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“*ta lekta*” THE STOIC THEORY OF SAYABLES

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Abstract. The stoic logic in comparison to that of Aristotle seems to have no importance and it has always been ignored. This article throws light on the main subject matter of their logic e.g. the “*Lekta*” (The Sayables) which are the very underlying meaning of whatever we say and think. So the Stoic logic is not only a scheme of argumentation but it also is a system of speech and dialectics. The nature of stoic “*Lekta*” is that they subsist independently. They are distinguishable from linguistic expressions also. Here I have presented an account of the meaning, nature, kinds, place and importance of the “*Lekta*” of Stoic logic.

Key Words. Deficient, Exiomata, Rhetoric, Definitions, Dialectics, Sayables, Self-Complete, Speech, Voice, Zeno,

Stoicism appeared in the Hellenistic age and perhaps after the phase of the Alexander’s conquests and it soon got popularity among the Greeks as well as among non-Greeks. It is supposed that this movement was started with the teachings of Zeno of Citium who, from Cyprus came to Athens and he laid the foundations of his own school in 300 B.C.

This was due to the fact that he taught his pupils in a “Stoa” (portico), his philosophy got repute as Stoicism (or the philosophy of Stoa). Zeno, in the field of logic was influenced particularly by Stilpo, he felt the need to lay down the basis of logic because he considered that the wise person must know how to get rid of fallacies and to avoid deception.¹ Though Zeno had been accused by Cicero of being inferior

¹ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/stoicism/>

to his philosophical ancestors in treating logic.² It is considered that a better treatment was done by his successors particularly Chrysippus.³

Sources of Stoic Knowledge

Zeno as a head of this school was succeeded by Cleanthes, and the later by Chrysippus. Diogenes reported that these three early philosophers wrote many works but only fragments had survived. He also tried to synthesize those works to provide a brief outline of Stoicism. The critics e.g. Plutarch or Sextus Empiricus are also sources of stoicism. Moreover the works of later Roman stoics are also available which provide insight about stoic philosophy. However they stressed the ethical and practical aspects of stoicism.

Division of Stoic Philosophy

Diogenes reported that the Stoics divided philosophy into tripartite being Physical, Ethical and Logical. According to him Zeno was the first who made this division and the later philosophers followed this division. They thought this division of subjects is inter-dependent, one cannot be studied without interacting the other.

Stoic Logic

The Stoics had written numerous works but alas almost nothing survived and we have to rely on the fragments or the critics' commentaries or summaries or occasional quotations from others assigned to the stoics. Due to this fact it is not possible to formulate any coherent and complete system of stoic logic.

In constructing the structure of Stoic Logic we find categories and sub-categories in it. Diogenes purported, some of the stoics had divided the logical part into two categories namely The Rhetoric and The Dialectics but some others include or enhanced two other categories e.g. a part that dealt with Definitions and the other that concerned with Canons and Criteria.

The first part, Rhetoric explains the expressions into words, arrangements, delivery, inventions of arguments etc. and the Dialectic concerned with theory of language, Epistemology and formal logic.

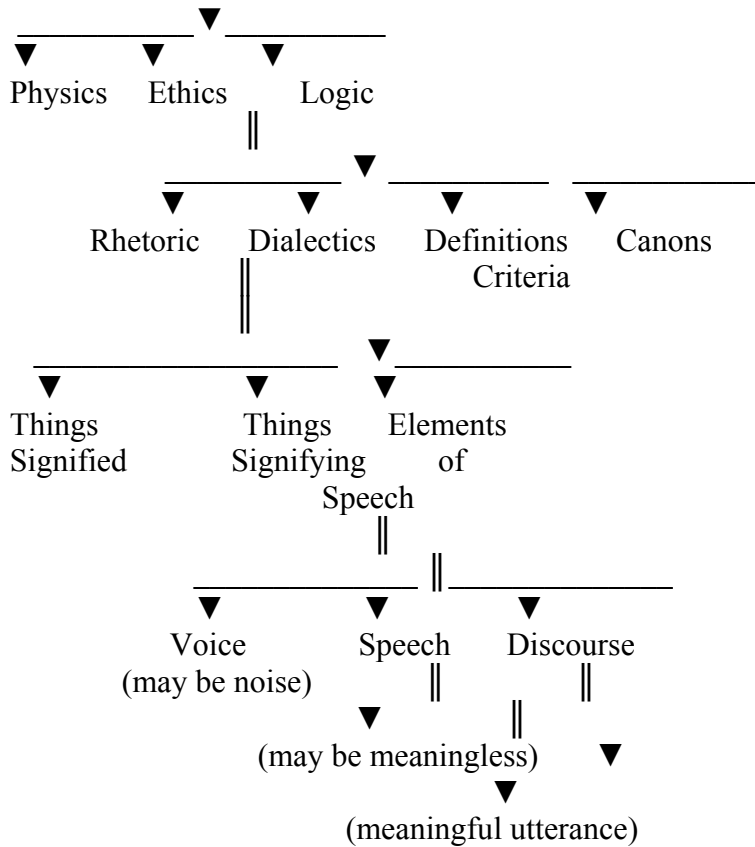
² Kneal, William. *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: The Calrendon Press, 1962.

