

Sextus on Place: a Dialectical Insulation between Philosophical Questions and Ordinary Answers

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In Sextus Empiricus *PH* ii 245, we find the following anecdote about Diodorus Cronus:

one day Diodorus dislocated his shoulder and went to Herophilus to be treated. Herophilus wittily said to him: ‘Your shoulder was dislocated either in a place in which it was or in a place in which it wasn’t. But neither in which it was nor in which it wasn’t. Therefore it is not dislocated.’ So the sophist begged him to leave such arguments alone and to apply the medical treatment suitable to his case.¹

Sextus uses Diodorus’ reaction here to support the view that dialectic does not pay off in practical matters: even Diodorus, the famous dialectician, leaves dialectical arguments alone and follows established practices of life to solve the urgent problem of a dislocated shoulder. As for the remark by Herophilus that provoked this reaction, it applies Diodorus’ argument against local motion to the ordinary occasion of a dislocated shoulder.² Transferring an argument from the field of philosophical discussion to practical matters of ordinary life might even today produce jokes about philosophical doctrines, but back then it could also produce powerful arguments against such doctrines. In the case under discussion, it might be used to show that Diodorus cannot live according to his own arguments, therefore Diodorus could be considered as not taking these arguments seriously, which would make them appear more like sophisms than real philosophical arguments.

What we encounter here is a general feature of ancient philosophical discussion that goes back to Socrates. In a dialectical discussion, the subject of the

¹ Sextus cites this anecdote about Herophilus and Diodorus in the context of a chapter on sophisms, where he presents Diodorus’ puzzle against local motion (*PH* ii 242) as a sophism. He presents the same puzzle in *PH* iii 71 and in *M* x 87 in the context of his discussion of local motion, but there he presents it as an important philosophical argument that he discusses at length. I focus on parts of this discussion in section 2. For the translations of *PH*, *M* vii-viii, and *M* x, I rely on Annas/Barnes 1994, Bett 2005, and Bett 2012 respectively.

² In a less urgent situation, perhaps Diodorus could easily respond to Herophilus’ objection with further arguments that could preserve the consistency of his position. However, the anecdote points to an inconsistency that is not a matter of arguments but a matter of actions. On Diodorus Cronus, see Sedley 1977 and 2018, and for an analysis of Diodorus’ argument against local motion in connection to his atomism, see Denyer 1981. On Herophilus and his historical and philosophical connection to Diodorus, see Leith 2014.

elenchus was not just a certain thesis, but it involved a certain person, and thus the subject of the discussion was a certain thesis that was part of this person's beliefs. Given this, Diodorus could not have one belief about 'motion' as a philosopher and a contradictory belief about motion in ordinary life. The Sceptics themselves had to respond to similar criticisms. Their own arguments against the very being of motion, place, time, or everything else we take for granted in everyday life seem to have also come at the price of either inconsistency and sophistical appearance or inactivity. Burnyeat 1984/1997 focuses on Sextus' discussion of the conception of 'place' and maintains the thesis 1997, 94 that 'no-one thought to insulate' ancient scepticism 'from affecting, or being affected by, the judgments of ordinary life' and therefore Pyrrhonians could not consistently respond to these charges.

Sextus' discussion of the conception of 'place' seems to be an ideal case study for understanding the special difficulties that the Pyrrhonians had to face in developing their sceptical arguments. Algra 1995, 31-38 and 2015, 185 has pointed out that the conception of 'place' pursued by ancient philosophers did not concern anything beyond our common experience, or anything different from what we think and speak about when in ordinary contexts we say where something is. Hence, of considerable relevance to philosophical discussion are what we say when someone asks simple questions such as 'Where are you?' and we answer 'I am at home', or 'Where is the wine?', 'It's in the jar on the table'. Moreover, whatever someone might say or believe about their place or the places of certain things in everyday life could legitimately be used in the dialectical debate to elicit the necessary 'yes', which would commit the interlocutors who denied the existence of place to premises leading to a contradictory conclusion.

However, in Sextus' discussion of 'place', I argue that we actually find an attempt to insulate both philosophical questions from ordinary answers and ordinary beliefs from philosophical arguments, using dialectical tools available to ancient philosophers. The rules of dialectical exchange are utilized to show that there is no inconsistency between accepting ordinary beliefs, according to which we simply take for granted that things occupy places and change places, and disputing the very same things in the context of dialectical inquiries into the nature of 'place'. Therefore, the Sceptics can protect themselves from the charge of inconsistency when arguing against 'place'; their sceptical arguments do not deprive them of the relevant ordinary beliefs, and these beliefs do not threaten these arguments. As Burnyeat 1984/1997 has shown, this may sound common place today but was far from being something trivially accepted in ancient times. And as we will see, it required an ingenious dialectical tactic that is found in Sextus' text.

