

Stoic Ontology

The subject matter of ontology is what there is, what exists, or what is real. It is now part of metaphysics. But the Stoics, indeed no ancient philosophers, would recognise this term: it was only when librarians organised Aristotle's works that the term 'metaphysics' came to denote 'those after the physics', which meant the collection works in which Aristotle deals with fundamental or foundational issues (hence also *prima philosophia*). We will focus on existence (LS27), universals (LS30), and bodies (LS28, LS45).

- 27 1. Centaurs and giants are examples of things that are but do not exist. How does this relate to the genus of 'something'? (cf. 30C)
- 2.★ The central idea is that only body or bodies exist. Which ones of the following items exist: an egg, Rewley House, virtue, god, the soul, a memory, a rainbow, a word?
3. Is the difference between existence and subsistence a 'quibble'?
- 30 4. Do the Stoics think there are universals?
- 5.★ Why are universals 'figments'?
- 28 6.★ The two passages are difficult. The first mentions the 'argument from growth'. What is this argument, and what does it allegedly show?
7. How do the Stoics respond to the argument?
- 45 8. These passages contain the main rationale for saying that only bodies exist. Can you identify it?

Background Information. (a) The 'old philosophers' in 30A are Plato and Aristotle, who thought of universals as Ideas or Forms. Plato adds the thought that such Ideas exist mind-independently, in an indestructible eternal realm, and that objects 'exemplify' some of these Ideas by 'sharing' in them. The key theoretical point is that many numerically non-identical things are nonetheless qualitatively identical (i.e. share all their features): two eggs, say, share the Form of 'egghood', which is also what makes them *eggs*, rather than oranges. The theory of Ideas/Forms aims to explain similarity amongst different objects. (b) *Genera* (see LS28) are aspects under which body, the only existent, can be studied: as a bare thing that could have properties (substrate), as a thing that has properties, as a thing that has certain dispositions, and as a thing that relates to other things.