³ *ibid.*

Classification of Knowledge

The founders of Stoicism namely, Zeno, Diogenes were named who classified philosophical theories into major three parts and more sub-divisions.

Stoic⁴ Philosophy



SCOPE OF STOIC LOGIC

The Scope of logic which the Stoics called Logic (*logikê*, the knowledge and functions of Logos or Reason) is tremendous, it included the analysis of arguments, its forms, rhetoric, grammar,

⁴ Kneal, William. *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: The Calrendon Press, 1962.

concepts, thought, propositions, perception and also what we nowadays call epistemology and philosophy of language and what we call logic today it was part of the Stoic epistemology because logical demonstration is one way to certify knowledge.⁵

(Ta Lekta pl.) Ton Lekton singular

Greek verb “**legein**” from which the word “ton lekton” and (ta lekta pl.) derived means “to mean” or “to say”. “What is meant” is translation of “lekton”.

Now, let us take into consideration, first the stoic hierarchy of Epistemology, its branches, place of “**lekta**” in it , its definition, nature and kinds etc.⁶

“What are the underlying meanings in everything which we think and say, subsist independently of us, and are distinguished from linguistic expression, what we utter, are expressions and what we say are sayables.”

According to Sextus:

The stoics said that “*the Lekton*” is that which subsists in accordance with a rational presentation and this presentation is, in which what is being presented can be conveyed in speech.

Diogenes said:

The presentations are of two types: some are rational and others are irrational... and “*The Lekton*” is that which subsisted in accordance with the rational presentation.

Characteristics of the Lekta

Three important characteristics of the Lekton (the Lekta pl.) are:

- 1= they are signified in meaningful discourses,
- 2= they are incorporeal,
- 3= they are True or False.⁷

Nature of the Lekta

Late Aristotelian commentators, Simplicius said that:

Lekta are thought.⁸

⁵ <http://users.hartwick.edu/burringtond/stoics/logic.html>.

⁶ Mates, Benson. *Stoic Logic*. California: University of California Press, 1961.

⁷ Kneal, William. *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: The Calrendon Press, 1962.

But, Philoponus said, *Lekta are Sounds*.⁹

But distinction must be kept in mind that the *Lekta* are different from spoken sounds, words, or sentences yet there is a fact that *lekta* can be identified only by using a word or a sentence which expresses the *lekta / lekton*. So we find similarity between the divisions of *Lekta* and the divisions of the parts of speech.¹⁰

Classification of the *Lekta* (say-ables):

There are two kinds of sayables e.g.

1= The complete

2=The deficient

1= The first one (the complete say-ables) are those which do not make the hearer to feel to ask a question. In this category there are the imperative, interrogatives, inquiries etc.¹¹

2= In this category The deficient (the incomplete say-ables), the Stoics include predicates, subjects and incomplete expressions like ‘*graphei*’ (he or she writes).

They explained further that some say-ables are self-complete and some are deficient.

The former (Self-complete) are those, which have a finished expression, e.g.: ‘Socrates writes’

The later (Deficient) are those which have an unfinished expression, e.g.: ‘writes’, for we ask: who?

Moreover, According to Diogenes, the complete *Lekta* are divided into “Axiomata”, questions, inquiries, commands, oaths prayers, suppositions, addresses, and things similar to axiomata.

⁸ ibid.

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ Borchert, Donald M., ed. *Encycloppedia of Philosophy*. New York: Thomson Gale, Macmillan Reference, 2006.