I argue that the Sceptics utilized a legitimate dialectical tactic against begging the question: no one can inquire dialectically into whether place, time, or motion is, while simultaneously taking their existence for granted, i.e., while taking for granted in this context, as we do in ordinary life, that certain things move from one place to another in a certain amount of time. Dialectical inquiries require a

specific detachment from otherwise commonly accepted beliefs. Thus, the Sceptics, as I contend, delimit the two contexts by showing that things we concede in ordinary life, philosophers should suspend judgment about within certain dialectical inquiries. The Sceptics, therefore, in the context of dialectical inquiries needed to detach themselves from ordinary beliefs that they can still accept in ordinary circumstances; but no more so than other philosophers.

Although the dialectical character of the Pyrrhonian arguments is generally acknowledged, in the case of Sextus' discussion of 'place', the background of the dialectical practice has not been sufficiently taken into account. Burnyeat 1976, 56 on Protagorean self-refutation in Sextus established that setting arguments against the background of dialectical practice 'is not too fanciful a way of approaching the disputes we meet with in the pages of Sextus Empiricus'. However, Burnyeat 1984/1997 ignores the dialectical background and misses the point of Sextus' remarks that attempt to insulate the questions philosophers ask about the conception of place from the answers we give to ordinary questions about where certain things are; the same remarks, through a dialectical perspective, become intelligible dialectical moves.

Additionally, Burnyeat 1984/1997, based on the questionable assumption that Sextus' *PH* ii-iii and *M* vii-xi present basically the same arguments, brings together different passages to argue that insulation is impracticable for Sextus and any such attempt results in failure and inconsistency. Through close reading of the relevant texts and critical examination of Burnyeat's reading,³ I argue that, in the case of 'place', some of Sextus' arguments in *PH* and in *M* give the misleading impression of being similar, while in fact they are profoundly different and based on distinctive conceptions of place; therefore, no inconsistency is to be found in Sextus' attempt to insulate between philosophical questions about place and everyday claims about the places of certain things.⁴ Consequently, we need to reconsider the thesis of Burnyeat 1997, 94 that such 'insulation' came much later in the history of philosophy, when in ancient philosophy 'insulation was not yet invented'. Pyrrhonians did invent some kind of insulation; such insulation was vital for their Scepticism and is crucial for our understanding of their philosophical stance.

Now let us turn to the texts themselves, starting with Sextus' discussion of the Aristotelian argument of 'replacement', a characteristic case of a philosophical argument based on common experience and on what we commonly say about where someone or something is.

³ Burnyeat's reading of the relevant texts has not been questioned, either by those who have studied Sextus' discussion of place in and of itself (see Spinelli 2014 and Algra 2015), or by those who have attempted to reject his interpretation of Pyrrhonism. Brennan and Roberts 2018 argued recently that there is a serious fault in Burnyeat's argumentation in Burnyeat 1984, but they do not examine Burnyeat's analysis of Sextus' texts on place, where, as I am going to argue, the real fault of Burnyeat's interpretation actually lies.

⁴ Another case of profoundly different Pyrrhonian approaches to the same philosophical problem in *PH* and *M* concerns Sextus' answers to *Meno*'s puzzle on inquiry. See Corti 2009, 185-206; Fine 2010 and 2014, 345-368; Vogt 2012, 140-157; Tigani 2016, 197-203.

I. Is There 'Place'?

A. Replacement: an Argument for 'Place'

In *PH* iii 120, Sextus classifies the following observation among the observations used to posit the reality of place based on what is evident (ἐνάργεια): 'Who, they ask, would say that there is no such thing as place...when he is at different places at different times, when he observes that where my teacher used to talk there I now talk?' And in *M* x 7-12, Sextus presents the same set of observations and gives a more extensive version of the observation cited above:⁵

if where Socrates was, there is now another person, such as Plato after Socrates is dead, there is place. For just as, when the liquid in the wine-jar has been emptied out and another one has been poured in, we say that the wine-jar exists, being the place of both the previous liquid and the one put in later, so if another person now holds the place that Socrates held when he was alive, there is some place. (x 8)

In this version, the connection with Aristotle's argument of replacement in *Physics* 208b1-8 is more obvious.⁶ Aristotle uses the example of water going out of a vessel and air simultaneously entering to take its place. Sextus' version refers to a similarly simple phenomenon of common experience, that of a liquid poured into a wine-jar after the jar has been emptied of a previous liquid; it connects this common experience with the common way of saying, for example, that Plato is now where Socrates was, in the same way that we may say that the wine is now where the water was. In saying something like this, we take for granted that when Socrates dies, the place of Socrates does not vanish with him but is separate from him; it is left behind, and someone else, for example Plato, may occupy it, just like the vessel which is emptied and refilled.

