume that such expression refers to Stoic common qualities, whereas there seems to be no evidence that the Stoics used such terminology for common qualities. So, the coherent reading which this interpretation allows for comes at great costs: it requires us to give up the only way we found to make sense of the strange expression used by Sextus ('the being-human') and to give a very uncharitable reading of Sextus' argument. Great costs which, nevertheless, someone might be willing to pay.[35]

However, there is an alternative. It might be held that the Stoics are indeed involved in the passage, but not as *target* of Sextus' argument: rather, they may very well be its *source*. In other words, we might think that Sextus' argument against universals depends on a *Stoic* argument against universals. This would imply that Sextus' argument actually is against universals, as it should be, and that the assumptions about common nouns which emerge therein are genuinely Stoic. Moreover, this fits well with the Stoic views on universals, and, further, with the fact that we are aware of a Stoic argument against universals: the Nobody (Οὖτις) argument, which seems to argue against the inclusion of universals such as the universal human – a very similar example to Sextus', coincidentally (or not: see *infra*, 26) – among τινα.[36] I will not go into the details of the argument right now, but since I shall have more to say about it and its connection with Sextus' argument, I will lay out its text here (see Simpl. *in Cat.*, p. 105.11 = LS 30E = *SVF* 2.278 and D.L. 7.187): "If someone is in Athens, she is not in Megara. But human is in Athens. Therefore, human is not in Megara" (εἴ τίς ἐστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν Μεγάροις· <ἄνθρωπος δέ ἐστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος ἐν Μεγάροις>).

At any rate, that Sextus' argument might be read as actually being against universals is the main advantage of this second line of interpretation. It has two disadvantages, though. The first,

---

[35] There is also the fact that, according to Stoic doctrines, a sentence such as '(A) human strolls' corresponds to a simple middle or predicative proposition (see *M* 8.97 = LS 34H = *SVF* 2.205, D.L. 7.70 = LS 34K = *SVF* 2.204, and Brunschwig 1986, Ebert 1991, Barnes 1993, Bobzien 2009, 88–9). While the sentences Sextus has in mind in premise (2) of the argument, i.e. '(A) human$_D$ strolls' and '(A) human$_T$ strolls', must be somehow deictic, and are true if and only if the single determinate individual they speak about strolls, the corresponding Stoic simple middle or predicative proposition isn't deictic and doesn't speak of a single determinate individual: in short, it is true if and only *at least* one human strolls (see Alex. *in APr.* 402.15–7, Brunschwig 1984, 47–53, Crivelli 1994). So, Sextus' analysis of the truth conditions of an ἀξίωμα such as '(A) human strolls' seems to conflict with the standard Stoic classification of simple propositions. But this might not be a problem at all, provided that we take a different line of interpretation; see *infra*, 27.

[36] See Caston 1999, Crivelli 2007, Ademollo (forth. a).

immediate one is that it doesn't really account for the change of terminology at §227. This is because, if the argument is to concern universals, the being-human should in fact be nothing other than the universal human, i.e. the *species* human Sextus has already talked about before. So, the problem remains: why does he use this new and strange expression to refer to something he has already mentioned?

A possible way of going about this difficulty is to slightly correct this line of interpretation, by taking into account the possible presence of Aristotelian jargon in the passage (see *supra*, 5–6). What I mean is, we could take seriously this hypothesis and hold that the target of the (supposedly) Stoic argument are, indeed, Aristotelian *essences*. This would explain the change in terminology relative to the previous sections and also allow for a coherent reading of the whole section *PH* 2.219–28: at §§219–26 Sextus targets genera and species, and at §227 he moves on to attack different, though related, entities. i.e. essences. Read this way, the argument at §227 could look as somehow cognate with the Nobody argument: just as the latter targets Platonic Forms, so the former targets Aristotelian essences. We would then find ourselves with *two* Stoic arguments directed against metaphysical doctrines held by predecessors of the Stoics, Plato and Aristotle respectively.