While the Deficient Lekta had been divided into Subject and Predicate. The predicate is something that says of something or combinable to something. And it would be combinable to a nominative case to produce a proposition.

The Three Acts

The stoic thought whenever we say a complete “sayable” we do three different acts¹² e.g.

- 1-Utter a linguistic expression,
- 2-we say the sayable,
- 3-perform a speech act.

Parts of Speech

Diogenes had given the following list of the Logos, (articulation and intelligible utterance) parts of speech.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| “Onoma”, | (Name) |
| “Prosegoria”, | (common noun or appellation) |
| “Reima”, | (Verb) |
| “Sondessmos”, | (Connective or conjunction) |
| “arthron”, | (article) |

The Tripartite of The Lekta

The Stoics classified three things which are linked together, that which is *signified*, that which *signifies* and the *external object*.

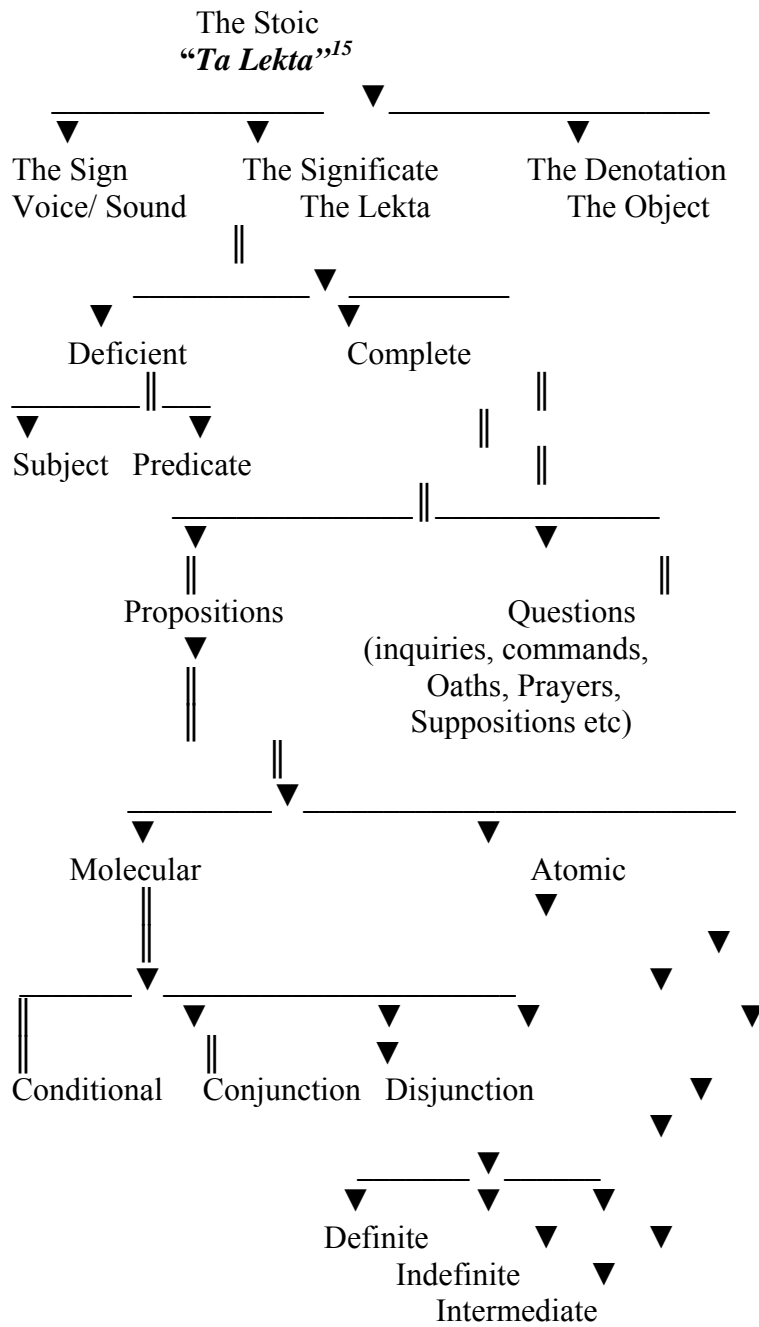
The speech signifies e.g. the “Dog”, which is signified is the external object revealed by speech the “Dog” itself, the external object and the other thing that we apprehend which is hearing of spoken word. Among these there are two which are corporeal e.g. the speech and the object while the third is incorporeal which is signified i.e. “the lekton” and it is true or false.