B. Begging the Question, which Is Absurd (ὄπερ ἦν ἄτοπον)

In *PH* iii 122, Sextus presents begging the question as a legitimate objection against observations that posit the reality of place based on ἐνάργεια.⁷ He charges with begging the question anyone 'who concludes that there is place by obtaining the premise (λαμβάνειν) that its parts exist',⁸ since this person 'wants to establish

⁵ For a comparison between the two parallel sections in *PH* iii and in *M* x and for the relation between them and Aristotle's *Physics*, cf. Algra 2015, 196 and 200-204.

⁶ For a discussion of this argument, see Morison 2002, 20-25. The relation between Sextus' arguments in favor of the reality of place and Aristotle's account of place in *Physics* has been pointed out by Hussey 1983, 100, Burnyeat 1984/1997, and Annas 1992. Annas remarks that in *M*, Sextus 'gives the impression that he is working from the whole Aristotelian account of place', and she argues that Sextus' reliance on Aristotle's *actual text* is apparent, especially in the discussion of place (221). For Aristotelian material reaching Sextus through intermediary sources, see Algra 2015, 204.

⁷ For convenience of presentation, I write 'Sextus presents' or 'Sextus argues', but we can safely assume that in fact Sextus used pre-existing material from the sceptical tradition, which he rearranged and maybe reworked.

⁸ I translate λαμβάνειν as 'obtaining the premise' instead of both Annas/Barnes' and Mates' 'assuming' and Bury's 'assumption'. I take the verbs δίδοναι and λαμβάνειν, respectively to refer, as they do in the technical language of Aristotle's *Topics*, to the answerer who grants a premise by

the matter under investigation by way of itself' (τὸ ζητούμενον δι' ἑαυτοῦ κατασκευάζειν βούλεσθαι). A similar objection underpins his charge of talking foolishly (ληρεῖν), aimed at 'those who say that something is or has been in a place', i.e., those who use the 'replacement' argument, in which this premise is an essential part, 'since place is simply not granted'.

Algra 2015, 188 has seen in this objection an argument 'taken from the Pyrrhonian standard arsenal', and he comments that 'We are basically dealing with applications of the fourth mode of Agrippa (hypothesis, or begging the question)'. It seems to me, however, that things here are rather more complicated. To shed light on this complexity, let us first compare the aforementioned passages with the more extended version of the same objection in *M x*. In *M x* Sextus again presents the objection of begging the question against those who conclude the existence of place based on the existence of its parts, and he provides a general formulation for this objection. He writes:

Since the parts of something are that very thing of which they stand as the parts, the person who says 'if there are the parts of place, there is place' is in effect saying 'if there is place, there is place'. Which is absurd; for the very thing being investigated has been used to support its own credibility, as if it were not under investigation.⁹ (*M x* 13)

Sextus does not here question the formal validity of the syllogism, 'if there are the parts of place, there is place'. Moreover, he does not detect reciprocity, and he does not criticize the premise of this syllogism for being hypothesized, i.e., for not being established but merely assumed.¹⁰ Rather, he criticizes the premise 'if there are the parts of place' as being equivalent to 'if there is place', thus turning the syllogism into 'if there is place, there is place', and his objection is that this syllogism is based on the very thing under investigation; thus, he specifies the fault in reasoning as that of begging the question.

In the above passage, Sextus calls begging the question 'absurd' (ἄτοπον), and this is a characterization he repeats almost stereotypically whenever he uses this charge, in most cases without any further argument or explanation.¹¹ It seems that the absurdity of begging the question, as soon as begging the question was detected, was not in need of further support; it was obvious and generally accepted.¹² However, the reasoning 'the parts of place exist: so place exists' does

replying 'yes' to a question addressed to him by the questioner, and to the questioner who, receiving this answer, obtains the premise. For the dialectical setting in *PH* iii 122 and *M x* 13 and the two verbs there, cf. next section.