This is quite interesting, because there are indeed some similarities between the two arguments: apart from the fact that either one concerns the universal human, which must have been a usual example in such debates (even though the very name of the *Nobody* argument seems to require that it deal with the universal *human*), they both rely on premises consisting (partially or totally) of sentences of the form 'ἄνθρωπος φ's', such as 'ἄνθρωπος ἔστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις' and 'ἄνθρωπος περιπατεῖ'. In particular, it has been argued (see Crivelli 2007, 105–6) that the Nobody argument presupposes a non-standard Stoic analysis of such sentences, according to which they are to be treated as (expressing) Stoic definite propositions, i.e. as *deictic* sentences. In other words, 'Human is in Athens' ('ἄνθρωπος ἔστιν ἐν Ἀθήναις') should be taken to be equivalent to 'This is in Athens', with 'this' ranging exclusively over the domain of *humans* and designating specifically the universal human.[37] This fits extraordinarily well with the analysis of the sentences in Sextus' premise (2), '(A) human_D strolls' and '(A) human_T strolls', which I have put forward (see *supra*, 9–11), and, if true,

---

[37] This seems to resonate well with Alex. *in APr.* 402.20–3, which contains an interesting remark regarding sentences such as 'This (οὗτος) strolls': when the object of deixis is female, 'This (οὗτος) strolls' and 'This (οὗτος) doesn't stroll' are said to both be false. Thus, the idea seems to emerge that, broadly speaking, the meaning of a deictic word may imply a restriction on the domain of things over which it ranges, thereby resulting in falsity when such restriction is not abided by. Still, we are dealing with sentences which according to standard Stoic analysis could be classified as (expressing) *definite* propositions; see Barnes 1999b, 41–5, Durand 2018, 109–16.

shows that in contexts such as this one the Stoics were willing to set aside their standard analysis of propositions – according to which '(A) human strolls' should be analysed as a simple middle or predicative proposition, thereby being subject to truth-conditions different from those which Sextus' argument presupposes (see *supra*, 25 n. 35) – and to adopt a non-standard one which suited best their needs.

I now come to the second disadvantage of this line of interpretation. It consists in the fact that it implies attributing to the Stoics an argument as bad as Sextus'. Not that the Nobody argument is perfect: its effectiveness as a *reductio* against its Platonic target depends on the fact that she be committed to treating Forms as quasi-individuals (see Caston 99, 201–2, Crivelli 2007, 100–4, Ademollo (forth.), 23). Moreover, it seems that, if the Nobody is to work as an *anti-realist* argument against universals – this time taking 'realism' and 'anti-realism' in the more usual sense –, i.e. to infer that they are completely unreal, it needs to rely on the further assumption that only particulars exists, which may imply a *petitio principii*.[38] However, there is a difference between an argument potentially being *ineffective*, like the Nobody argument, and an argument being, at best, *non-conclusive*, like Sextus'. This might suggest caution in attributing such a bad argument to the Stoics. Again, not that they should be held to be infallible. But certain logically faulty moves may seem to suit Sextus more than, say, Chrysippus.

These are the two main options available. Both may allow us to make some sense of the Stoic presence in the passage, and both have advantages as well as disadvantages. All in all, I think that the second line of interpretation is better, for it allows for a coherent of the argument's terminology, content and position in the wider context of *PH* 2.219–28, while also resonating well with what we know about the Stoic criticism of universals. And interestingly so, I might add. For this interpretation, if true, implies that Sextus' Stoic argument against Aristotelian essences requires essences to be taken to be the *designata* of tokens of common nouns, thereby establishing an intriguing conflation between essences and Stoic common qualities.

It goes without saying that the evidence for this is scarce and far from being conclusive, but I believe that §228 can be taken to support this reading, as I shall try to show in due time. At any rate, there is an important result which this detailed study of §227 has led us to. For both interpretations

---

[38] Cf. for instance Ademollo (forth.), 23: "This contradiction (*scil.* that the form of human both is and is not in Megara) forces the Platonist to acknowledge that the form of human is not a 'someone' (τις), i.e. not a particular: it is *not a someone* (οὔ τις), hence a '*non–someone*' (οὔτις). This however means that it is completely unreal, in the light of the Stoic theory according to which '*something*' (τι) is the supreme genus of reality". See also Caston 1999, 203.

single out the Stoic semantics of common nouns as the more probable source of Sextus' assumptions regarding common nouns at §227, be they his own or not. In particular, the double designation of common nouns to which Sextus is ultimately committed seems to recall, if anything, one of the main features of the Stoic semantics of common nouns, according to one of its possible reconstructions (see *supra*, 16–20): the distinction between the subject of a sentence (the *designatum* of its subject term) and that of which the predicate must hold in order for the sentence to be true. It seems then that §227 might have some bearing on our reconstruction of the relevant Stoic doctrines, whichever interpretation we opt for.

