

SOSSEH ASSATURIAN

Department of Philosophy
The University of Texas at Austin
2210 Speedway, Stop C3500
Austin, TX 78705

sossehassaturian@utexas.edu
sossehassaturian.com

Updated March 2020

EDUCATION

- 2014 - 2020 The University of Texas at Austin
(expected) Ph.D. Philosophy (Joint Program in Ancient Philosophy)
 Chair: R.J. Hankinson
 Committee: Victor Caston (Michigan), Matt Evans, Vanessa de Harven (UMass-Amherst), Rob Koons
 Dissertation: *The Stoics on Language and Reality*
- Spring 2019 University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
 Visiting Graduate Student
- 2009 - 2014 University of Toronto
 B.A. (Hons) Philosophy (Specialist), Classical Civilizations (Major)
 Awarded with High Distinction
-

AREA OF SPECIALIZATION Ancient Greek & Roman Philosophy
AREAS OF COMPETENCE Philosophy of Language, Metaphysics, Epistemology

PUBLICATIONS

- 2020 “What the Forms are Not: Plato on Conceptualism in Parmenides 132b-c,”
Philosophical Studies 177(2), 353-368

BOOK REVIEWS:

- 2019 “Melissus and Eleatic Monism by Benjamin Harriman,” *The Classical Review* 69(2),
365-366
- 2015 “Parmenides’ Grand Deduction: A Logical Reconstruction of the Way of Truth by
Michael Wedin” (with Matt Evans), *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 53(4), 775-776
-

AWARDS AND HONOURS

- 2020 Dissertation Writing Fellowship (6,000 USD)
The University of Texas at Austin, School of Graduate Studies
- 2019 Spring Dissertation Scholarship (6,000 USD)
The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Philosophy

- 2019 Graduate Continuing Fellowship (25,000 USD)
The University of Texas at Austin, School of Graduate Studies
- 2018-19 Doctoral Fellowship (20,000 CAD)
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
- 2016 Cogburn Foundation Philosophical Essay Prize
The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Philosophy
- 2015 Ethel Treble and F Louis Barber Travelling Postgraduate Scholarship (5,000 CAD)
Victoria College, University of Toronto
- 2014 Graduate Recruiting Fellowship (8,000 USD)
The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Philosophy

Undergraduate Awards (at University of Toronto): Faculty of Arts & Science Dean's List, 2009-2010, 2013-2014; Kathleen Cowan Prize, 2013; Regents Scholarship, 2010

PRESENTATIONS

- Jan 2020 How to Do Things with Complete Lektas: The Stoics on Illocutionary Acts
APA Eastern Division Meeting, Philadelphia, PA
- May 2019 The Priority of Stoic Definite Assertibles
Ancient and Early Modern Stoic (Meta)physics Workshop, Utrecht University
- Apr 2019 What the Forms are Not: on Conceptualism in Parmenides 132b-c
APA Pacific Division Meeting, Vancouver, BC
- Apr 2019 19th Annual NYU-Columbia Graduate Philosophy Conference
- Oct 2017 Aristotle and the Stoics on Signification
Forms: New Perspectives on Ancient Metaphysics and Epistemology Conference,
Università degli Studi di Milano
- Sept 2017 A Discussion of Jaap Mansfeld et al. 'Melissus Between Miletus and Elea' (Invited)
10th Biennial Eleatica Symposium, Fondazione Alario per Elea-Velia Onlus
- Jan 2017 Knowing and Feeling: An Epistemic Model of the Stoic View of Emotions
148th Meeting of the Society for Classical Studies, Toronto, Ontario
- June 2016 Parmenidean Ontology and Verbs of Cognition: A Solution to the *Alētheia-Doxa* Problem
5th Biennial Conference of the International Association for Presocratic Studies
(IAPS), Austin, TX
- Dec 2015 2nd Ancient Philosophy Workshop for Female Graduate Students and Early Career
Researchers, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin
- Mar 2015 Are Stoic Limits Incorporeals?
8th Annual University of South Florida Graduate Student Conference: 'Delimiting
Limits'

Oct 2015 A Cosmological Assessment of Parmenidean Monisms
33rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy (SAGP), Fordham University

Apr 2013 Using Plotinus to Extract Plato's Account of Akrasia as Culpable Ignorance
Undergraduate Research Conference, University of Toronto

COMMENTARIES:

June 2018 On Eliya Cohen, "Vibration as an Explanation for Contact and Compound Individuation in Epicurean Physics"
Athena in Action: A Networking and Mentoring Workshop for Graduate Student Women in Philosophy, Princeton University

Oct 2015 On Katherine Meadows, "The Priority in Being of Actuality to Potentiality in Metaphysics Theta 8"
APA Eastern Division Meeting, Baltimore, MD

Apr 2013 On Susan Sauvé Meyer, "Stoic Desires: Affect and Impulse in the Stoic Doctrine of the Passions"
38th Annual Workshop in Ancient Philosophy, The University of Texas at Austin

PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOPS:

June 2018 Athena in Action: A Networking and Mentoring Workshop for Graduate Student Women in Philosophy
Princeton University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

AS PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR (at The University of Texas at Austin):

Fall 2019 Ancient Philosophy
Spring 2018 Ancient Philosophy
Fall 2017 Knowledge & Reality

AS TEACHING ASSISTANT:

Spring 2020 Knowledge & Valuation (Ian Proops)
Fall 2018 Ancient Philosophy (Jeff Leon)
Fall 2016 Mind & Body (Michael Tye)
Spring 2016 Ancient Philosophy (Stephen White)
Fall 2015 Ancient Philosophy (Jim Hankinson)
Fall 2014 Knowledge & Valuation (Galen Strawson)
2012-13 (AY) Introduction to Philosophy (Peter King) (at University of Toronto)

PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING AND TEACHING CERTIFICATES: Division of Diversity and Community Engagement Inclusive Classrooms Seminar and Certificate, Spring 2017; Supervisory Teaching in Philosophy (Michael Tye), Fall 2016; Center for Teaching and Learning Seminar in Teaching Fundamentals, Fall 2014; Center for Teaching and Learning Certificate and Scholarship, Fall 2014

LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

CLASSICAL: Ancient Greek, Latin

MODERN: Armenian, French (basic reading), German (basic reading)

SERVICE

2015-17 Secretary, Euthyphrones (Ancient Greek Philosophy Reading Group)
 2017 Graduate Organizer, 40th Ancient Philosophy Workshop
 2016-17 Graduate Student Representative to Faculty
 2015-16 Co-organizer, UT-Austin Graduate Conference
 2014-16 Committee Member, Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) at UT-Austin

REFERENCES

R.J. HANKINSON (CHAIR)
 Professor of Philosophy
 The University of Texas at Austin
 rjhankinson@mail.utexas.edu

VICTOR CASTON
 Professor of Philosophy and Classical Studies
 University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
 vcaston@umich.edu

MATT EVANS
 Associate Professor of Philosophy
 The University of Texas at Austin
 evansmatt@utexas.edu

VANESSA DE HARVEN
 Associate Professor of Philosophy
 University of Massachusetts at Amherst
 vdeharven@philos.umass.edu

IAN PROOPS (TEACHING REFERENCE)
 Professor of Philosophy
 University of Texas at Austin
 iproops@utexas.edu

∞ The Stoics on Language and Reality

The Ancient Greek philosophers are preoccupied with the question of the relationship between language and reality, and whether language is an adequate tool for understanding the world. At the heart of the Stoic responses to these puzzles are the peculiar entities called *lekta*, or ‘what can be said’. Distinct from the sentences that express them, *lekta* are the meanings of our speech. Despite the importance of *lekta* within the Stoic system, basic features of the account, such as their structure and representational powers, remain a mystery. In *The Stoics on Language and Reality*, I develop a novel reconstruction of the Stoic theory of *lekta*, addressing these interpretive questions with new solutions that shed light on how the Stoics conceived of the relation between language and reality.

Much of what survives of the Stoic theory of language concerns one type of complete *lekton*: the proposition, or the assertible (*axiōma*). On the dominant interpretation of the structure of Stoic assertibles, it is assumed that the Stoics embrace what we recognize today as a Fregean theory of propositions, according to which propositions are constituted purely by abstract semantic entities, distinct from the objects in the world to which they refer. Against this interpretation, I reconstruct a new semantics of Stoic *lekta*, in which both the subject terms and the predicate terms of all *lekta* are non-semantic objects in the world. These objects are united into a *lekton* by acts of thinking or speaking—in the assertible, by the act of asserting.

First, I show that ‘definite’ assertibles, which have a subject term that involves demonstrative reference, contain the object of the demonstrative reference as a partial constituent. A study of the subsistence conditions and the privileged status of these assertibles suggests that their semantic mechanisms are different from those of ‘intermediate’ assertibles, the subject terms of which do not involve demonstrative reference, but common or proper names. I argue that the subject terms of intermediate assertibles are not the objects themselves, but items the Stoics call ‘cases’ (*ptōseis*). Cases are one of the most controversial entities in the scholarship on Stoic philosophy. Our sources contain contradictory reports of what these items are, resulting in an interpretive landscape in which they are word forms, Fregean thoughts, or qualities. One of the central contributions of my project is a completely novel interpretation of cases, which rejects all of the readings on offer and explains the discrepancies in our evidence. I show that cases are particularizing events that have an important role in Stoic metaphysics. Since the Stoics deny that generic items have reality, but nevertheless allow concepts into their ontology in a limited capacity, cases explain how all real things (i.e. particulars) are related to concepts. Cases, in turn, are the subject terms of intermediate assertibles, which have a unique set of truth and subsistence conditions that can only be fulfilled not by the object itself as in definite assertibles, but by the case that an object bears as a feature.

I then show, by appealing to what I call the *functional principle*, which underlies taxonomies of complete *lekta*, that when cases combine with predicates—the effects of the causal interactions that take place solely between bodies (and hence, items which find their home in metaphysics proper—not grammar or language)—they do so by entering into a relation with a speech act. Accordingly, Stoic *lekta* at the most basic level are constituted by two components: (1) either a particular item in the world (in demonstrative reference), or a case (when the subject term involves a name), and (2) the effect of a causal interaction. These are “glued together” by speech acts. In assertibles, for example, they are combined by asserting, while in other types of complete *lekta*, they are combined by other speech acts, such as questioning or commanding.

This new interpretation of Stoic *lekta* presents a distinct and startlingly sophisticated view of language that better coheres with the extant evidence, and explains the apparent inconsistencies between conflicting reports without appealing to sources that are not undeniably Stoic, such as the Hellenistic grammarians. It shows that the relation between language and the world, for the Stoics, is not mediated by a mysterious, wholly abstract entity. Rather, language represents the world because the world is directly a part of language, rendering language an adequate tool for understanding reality.