⁹ ἐπεὶ τὰ τινὸς μέρη αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν οὗ τὰ μέρη καθέστηκεν, δυνάμει ὁ λέγων· 'εἴ ἐστι τὰ μέρη τοῦ τόπου, ἔστιν ὁ τόπος' τοῦτό φησιν· 'εἴ ἔστιν ὁ τόπος, ἔστιν ὁ τόπος'. ὅπερ ἦν ἄτοπον· αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ ζητούμενον εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ πίστιν ὡς ἀζήτητον παρείληπται.

¹⁰ In the corresponding passage in *PH* iii 120, the premise used by those who posit place based on the existence of its parts does not even take the form of a hypothesis; it is introduced as something that you see or observe (ὁρῶν).

¹¹ Apart from our passage, cf. *M* viii 180, 359; *PH* i 61, 174, ii 36, 122.

¹² That begging the question was considered a basic fault in reasoning, and generally rejected as

not seem an obvious and unquestionable case of begging the question, since we can imagine several objections to the effect that it is not tantamount to ‘P: so P’. Therefore, we cannot understand the biting remarks with which Sextus accompanied the charge of begging the question: in *PH* iii 122, as we have seen, he presents those who use this argument as ‘talking foolishly’ (ἀληθεῖν), and in *M* x 13 he introduces his criticism by calling their approach ‘completely childish’ (τελέως ἐστὶ μαιρακιῶδες). His remarks raise the following questions: Why does Sextus take the arguments based on what we commonly say or accept, such as the one based on the parts of place as well as the ‘replacement’ argument, as clear cases of begging the question and even more as foolish talk and nonsense? To answer these questions, we now turn to the remarks Sextus employs in *M* x 14-15 to explain how begging the question and the associated absurdity and nonsense come about in the case of the ‘replacement’ argument.

C. A Dialectical Limit between the Dogmatists’ Investigation and Ordinary Life

In *M* x 14-15, having already raised the objection of begging the question against the argument based on the existence of the parts of place, Sextus raises the same objection against the ‘replacement’ argument: ‘One should say the same thing, too, when they conclude the existence of place from Plato’s now being in the place where Socrates was’ (14). And then he goes on to explain how the ‘replacement’ argument, in particular, is a case of begging the question.

For though we are investigating whether there is any such thing as the place in which the body is, different from the actual body that is said to be contained in it, they respond as if we agreed (ὡς ὁμόλογον ἡμῖν) to Socrates’ having been in a place and Plato’s now being contained in this place. For it is agreed (ὁμόλογον) that we say in an unsophisticated way (ἀφελῶς) that someone is in Alexandria and in the gymnasium and in the school; but our inquiry is not about place understood broadly (οὐ περὶ τοῦ κατὰ πλάτος) but about place understood in a limited way (ἀλλὰ περὶ τοῦ κατὰ περιγραφὴν τόπου)—whether it is, or is merely conceived, and if it is, what sort of nature it has: corporeal or incorporeal, and contained in a place or not. And the people who rely on the remarks above have no power (οὐδὲν ἴσχυσαν) to establish any of these things.¹³ (*M* x 14-15)

illegitimate, is also made clear in Sextus’ attempt to use it in order to underpin the hypothesizing mode in *PH* i 174. Hypothesizing had an epistemologically legitimate role in the philosophical tradition (cf. Barnes 1990, 90-96), and Sextus attempts to undermine this legitimacy by reducing it to a marginal case, i.e., that of hypothesizing the object under investigation, which amounts to begging the question (for a criticism of this attempt, see Sienkiewicz 2019, 70). On the different usages of ‘begging the question’ in current philosophical discourse in comparison with its original usages in ancient dialectical practice, and for a study of Aristotle’s account of it in the *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, and *Prior Analytics*, see Castagnoli 2013.

¹³ ἡμῶν γὰρ ζητούντων, εἰ ἔστι τι ὁ τόπος ἐν ᾧ ἔστι τὸ σῶμα, διαφέρων αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ λεγόμενου περιέχεσθαι σώματος, ἐκείνοι ὡς ὁμόλογον ἡμῖν ἀντιφουνοῦσι τὸ ἐν τόπῳ γεγενόμενα Σωκράτην

The first thing to notice in order to understand Sextus' remarks in this passage is that he presents his objection in a question-and-answer dialectical setting. This kind of setting is also indicated by the language Sextus uses earlier when he notes that 'the person who does not concede to them (ὁ γὰρ μὴ διδοὺς αὐτοῖς) that there is the whole will also not agree that there are the parts of the whole' (*M* x 13). We find the same dialectical setting in *PH* iii 122 for Sextus' objections to the same arguments. In all of the aforementioned passages, Sextus describes a dialectical exchange between two sides, the Dogmatists who posit the existence of place on the one hand and their opponents on the other.¹⁴ In such a context, those who posit the existence of place need their opponents' agreement on the premises of their argument, and the issue for Sextus is whether the opponents grant these premises or not (διδόναι), and whether the questioners thereby obtain the necessary premises or not (λαμβάνειν). Indeed, διδόναι and λαμβάνειν (four occurrences in *PH* iii 122 and two in *M* x 13) seem to be taken from dialectical jargon, and they further indicate that Sextus' objections work in such a dialectical setting (cf. n8 above).