3.   Sextus' arguments at §228

3.1 *A first glance*

It is now time to finally move to §228. Here, Sextus targets the so-called "common accidents" or "common properties" (κοινὰ συμβεβηκότα), the examples he gives of such entities being sight and breath. Yet again, it is quite hard to understand what *exactly* he has in mind. At any rate, he holds what he is going to say about common accidents to be similar to what he has said about the being-human at §227:

> Παραπλήσια δὲ λέγεται καὶ περὶ τῶν κοινῶν συμβεβηκότων. εἰ γὰρ ἓν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συμβέβηκε Δίωνί τε καὶ Θέωνι τὸ ὁρᾶν, ἐὰν καθ' ὑπόθεσιν φθαρῇ μὲν Δίων, Θέων δὲ περιῇ καὶ ὁρᾷ, ἤτοι τὴν ὅρασιν τοῦ ἐφθαρμένου Δίωνος ἄφθαρτον μένειν ἐροῦσιν, ὅπερ ἀπεμφαίνει, <ἢ> τὴν αὐτὴν ὅρασιν ἐφθάρθαι τε καὶ μὴ ἐφθάρθαι λέξουσιν, ὅπερ ἄτοπον· οὐκ ἄρα ἡ Θέωνος ὅρασις ἡ αὐτή ἐστι τῇ Δίωνος, ἀλλ' εἰ ἄρα, ἰδία ἑκατέρου.
>
> Similar remarks (*scil.* to the ones made at §227) are made in regards of common accidents. For if seeing is one and the same for Dio and Theo, then if we suppose that Dio has died, whereas Dio survives and sees, either they will say that the sight of dead Dio remains undestroyed, which is incongruous, or they will affirm that the same sight both has been and has not been destroyed, which is absurd. Therefore, Theo's sight is not the same as Dio's but, if anything, it is peculiar to each. (§228; transl. Annas and Barnes, with modifications)[39]

---

[39] I should note the terminology changes, both here and in the later argument about breath. Sextus switches from expressions constructed with a neuter article and an infinitive, namely "seeing" and "breathing" (τὸ ὁρᾶν, τὸ ἀναπνεῖν), to nouns, namely "sight" and "breath" (ὅρασις, ἀναπνοή). In my opinion, such change in terminological shouldn't be taken to hint at any deeper philosophical meaning. Still, there are some parallels which might be worth mentioning. The first

This is what Sextus has to say about sight. His argument is structured as a conditional in which the antecedent expresses the starting assumption and the consequent expresses the two horns of a dilemma: the negation of both horns of the dilemma allows Sextus to infer the conclusion, i.e. the contradictory of the starting assumption, by *modus tollens*. This strategy is indeed very similar to the one we found at §227 (and to the one you may find at §219–26, for that matter).

The starting assumption is that a common accident is one and the same for all individuals in which it inheres. Assuming then that one of the subjects in which it inheres dies, it follows that the common accident either (i) survives or (ii) it doesn't. If (i), we will have that a common accident may exist *without* its underlying subject, which Sextus takes to be incongruous. If (ii), we will have to claim that the common accident ceases to exist in respect of the subject that has passed away, but that it survives in respect of other subjects which survive.[40] However, we assumed that the common accident is one and the same for all individuals in which it inheres. And the same thing, where 'same' expresses numerical identity, cannot undergo contradictory affections at the same time ("the same sight both has been and has not been destroyed"). So, what we normally experience, namely that people – but the same might go for animals – carry on seeing even if someone has passed away (whereby their sight ceases to exist as well), is taken by Sextus to imply a violation of the principle of non–contradiction (PNC). Quite interestingly then, Sextus is (dialectically) committed to PNC, and this is not the only passage where that seems to be the case (cf. for instance §§224–6).[41]

At any rate, it should be quite clear now that Sextus' argument requires a strong type identity to be at play, namely *numerical* identity. Only numerical identity can make it the case that what Sextus says actually implies that PNC is violated. So, the starting assumption of the argument is that a common accident is *numerically* identical for all subjects in which it inheres. This recalls the