And Simplicius said that: *Lekta are thought*.¹³

But Philoponus said, *Lekta are Sounds*.¹⁴

¹² Borchert, Donald M., ed. *Encycloppedia of Philosophy*. New York: Thomson Gale, Macmillan Reference, 2006.

¹³ Kneal, William. *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: The Calrendon Press, 1962.



¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Mates, Benson. *Stoic Logic*. California: University of California Press, 1961.

The Concept of “Axiomata”¹⁶

Diogenes said that the complete “*lekta*” can be divided into “*axiomata*”, questions, commands, prayers, inquiries, oaths, addresses, suppositions and all the things similar to axiomata. He defined that “an axiomata is True / False, or a complete thing declaratory in itself.”

Sextus said, The *Lekta* are more than “axiomata” and “non-axiomata”,

However, the axiomata had been divided into two classes, namely: Simple axiomata and non-simple axiomata. The former is the only one axiomata comprising nothing else whereas non-simple consists of many axiomata or one axioma duplicated

e.g. (If it is day, it is light) and (if it is day, it is day).

Components of Argument¹⁷

In Susanne Bobzien’ opinion ,their logic in its nature is propositional one and its inferences have concern to such things that have the structure of propositions and those things are assertables named (axio’mata), they have truth values.

Stoic logic can be divided into two parts namely;

The Theory of Argumentation and the other is:

The Theory of Assertable (a self-complete say-able);

and they are the components for building an argument.

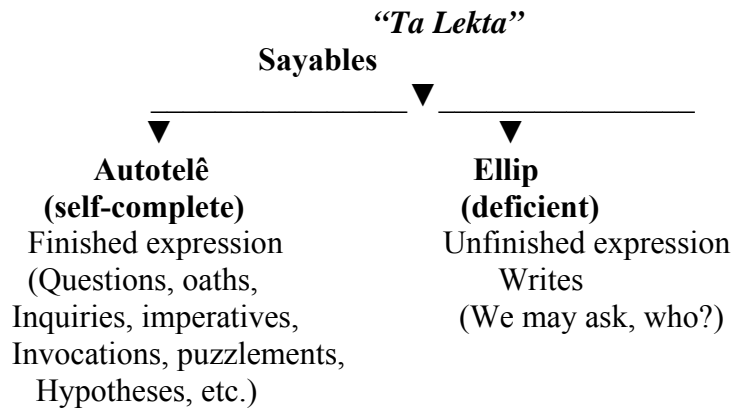
The say-ables (*Ta Lekta*) are such components which are placed between mere voice (vocal sounds) and the world. They are underlying “meanings” of everything which we can thing and say and rational presentation of these. They made two classes of say-ables:

¹⁶ Kneal, William. *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: The Calrendon Press, 1962

¹⁷ Inwood, Brad, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to The Stoics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

1= **autotelê** (which are self complete)

2=**ellipê** (deficient)



Conclusion

Stoics logic is different from that of Aristotelian one , as it moves around the relationship of inference of given items of proposition, whereas Aristotelian logic deals with terms and the logical theorizing. Aristotle seems to be prompted by thought concerning demonstration e.g. in geometry but the Megarians focused on Zenonian dialectics and argumentation. The Stoics contribution secured its credibility and Kneale professed their importance in the following words:

“Throughout later antiquity two great school of Logic were distinguished, the Peripatetic which was derived from Aristotle, and the Stoic which was developed by Chrysippus from the teaching of Megarian.”¹⁸ ... The Stoics were the first to work out in detail a theory of arguments involving the conditional and other forms of propositions”.¹⁹

Stoics contribution in logic is taken as an more intelligible effort in modern era;

“Stoic doctrines concerning *lekta* (The Sayables) also made another contribution to epistemology. *Lekta*, more specifically *axiomata*

¹⁸ Kneal, William. *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: The Calrendon Press, 1962

¹⁹ *ibid*

(propositions), can be formulated in the sentences of a language, have truth value, and thus are available for formal reasoning. Some sentences state information conveyed in perception, in this manner connecting language with the senses, and providing us with the basis for our knowledge of particular facts (as opposed to general truths, the knowledge of which, for the most part, is built upon this knowledge of particulars).²⁰

²⁰ <http://users.hartwick.edu/burringtond/stoics/logic.html>.

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