But which 'dialectic' is Sextus' dialectic that can help us to make sense of Sextus' points?¹⁵ In ancient philosophy, from Socrates down to the Stoics and the Academics, a variety of quite different 'dialectics' is recognizable (cf. Long and Sedley 1987, i 189; Castagnoli 2010b, 154; Ierodiakonou 2019, 115-121; Allen 2019, 17-18). However, it has become a consensus among scholars that 'there was a unity in their diversity. They share a common origin in a practice of argument by question and answer' (Allen 2019, 18). Apart from the special theoretical perspective through which philosophers understood the role and the aims of dialectic differently, they all, down to Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic times, presupposed a common dialectical practice in which 'arguments are questions put to an interlocutor and their premises require his positive answer if they are to proceed' (Long and Sedley 1987, i 189). In such a practice, the participants need to follow some commonly accepted general rules in defending or attacking certain theses, no matter how different their conceptions of dialectic may be (as for example the Stoic or the Aristotelian conception).

Now Aristotle's *Topics*—particularly book 8—and his *Sophistical Refutations*, which give directions for the participants in actual dialectical debates, are our best chance to obtain some insight into these commonly accepted general rules. There we find the most complete description of the dialectical exchange available to us, and some kind of codification of general rules and tactics. Further-

καὶ τὸ ἐν τούτῳ νῦν περιέχεσθαι Πλάτωνα. ὅτι μὲν γὰρ λέγομεν ἀφελῶς ἐν Ἀλεξανδρεῖα εἶναί τινα καὶ ἐν γυμνασίῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ σχολῇ, ὁμόλογον· ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ σκέψις οὐ περὶ τοῦ κατὰ Πλάτος, ἀλλὰ περὶ τοῦ κατὰ περιγραφὴν τόπου, πότερον ἔστιν ἢ ἐπινοεῖται μόνον, καὶ εἰ ἔστι, ποταπὸν τὴν φύσιν, ἄρα γε σωματικὸν ἢ ἀσώματον καὶ ἐν τόπῳ περιεχόμενον ἢ οὐδαμῶς. ὃν οὐδὲν ἴσχυσαν παραστήσαι οἱ ταῖς προειρημέναις ὑπομνήσεσι χρώμενοι.

¹⁴ In *M* x 14 Sextus refers to these opponents with the first person plural, while in *PH* iii 122 he refers to them with the description 'those who reject place'.

¹⁵ I am in debt to *Ancient Philosophy's* referee for raising a crucial objection that helped me to clarify this point.

more, in Sextus' era,¹⁶ still a time of lively philosophical debate, Aristotle's books on dialectic may well have been widely known and influential. Evidence exists of commentaries on *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations* from the first, second, and early third century CE (cf. Barnes *et al.* 1991, 6-7), and also some evidence about Aristotelian dialectic used in argumentative practice by Peripatetic and non-Peripatetic authors of second and early third century CE.¹⁷

In the same period, 'rule-governed exchanges by question and answer were still widely practised by the Stoics' (Castagnoli 2010b, 164), and there is evidence of a few original dialectical tactics and terminological innovations made by the older Stoics of Hellenistic era (cf. Long and Sedley 1987, i 228-230; Gourinat 2019, 135 and n9). But this evidence, enough to verify the Stoics' participation in the same dialectical exchange by question and answer, can hardly guide us in understanding the dialectical framework of Sextus' points. However, in Aristotle's texts on dialectic, despite the time distance that separates Sextus from Aristotle, we do find, as I show, the key to understanding how Sextus' points against the 'replacement' argument work as decisive moves in a dialectical debate on the existence of place.¹⁸

Let us go back to these points. The premise at issue, i.e., that Plato is now where Socrates was, is a premise that the questioner in a dialectical debate could ask his opponent, the answerer, to grant. In general, proposing premises like this, taken from common experience and the ordinary way we speak about the place of something, is perfectly legitimate in dialectical exchange; it is part of the 'game' that the questioner proposes commonly accepted beliefs, which being as indisputable as possible are used to obtain an affirmative answer, since the answerer is obliged to accept premises with a high degree of acceptability.¹⁹ However, as Sextus implies here, proposing such a premise is something that happens *in a certain context* of dialectical exchange. This context is determined by the specific subject under investigation, which Sextus identifies as the question 'whether there is any such thing as the place in which the body is, different from the actual body that is said to be contained in it', and the premise 'Plato is now where Socrates was' in this context begs the question (*M* x 14).