---

one is *PH* 3.14. There, Sextus discusses rival theories of causation, distinguishing between χύσις and τὸ χεῖσθαι: the first is a corporeal body (effect), whereas the latter is an incorporeal Stoic predicate (cf. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 8.9.26.3–4 = LS 55C and *supra*, 16–20). It seems hard to me that a such a distinction may be read into §228. The second parallel is *PH* 3.49, where Sextus discusses dispositions and privations. There, sight (ὅρασις) is held to be the disposition (ἕξις) whose privation is blindness (τυφλότης). A few lines below, though, Sextus mentions "being blind" (τὸ τυφλὸν εἶναι): "Someone who didn't have any conception of sight could not say that so-and-so does not possess sight – which is exactly what being blind amounts to (ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ τυφλὸν εἶναι)". This change of terminology doesn't seem to have any deeper meaning, just like the one at §228.

[40] In the case of sight, it is also important that the surviving subjects should also keep on *seeing*: Sextus assumes that Theo survives *and sees*. If Theo were to undergo some kind of Oedipus-style situation, i.e. to survive but be blind, Sextus' argument would work differently. Things are different in the case of breath. That is simply because, quite intuitively, breathing is a necessary condition of surviving: for *x* to survive, i.e. to live, *x* has to breath. But maybe modern medicine has changed things a bit.

[41] On Sextus' dialectical commitment to the PNC, see Machuca 2012.

starting assumption of §227, namely that the being-human is numerically identical for different individuals. §227 and §228 are similar, after all.

What I said about sight goes also for Sextus' following example, breath, although with some slight modifications:

> καὶ γὰρ εἰ ταὐτὸν συμβέβηκε Δίωνί τε καὶ Θέωνι τὸ ἀναπνεῖν, οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τὴν ἐν Θέωνι ἀναπνοὴν εἶναι, τὴν ἐν Δίωνι δὲ μὴ εἶναι· ἐνδέχεται δὲ τοῦ μὲν φθαρέντος τοῦ δὲ περιόντος· οὐκ ἄρα ἡ αὐτή ἐστιν.

> Also, if breathing is the same for Dio and Theo, it is not possible for the breath in Theo to exist and the one in Dio not to exist. But it is possible, if the one is dead and the other survives. Therefore, it is not the same. (§228)

This is the general picture. I shall now take a closer look at Sextus' arguments. Given that the argument about breath is simpler, though very similar to the one about sight, I will start from the former, and then move to the latter.

3.2 Breath

Sextus' arguments at §228 elicit some kind of discomfort, just like the one at §227. However, this time around it is easier to address and flesh out such discomfort, given that no assumptions about common nouns are involved which we are to make sense of.

For a start, it is not clear what a common accident even is supposed to be. Given that the arguments assume that a common accident possesses numerical identity and purports to prove that it doesn't, a common accident must be taken to be some kind of universal. What is strange is that the previous section (§§219–26) too is about universals, as well as §227 (or at least, Sextus *wants* it to be about universals). So, yet again, why the change of terminology? One possible answer comes quite easily. After all, in philosophical prose 'συμβεβηκός' usually refers to accidental attributes, as opposed to essential and/or necessary ones. So, the *prima facie* reasonable hypothesis would be this: common accidents are universal accidents (something like the things which are said of a subject and are in a subject in the meta–ontology of Aristotle's *Categories* 2). The only strange thing is, the usual examples of accidents are attributes such as being white, or being musical (whatever that means).

Instead, Sextus' examples of common accidents are breath and sight, the latter of which elsewhere (see *supra*, 27 n. 40) he takes to be a disposition (ἕξις).[42]

Be that as it may, it is interesting to note that Sextus' arguments may work with attributes such as being white and being musical *as well*. In general, they work – and this is trivial – with *any* attribute whose relation with the subject to which it inheres is such that the demise of its subject may give rise to the following question, upon which Sextus' arguments turn: does the attribute survive the demise of its subject, or not? But what kind of attributes are these? Well, to answer to this latter question, I need to call into play an old distinction: that between accidental and essential attributes or, to borrow Alan Code's (1986) terminology, that between what something *has* and what something *is*.[43] It seems to me that only accidental attributes, i.e. (according to the notion just expounded) attributes which are merely had by their subject, may be liable to Sextus' line of argument. For essential attributes definitely seem to escape it. Let us assume, for instance, that Dio is *essentially* human. What happens, then, were he to die? Well, in that case we would not wonder, probably, whether his humanity has now been destroyed or not. Intuitively, what we could say would be only that *a human being* has died. And the human being we would be talking about would be exactly Dio.

