8. Stoic Physical Theory, Aristotelian Precedent

Summary. In this section we study the relation of the *Placita* to the detailed contents of the two divisions of the Stoic *physikos logos* as reported in Diogenes Laërtius 7.132–133. It is first divided eidetically into corporeals such as elements, principles and gods, and incorporeals such as place and void. This division compares well with the contents of Book I of the *Placita*, and can be integrated with concepts from Aristotle’s theoretical physics. The two most important parts of the generic division in Diogenes’ text are ‘on the cosmos’ and ‘causal explanation’. Philosophers as well as astronomers study some of the issues pertaining to the cosmos, just as mathematicians, astronomers, and doctors study some of the issues pertaining to causation. Other such issues are the preserve of the philosophers. Aristotle already discussed the demarcation between philosophy and science, and Chrysippus noted the disagreement among philosophers and doctors concerning an issue known to us from ch. 4.5, ‘on the regent part’. We note that this description of standard Stoic physics is problem-oriented, just as was the case for physics according to Aëtius’ proem. The selection and sequence of topics listed at D.L. 7.132–133 are consistent with the contents of Books II to V of the *Placita*. This also holds for the brief account of the details of Stoic physics at D.L. 7.142–159.

The term *φυσικός λόγος* (we recall P in his proem telling us that this *logos* is what he is going to teach) is found at the beginning of the account of Stoic physics in Diogenes Laërtius 7.132. It means the part of philosophical theory concerned with physics (cf. e.g. D.L. 7.39, Plu. *SR* 1035d). Two divisions of this part are listed. We shall see that the contents of the first of these are roughly parallel to those of A Book I, and those of the second to those of A Books II–V.

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200 See above, n. 21 and text thereto; for some examples of the formula below, n. 334; D.L. 7.160 also uses the formula *φυσικός τόπος* in this sense. Theiler attributes D.L. 7.132–133 to Posidonius (his fr. 254) because of the parallel in fr. 18 E.-K. ~ 255 Th., see Theiler (1982) 2:133–137; for fr. 18 E.-K. (the famous abstract from Posidonius’ *Meteorology* by Geminus) see below, nn. 230, 378, 387, and Section 16. Posidonius’ *Φυσικός Λόγος* is quoted eight times in the sequel: D.L. 7.143, 134, 140 (twice), 149, 144, 145, 153 ~ fr. 4–11 E.-K., but (although this is sometimes claimed) this does not entail that the division at D.L. 7.132–133 is to be attributed to him.
The first division of the *physikos logos* is one into seven species (εἰδικῶς), i.e. subparts: they divide the *physikos logos* into (1) the part about bodies, (2) the part about principles, (3) the part about elements, (4) the part about gods, (5) the part about bounding entities, (6) the part about place, (7) the part about void. We note that diaeresis as a method was also part of Stoic logic, see D.L. 7.61–62; it was itself (unsurprisingly) subdivided into species, and distinguished by them from μεσομοιός, *partitio* (‘classification’).

This list of seven sorted items naturally divides into two halves: parts (1), (2), (3), and (4) pertain to Stoic corporeals, which presumably is the reason why ‘bodies’ come first, and parts (5), (6), and (7) to Stoic incorporeals. The division is called specific because these two sections (to be subdivided themselves) can be subsumed under a shared and extremely abstract supreme genus we know something about from other sources, viz. the enigmatic ‘something’ (the Stoic τι), so are its first species (προοεχθή εἴδη, cf. D.L. 7.61). At a first glance, Diogenes Laërtius’ enumeration seems incomplete, since topics such as fate are lacking, but a reason for this could be that it is a factor in both divisions of Stoic physics. Although the enumeration of contents in this list is orderly enough, it apparently fails to correspond to an order of treatment; in the sequel in Diogenes Laërtius principles (7.134) are discussed before body (7.145), presumably allowing for a better performance.

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201 The more abstract and theoretical character of this division has been well argued by Long & Sedley (1987) 1.267–268, Brunschwig (2003) 207–209.  
202 For the ‘parts’ and ‘sub-parts’ of philosophy the Stoics, apart from τόπος, also used the terms μέρη, γένη, or εἴδη. The use of the word τόπος may have to do with memorization, or imaginative representation. For another eidetic division of a subdiscipline into seven *topoi* see above, n. 5, and for an Aristotelian division into six species below, n. 330.  
203 D.L. 7.132, τὸν δὲ φυσικὸν λόγον διαιροῦσιν εἰς τε τὸν περὶ σωμάτων τόπον καὶ περὶ ἄρχων καὶ στοιχείων καὶ θεῶν καὶ περάτων καὶ τόπων καὶ κενοῦ.  
205 See Long & Sedley (1987) 1:268. A variety of this division, unpedantically formulated, is found Sen. *Ep*. 89,16. This is bipartite: corporeals and incorporeals, both subdivided into their ‘grades of importance, so to speak’ (in suos, ut ita dicam, gradus). Corporeals are divided into what creates and what is created, ‘and the created things are the elements’ (gignuntur autem elementa). So the creative things are the principles.  
207 εἱμαρμένη is coextensive with God at D.L. 7.135, i.e. belongs with the specific sub-topic ‘On gods’, and is that according to which the cosmos is administered according to D.L. 7.145, i.e. belongs with the generic sub-topic ‘On the cosmos’ as well.