¹⁶ His dates are not known exactly but we can at least 'set a limit on the possible dates of Sextus that range from 100 CE to the first part of the third century' (House 1980, 231).

¹⁷ For Alexander of Aphrodisias' view that Aristotle's *Topics* and his commentary on it were useful in contemporary practice, see Castelli 2014, 20-23. For the use of updated methods derived from Aristotle's *Topics* in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato*, see Adamson 2018. For Galen's debt to Aristotle's *Topics* and dialectic, see Singer 2016, 3.1 and Chiaradonna 2019, 323-324.

¹⁸ Influences between Pyrrhonism and Aristotelian or Peripatetic dialectic have been noted by scholars: For a use of peripatetic dialectic 'updated' according to the Pyrrhonian modes, cf. Mansfeld 1988. For similarities between the Aristotelian τῶτοι as codified in the *Topics* and the Pyrrhonian modes, cf. Morison 2019. The general question if and how the Pyrrhoneans, from the first century BCE down to Sextus Empiricus, utilized Aristotle's or Peripatetic texts on dialectic to develop their argumentation seems to be a promising line of inquiry.

¹⁹ Things are somewhat more complicated. For details, cf. Castagnoli 2013, 97-98 and *Topics* viii 4-6.

In general, the starting point for a dialectical exchange is, in the jargon of the *Topics*, a ‘dialectical problem’ that typically has the form of the question: ‘p or not p?’.²⁰ Initially, the answerer and the questioner choose their theses. In the case under discussion, the answerer stands for ‘not p’, i.e., for ‘there is *not* any such thing as the place in which the body is, different from the actual body that is said to be contained in it’, and the questioner aims at forming a syllogism that concludes in the opposite thesis, based on premises explicitly accepted by the answerer and in this way leading him to contradict himself.

For the whole process to get off the ground, it is necessary that neither of the opposite theses with which the dialectical exchange starts be taken as given. In the process of the dialectical exchange, it is also necessary that the very theses that form the dialectical problem under discussion do not come up disguised as premises, and if they do come up, it is necessary that they not be granted. If something like that happens, then begging the question occurs and because of it, the dialectical exchange is simply nullified. There is therefore no chance of begging the question being taken as a legitimate move in this context; it is obviously absurd and generally unacceptable, and this is something that needs no further justification.²¹

Let us now go back to the premise ‘Plato is now where Socrates was’ to see why and how, according to Sextus, it begs the question in such an obvious and serious way that the Dogmatists who use it to infer the existence of place as distinct from the body are talking pure nonsense. What Sextus offers as a justification for the charge of nonsense is not any formal analysis that proves beyond doubt the occurrence of begging the question. Instead, he outlines the fair and easily foreseeable move with which the answerer can effectively object to the ‘replacement’ argument: in a certain way, he can abrogate agreement with ‘Plato is now where Socrates was’ and, without this necessary agreement, the dialectical syllogism based on the premise cannot be formed. Therefore, it is not just a reasoning that begs the question, it is a questioner who commits the silly mistake of ignoring the answerer’s move that deprives him of the necessary premise and turns his reasoning into nonsense.²²

Aristotle’s instructions in the *Sophistical Refutations* on proper responses to

²⁰ According to Aristotle’s *Topics* 104b1-17, a dialectical problem was formed by two opposite claims on the same topic and these opposite claims were both fully worthy of discussion.

²¹ In a dialectical exchange ‘for the sake of competition’ (ἀγῶνος χάριν), if begging the question occurs and remains undetected, the questioner’s interests are served because it gives him the victory. Yet, if begging the question occurs and remains undetected in a dialectical exchange ‘for the sake of testing and inquiry’ (πείρασ καὶ σκέψεως χάριν, cf. *Topics* 159a33ff.), then this acts against the interests of both sides, who fail to play their roles properly and therefore to carry out their common task of fruitfully discussing the matter (cf. Brunschwig 1986). Indeed, if philosophy is understood as an investigation (σκέψις) and the dialectical testing of philosophical theses and theories represents an essential part of this investigation, then begging the question could yield devastating results for philosophy itself.