So, Sextus' arguments at §228 would seem to be effective against every attribute which his opponents are inclined to regard as accidental, in the sense of 'accidental' just expounded. This does not mean that the same line of argument cannot be used against humanity. Indeed, it can be used against it, but this requires that humanity be taken to be an accidental attribute, which may prove quite costly, for some philosophers.[44] Therefore, there seem to be good theoretical reasons to take

---

[42] A different possibility involves calling into play Epicurus and his followers. As a matter of fact, it looks like 'συμβεβηκός' is a proper piece of Epicurean terminology, used to refer to properties belonging to atoms and aggregates, both essential and accidental (see e.g. LS 7B). Such use is attested elsewhere in Sextus' works (see *M* 10.219–21 = LS 7C, and possibly *M* 7.269–71). This might suggest that Sextus' arguments at §228 actually target Epicurean properties. However, properties as they are made out to be by Epicurus do not seem to be a fitting target for Sextus' argument. For not only is their existence strictly dependent on the subject to which they inhere, but – I take it – they are also particular and *not* universal (see Sedley 1999, 362–82 and Bronowski 2013).

[43] It goes without saying that different distinctions between accidental and essential attributes may be drawn: for instance, one may take all *necessary* attributes of a thing to be its essential attributes. The distinction I am working with is quite coherent with what Aristotle says at *Metaph.* Δ 30, 1025ᵃ 30–4, where he famously assumes that there are necessary attributes of a thing which nonetheless are *not* essential attributes of it.

[44] It follows that the line of argument of §228 *can* in principle be used against the items which Sextus targets at §227, though at the cost of (possibly) heavy concessions. What about the opposite scenario? Can Sextus' line of argument at §227 be put to work extensively against accidental attributes? Well, it seems that for this to be the case, Sextus would need to employ something like paronyms. For instance, given an accidental attribute *F*, his argument would turn upon sentences such as '(A) *F** *φ*'s', where *F** is a paronym of *F*.

common accidents to be universal accidents, or something akin to these. This supports the interpretation of §227 I put forward in the previous section, according to which §227 targets essences, possibly reflecting – if anything – a Stoic argument against Aristotelian doctrines. For the contrast that would thereby ensue between §227, which concerns essences, and §228, which concerns universal accidents, works well and looks itself Aristotelian, at least on a superficial level. It would follow that the whole section *PH* 2.219–28 has the following overall structure: §§219–26 target genera and species (in particular, Sextus' examples are animal and human, namely genera and species of *substances*); §227 targets entities such as the being-human, which may be taken to be an Aristotelian essence; §228 targets common accidents, i.e. universal accidents. This fits together quite well.

This being said, all we need to know to evaluate Sextus' brief argument is that breath must be taken to be a universal. Here's a summary of it:

(1) If breath is one and the same for different individuals, e.g. Dio and Theo, then
it is not possible that the breath in Theo should exist and the breath in Dio
should not exist

(2) But this is possible, if Dio dies and Theo survives

(C) Therefore, breath is not one and the same for different individuals

The underlying assumption in premise (2) is that, if Dio dies, his breath ceases to exist with him, whereas Theo (and everyone else, for that matter) may survive and carry on breathing. This makes sense. The problem is that it is *his* breath which ceases to exist: if Dio dies, *Dio's* breath pops out of existence, so to speak, alongside Dio himself. It is no coincidence then that in premise (1) Sextus himself mentions *Dio's* breath ("the breath in Dio) *and Theo's* breath ("the breath in Theo"). This is strange, though: didn't we assume, in the very same premise, that breath is *one and the same* for everyone? How should we account for the abrupt transition from the universal breath to Dio's and Theo's breath*s*?

