

Stoic Logic and Semantics

The word *λογική* (*logikê*) relates to *λόγος* (*logos*), which is notoriously difficult to translate: it could mean reason, language, rationale, principle, or argument. So, for the Stoics, logic deals with all that matters of rational discourse. It falls into rhetoric and dialectic, which incorporates what we now recognise as logic in a narrower sense, dealing with definitions, language, meaning, truth, propositions, and arguments (as in LS36A1). For the Aristotelians logic has instrumental value as a tool for right reasoning; but for the Stoics, logic is an integral parts of their system: nature, or the cosmos, itself is rational through and through, and everything that happens is driven by, and reflects, (divine) *logos*.¹ We focus on sayables (LS33), propositions (LS34–5), and arguments (LS36). The texts on fallacy and modality (LS37–8) are optional.

- 33A 1. What is the difference between an utterance, speech, and language?
 33B 2. Explain the distinction between signification (or the thing that gets signified), signifier (or the thing that does the signifying), and ‘name-bearer’.
 33F 3. Give a few examples of incomplete and complete sayables.
 34 4. What is the hallmark of a proposition (*ἀξίωμα*, *axioma*)?
 34E 5.* When is ‘It is day’ true, and when false?
 34F 6.* Can propositions change their truth value?
 35 7. Characterise the difference between simple and non-simple propositions.
 8.* Pick one of the three types of complex (non-simple) propositions and explain it.
 36 9. Sketch one of the five ‘indemonstrable’ arguments, perhaps using an example.

Background Information. (a) ‘Utterance’ could also mean ‘voice’ (*φωνή*, *phonê*), and this could be anything that comes out of our mouths, from sighs to complex sentences. Animals makes utterances too, but they lack speech (*λέξις*, *lexis*). (b) A *sayable* is what gets said or something that can be said; it is derived from the verb ‘to say’ (*λέγειν*, *legein*). It seems also apt to think of *lekta* as the content of what we say, and hence they are closely related to meaning. *Lekta* are thus things that can be semantically evaluated, and hence can be true or false. But not only propositions or statements are *lekta*, but also questions, oaths, prayers, and commands. Cicero calls them ‘dictum’. (c) The word ‘significant’ (e.g., in 33A) translates from *σημαντικός* (*sêmantikos*); so, it could also mean ‘meaningful’, but it may also allude to a theory of signs. (d) The word for a proposition is *ἀξίωμα* (*axiôma*), which derives from the verb ‘to put forward a claim’; it lacks the force of ‘axiom’ as a self-evident truth.

¹ *Logos* is not only the reason for all things, but also the cause, as we shall see.