²² Hintikka 1987, 211 argues that Aristotelian fallacies in general ‘were not fallacies at all in our twentieth-century sense of the term’, but were ‘essentially mistakes in questioning games’ (213).

refutations based on begging the question can help us understand Sextus' explanation of this crucial move. Aristotle at 181a15-21 offers two options to the answerer who faces a question that asks for the point at issue: (1) the answerer does not concede it, however acceptable it may be;²³ or (2) he concedes it, but he turns the charge of *ignoratio elenchi* against the questioner, pointing out that he does not concede it as a premise to an argument that contradicts the horn of the dialectical problem that he himself stands for in the specific dialectical exchange (see on this passage Castagnoli 2013, 104-105 and Schreiber 2003, 106).

It is interesting that Sextus' objection does not follow the first of the aforementioned options although, according to Aristotle, it would be a legitimate move—given the occurrence of begging the question—to reject the statement 'Plato is now where Socrates was' in spite of its general acceptability. It seems to me, however, that such a rejection, especially with a Sceptic in the role of answerer, could be easily mistaken as following not from the rules of the game but from sceptical commitments leading to the rejection of an ordinary belief. Sextus' objection, therefore, follows the second option: he acknowledges the universal tendency to answer 'yes' to questions like 'Is now Plato where Socrates was?', if they happen to be true. But he can also reject the statement 'Plato is now where Socrates was' when it is taken as equivalent to the premise 'there is a body, i.e., Socrates, and the place of this body, being different from him, is left behind after his death, and another body, i.e., Plato, may occupy it', exactly because the problem under investigation is the very existence of place as something distinct from the body. In the context of this particular dialectical exchange, 'the thing in question' is to be found in this premise, instead of something that is not in question (ἀζήτητον), i.e., something about which we agree and that could help us make progress in the investigation into the thing in question. Such a premise should be rejected not only by the Sceptics but by any participants who want to play their role correctly and avoid the absurdity of begging the question. However, such a rejection is context-dependent; it is only in this particular context that the specific philosophical implications of 'Plato is now where Socrates was' matter and the absurdity of begging the question makes its rejection reasonable; yet, within the context of ordinary life, it is perfectly acceptable.

As Sextus notes we agree that 'we say in an unsophisticated way (ἀφελῶς) that someone is in Alexandria and in the gymnasium and in the school' (*M*x 15); in a similar way we may agree on the statement 'Plato is now where Socrates was'. As Sextus goes on to argue, however, this general agreement is based on the acceptance of something said in a certain way, i.e., ἀφελῶς, and for this reason, in the context of the debate on place, it does not really have the force some Dogmatists supposed it had, i.e., it cannot force upon the opponent any agreement on the existence of place.

Now we need to understand the term ἀφελῶς. As Burnyeat 1997, 104 states,

²³ We find in *Topics* 160a3-6 a similar instruction to the answerer: when contrary to the general rule, he rejects something generally acceptable, he is instructed to say that 'it is acceptable but is too close to the initial thesis and that the thesis is refused if it is conceded'.

‘*Aphelōs*’ occurs a number of times in Sextus Empiricus and elsewhere, and so far as I can see the best gloss on it would be “with-out distinctions”, with special reference to technical distinctions by which theory or science purports to represent real distinctions in the nature of things.’ In Sextus and in other writers of his time, we also find ἀφελής/ἀφελῶς as a characterization of the layman’s ordinary way of speaking, or as a characterization of speech that is modelled after the ordinary way of speaking.²⁴ We can therefore speak ἀφελῶς, i.e., without taking into consideration any technical distinction, modelling our speech on the ordinary way of speaking, and say that Socrates was in a place and Plato is now in that place. This would be an acceptable way of speaking, similar to saying in an ordinary way that someone is in Alexandria.

When the Dogmatists enter the dialectical debate on place, however, they ask for technical distinctions that we ignore when we speak ordinarily about where something is. In the passage we have been discussing (*M* x 14-15), Sextus mentions as pertinent to this debate the following questions: Does place exist or is it merely conceived? If it exists, what sort of nature does it have: corporeal or incorporeal, and contained in a place or not? The question of whether place is distinct from the body contained in it or not, one which the replacement argument attempted to settle, arises within a larger project of research based on conceptual distinctions like those mentioned above: existence–non-existence, corporeal–incorporeal, contained in place–not contained in place. However, no one who is asked to specify the place of something or of someone asks these questions and takes these distinctions into consideration. For example, a debate on whether Alexander’s tomb is in Alexandria, no matter how intense it might become, would never pose the question of whether the tomb’s location, wherever this may be, exists as something separate from the tomb; in this context, that much is taken for granted. But the Dogmatic philosophers’ project of research turned this very question into the subject matter of a dialectical investigation (into a ζητούμενον), i.e., into something that deserves philosophical discussion. Within such a context of investigation, it can no longer be taken for granted, regardless of how evident (ἐναργές) it might otherwise be considered to be; indeed, taking it for granted would mean begging the question and thereby nullify the relevant philosophical discussion.²⁵