This transition looks far from innocent. As a matter of fact, if the breath in the antecedent of premise (1) is a universal, Sextus isn't allowed to distinguish *Dio's* breath from *Theo's*. The universal breath isn't *anybody's* breath.[45] Having said that, the transition from the universal breath to Dio's and Theo's breaths seem to hinge on the following assumption: if the universal breath inheres in Dio

---

[45] It could *at most* be thought belong to something like the universal human, or the universal animal. But it can't in any way whatsoever be taken to belong to some *individual*, like Sextus does.

and Theo, then there exist such things as *Dio's* breath and *Theo's* breath. This is not wrong. As a matter of fact, Dio's breath and Theo's breath look a lot like contemporary tropes, which may be described as particular and non-repeatable instances of properties, such as the red in *this* rose. In this respect, it is quite reasonable to assume that the inherence of the universal breath in Dio and Theo implies that each of them has his own particular breath (i.e. is own particular trope).[46]

The distinction between the universal breath and its tropes allows us to single out the problem affecting Sextus' argument at its very core: Sextus seems to conflate the universal breath and its tropes, i.e. Dio's and Theo's breath. This is the only way a fact we experience every day, namely that people keep on breathing even if someone has passed away, might be made out to be troublesome for the identity of the universal breath. To understand why that is the case, let us imagine that there is indeed a universal breath which inheres in Dio and Theo, so that each of them has his own trope. Imagine then that Dio passes away: what happens now? Intuitively, Dio's breath ceases to exist. But this doesn't imply that the universal breath or Theo's breath should be affected. Dio's death is troublesome for the universal breath and Theo's breath only if Dio's breath is somehow identified with the universal breath and Theo's breath. That way, we will have what Sextus wants: one and the same entity exists (in Theo) and doesn't exist (in Dio) at the same time, which is a clear violation of PNC.[47]

To confirm this, let us turn to premise (1). To quote Sextus, "if breathing is the same for Dio and Theo, it is not possible for the breath in Theo to exist and the one in Dio not to exist". If it involves three different entities, namely the universal breath and its two tropes in Dio and Theo, the consequent doesn't follow from the antecedent: even if the universal breath is one and the same for Dio and Theo, nothing prevents Dio's breath from ceasing to exist while Theo's survives. On the other hand, if there is only one single entity involved, namely the universal breath, Sextus shouldn't even mention Dio's breath and Theo's breath in the consequent: as I said, the universal breath isn't anybody's breath, and so it cannot be taken to cease to exist when someone passes away.

---

[46] Both Plato and Aristotle may allow entities very similar to contemporary tropes in their ontology. As for Plato, some passages in the *Parmenides* and in the *Phaedo* seem to hint at forms which are *immanent* in individuals; see Ademollo 2013, 83–5. As for Aristotle, the things "which are in a subject but are not said of a subject" in the meta-ontology of *Cat.* 2 may be held to be particular and non-repeatable instances of properties, i.e. tropes; see Wedin 2000, 38–66, Matthews 2009, 144–54 and Ademollo (forth. b), 45–9.

[47] That the one and the same thing exists and doesn't exist is an *extreme* breach of PNC. Still, Sextus may have problems with any claim of the form '*x* is *F* and isn't *F*', where '*F*' stands for any property.

3.3 *Sight*

This goes also for Sextus' argument about sight. It is slightly more complicated, in that it involves a

dilemma in the consequent of premise (1):

(1) If sight is one and the same for different individuals, e.g. Dio and Theo, then

if Dio dies and Theo survives and sees, either (A) the sight of dead Dio still

exists or (B) the same sight exists and doesn't exist

(2) (1A) is incongruous

(3) (1B) is absurd

(C) Therefore, sight isn't one and the same for different individuals

The underlying assumption of (1A–B) is, again, that if someone passes away their sight might cease

to exist as well, while other people can happily carry on seeing. Just like in the case of breath, there

is a transition from the universal sight to *Dio's* sight.[48] It hinges, probably, on the assumption that, if

the universal sight inheres in Dio and Theo, each of them has his own sight. The problem is, yet

again, that Dio's sight is *Dio's*: it a particular, non-repeatable instance which belongs exclusively to

Dio. Therefore, it shouldn't be identified with the universal sight: Dio possesses *his own* sight only in

that the universal sight inheres in him, but his own sight is different from the universal sight.

The two horns of the dilemma depend exactly on a such an identification. Let us distinguish,

yet again, three entities: the universal sight and its two tropes which belong to Dio and Theo,

respectively. We will then have that, if Dio dies, *his* sight ceases to exist, but this won't affect neither

Theo's nor the universal sight. If the questions are to be put forward, 'Can Dio's sight survive his

passing away?', or 'Can the same sight both be destroyed and survive at the same time?', Dio's sight

needs to be identified with the universal sight and with Theo's.

3.4 *Concluding remarks*

It is possible that such an identification, in both of these arguments, is favoured by the starting

assumption, that a common accident is one and the same for different individuals: Sextus might be

prone to think that, if sight/breath is one and the same for Dio and Theo, then Dio's sight/breath is

in fact the same as Theo's, and therefore, it is the *universal* sight/breath (given that it is the same for

both). However, this is incorrect, as I hopefully showed. And someone who held common accidents

---

[48] In this case, it is the opponents who will have to introduce it: "either *they will say* that the sight of dead Dio
remains undestroyed [...[or *they will affirm* that [...]...". Still, it is clear that this is what Sextus takes to follow from the
premises, whether it is him or the opponents who actually have to state it.

to exist might simply deny that the universal sight/breath is affected by Dio's death (or, actually, deaths: he is made to pass away twice in a few lines), like Sextus' arguments require. Still, Sextus seems to have got what he wanted: even after the thorough analysis of §228 I have carried out shows, that seems to be a sense in which Dio's sight/breath is *not* the same as Theo's, in that there are numerically different instances of the same universal attribute.

At this point, we could wonder, yet again, who Sextus' target is. As I have already said, we may safely assume that he is targeting philosophers who are realists in respect of universals, or of *this kind* of universals, assuming that common accidents are universal accidents. On the other hand, our interpretation of §227 may give us some hints for §228: if §227 actually is about Aristotelian essences, and the contrast between essential and accidental properties is itself typically Aristotelian, a reasonable inference might be that the target of this section is likewise Aristotelian.

References

Ademollo, F. (2013). Plato's Conception of the Forms: Some Remarks. In: Chiaradonna and Galluzzo 2013, pp. 41–85.

Ademollo, F. (2022). Anti-Platonism in Aristotle's *Categories*. In: Ademollo, F., Amerini, F. and De Risi, V., eds., *Thinking and Calculating. Essays in Logic, Its History and Its Philosophical Applications in Honour of Massimo Mugnai*. Cham, pp. 31–52.

Ademollo, F. (forth. a). Stoic Reactions to Plato's *Sophist*.

Ademollo, F. (forth. b). *Categories* 1–3' (presented at the 22° Symposium Aristotelicum, Oslo, 2022).

Armstrong, D.M (1989). *Universals. An Opinionated Introduction*. Boulder (CO).

Alessandrelli, M. (2016). L'ontologia stoica del qualcosa. *ILIESI digitale. Memorie* 2, Roma.

Alessandrelli, M. (2022). Bronowski, *The Stoics on Lekta. Gnomon* 94(8), pp. 676–86 (review of Bronowski 2019).

Algra, K., Barnes, J., Mansfeld, J. and Schofield, M., eds. (1999). *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Cambridge.

Annas, J. (1992). Sextus Empiricus and the Peripatetics. *Elenchos* 13, pp. 201–31.

Annas, J., and Barnes, J., eds (2000). *Sextus Empiricus. Outlines of Scepticism*. Cambridge.

Bailey, D.T.J. (2014). The Structure of Stoic Metaphysics. *OSAP* 46, pp. 253–309.

Barnes, J. (1990). *The Toils of Scepticism*. Cambridge.

Barnes, J. (1993). A Big, Big D?. *The Classical Review* 43(2), pp. 304–6 (review of Ebert 1991).

Barnes, J. (1999a). Meaning. In: Algra et al. 1999, pp. 193–213.

Barnes, J. (1999b). Aristotle and Stoic logic. In: Ierodiakonou K., ed., *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*. Oxford, pp. 23–53.

Barnes, J. (2003). *Porphyry. Introduction*. Oxford.

Barnes, J (2007). *Truth, etc.*: *Six Lectures on Ancient Logic*. Oxford–New York.

Barnes, J. (2012). *Logical Matters: Essays in Ancient Philosophy II*. Oxford.

Blank, D. and Atherton, C. (2003). The Stoic Contribution to Traditional Grammar. In: Inwood 2003, pp. 310–27.

Bobzien, S. (2003). Logic. In: Inwood 2003, pp. 85–123.

Bronowski, A. (2013). Epicureans and Stoics on Universals. In Chiaradonna and Galluzzo 2013, pp. 255–97

Bronowski, A. (2019). *The Stoics on* Lekta. *All There Is to Say*. Oxford.

Brunschwig, J. (1984). Remarques sur la théorie stoïcienne du nom propre. *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 6(1), pp. 3–19. Reprinted as 'Remarks on the Stoic Theory of the Proper Noun' in Brunschwig 1994, pp. 39–56 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Brunschwig, J. (1986). Quelques remarques sur la conception stoicienne du nom propre. *Histoire tpistemologie Langage* 6, pp. 3–19. Reprinted as 'Remarks on the Classification of Simple Propositions in Hellenistic Logic', in Brunschwig 1994, pp. 57–71.

Brunschwig, J. (1988). La théorie stoïcienne du genre suprême et l'ontologie platonicienne. In: Barnes, J. and Mignucci, M., eds., *Matter and Metaphysics. Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum*. Napoli, pp. 19–127. Reprinted as 'The Stoic Theory of the Supreme Genus and Platonic Ontology' in Brunschwig 1994, pp. 92–157 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Brunschwig, J. (1994). *Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*. Cambridge.

Bury, R.G., ed. (1933). *Sextus Empiricus I. Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. London.

Castagnoli, L. and Fait, P., ed. (2023). *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Logic*. Cambridge.

Caston, V. (1999). Something and Nothing: The Stoics on Concepts and Universals. *OSAP* 17, pp. 145–213.

Caston, V. (forth.). The Stoics on Mental Representation.

Chiaradonna, R. and Galluzzo, G., eds. (2013). *Universals in Ancient Philosophy*. Pisa.

Code, A. (1986). Aristotle: Essence and Accident. In: Grandy, R.E. and Warner, R., eds., *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality. Intentions, Categories, Ends*. Oxford, pp. 411–40.

Crivelli, P. (1994). Indefinite Propositions and Anaphora in Stoic Logic. *Phronesis* 39, pp. 187–206.

Crivelli, P. (2007). The Stoics on Definitions and Universals. *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 18, pp. 89–122.

Durand, M. (2018). *Language and Reality: Stoic Semantic Reconstructed*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto.

Ebert, T. (1991). *Dialektiker und frühe Stoiker bei Sextus Empiricus: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der Aussagenlogik*, Göttingen.

Frede, M. (1977). The origins of traditional grammar. In: Butts, R.E. and Hintikka, J., eds., *Historical and Philosophical Dimensions of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science*. Dordrecht, pp. 51–79. Reprinted in Frede 1987, pp. 338–59 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Frede, M. (1978). Principles of Stoic grammar. In: Rist, J., ed., *The Stoics*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: 27–75. Reprinted in Frede 1987, pp. 301–37 (page numbers cited according to this latter edition).

Frede, M. (1987). *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Minneapolis.

Frede, M. (1994). The Stoic Notion of a Lekton. In: Everson, S., ed., *Language*. Cambridge, pp. 109–28.

Kripke, S. (1977). Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference. *Midwest Studies* 2, pp. 255–76.

Kripke, S. (2013). *Reference and Existence*. Oxford.

Long, A.A. (1971). *Problems in Stoicism*. London.

Machucha, D. (2012). Pyrrhonism and the Law of Non–Contradiction. In: Machuca, D., ed., *Phyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*. Dordrecht, pp. 51–77.

Mates, B. (1996). *The Skeptic Way*. Oxford.

Matthews, G.B. (2009). Aristotelian Categories. In: Agnostopoulos, G., ed., *A Companion to Aristotle*, Chichester (U.K.), pp. 144–61.

Menn, S. (1999). The Stoic Theory of Categories. *OSAP* 17, pp. 215–47.

Mutschmann, H., and Mau, J., eds. (1958). *Sexti Empirici Opera. Vol. I: Pyrroneion Hypotyposeon*. Leipzig.

Quine, W.V.O. (1950). Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis. *JPh* 47 (22), pp. 621–33.

Sedley, D. (1983). The Stoic Criterion of Identity. *Phronesis* 27, pp. 255–75.

Sedley, D. (1985). The Stoic Theory of Universals. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (5), pp. 87–92.

Sedley, D. (1999). Hellenistic Physics and Metaphysics. In: Algra et al. 1999, pp. 355–411.

Wedin, M. (2000). *Aristotle's Theory of Substance*: *the* Categories *and* Metaphysics *Zeta*. Oxford.