²⁴ Sextus uses the terms ἀφελής/ἀφελῶς in *Against the Grammarians* to characterize the ordinary way of speaking, which is artless in the sense of not following the grammatical art (see, e.g., *M* i 153, 177, 179, 232). According to Galen, Thessalos, an important physician of the Methodic School, characterized his own way of speaking as ἀφελῶς, and although he employed Dogmatic terms, he asked to be heard and understood not Dogmatically but ἀφελῶς. The followers of Thessalos, as Galen informs us, explained ἀφελῶς as meaning ‘undogmatically’, and they explained ‘undogmatically’ as meaning βιωτικῶς (= according to Liddell/Scott, ‘in the tone of common life’, or ‘in popular language’), which in turn they understood as what is or holds for most people or is said in like manner by most people (cf. *Meth. Med.* x 268-269). Sextus also uses these terms in *Against the Rhetoricians* when referring to a style of speaking that, in opposition to the rhetorical style, is simple and gives the impression of ordinary speech (cf. *M* ii 76-77).

²⁵ On ‘evident’ (ἐναργές) in the Hellenistic period as meaning something that ‘can be relied upon to be true without further scrutiny or proof’, cf. Ierodiakonou 2011. In several other cases in Sextus,

To sum up: as we have seen, Sextus does not deny the philosophical implications of everyday claims; on the contrary, he brings the philosophical implications to the surface in order to raise the objection of begging the question against the use of an ordinary claim as an answer to a philosophical question. However, the legitimate move he chooses against begging the question, permits a different understanding of this claim, an understanding ἀφελῶς that ignores the philosophical implications and preserves its acceptance in ordinary contexts.

II. Conceptual Distinction vs Prescriptive Geometrical Distinction²⁶

So far, so good, but there is one important detail in *M* x 14-15 that we need to make sense of. Sextus uses the distinction between ‘place κατὰ περιγραφὴν’ and ‘place κατὰ πλάτος’ to explain the difference between the ordinary and the philosophical understanding of ‘place’. Place as we attempt to conceive it and to articulate its conception in the Dogmatists’ project of research is identified first positively as place κατὰ περιγραφὴν and then negatively as not place κατὰ πλάτος. Burnyeat 1984/1997 argues that the use of this very distinction attests to Sextus’ commitment to the view that what we ordinarily say about places is subordinated to the philosophical conception of place. Therefore, Sextus was not able to insulate between them. If this is right, then I am wrong. The use of such a distinction in our passage speaks against my interpretation and even if there is a dialectical attempt to insulate, this attempt is not carried through consistently.

Yet, let us examine Sextus’ use of the distinction κατὰ περιγραφὴν-κατὰ πλάτος and Burnyeat’s interpretation of it. To the best of my knowledge, Sextan scholars have without exception followed Burnyeat’s suggestion that the distinction κατὰ περιγραφὴν-κατὰ πλάτος in *M* x 14-15 is the same as the distinction πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν-ἐν πλάτει to be found in *PH* iii 119 within the introductory paragraph in the discussion of ‘place’, as well as in *PH* iii 75 and *M* x 95 and 108-110, where the distinction is discussed as a solution to Diodorus Cronus’ puzzle against local motion.²⁷ According to Burnyeat 1997, 104, ‘it was Aristotle who invented, in all but name, the distinction between broad and narrow place’. Burnyeat identifies narrow place, i.e., in his view, both place κατὰ περιγραφὴν and place πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν, with the Aristotelian ἴδιος or πρῶτος τόπος, which is the place of a body that does not contain anything more than this body and whose limits coincide precisely with this body.²⁸ Meanwhile, he identifies broad place, i.e., place κατὰ πλάτος and place ἐν πλάτει, with Aristotle’s ‘common place’, which contains the narrow place but is broader (cf. *Physics* 209a33-35), and he

we also find the idea that as far as something is the subject of investigation, it cannot be ἐναργές or πρόδηλον, but it has to be ἄδηλον and ζητούμενον, e.g., *PH* ii 1-10 and *M* vii 393. Furthermore, we find the idea that ‘what is investigated is removed from ἐνάργεια’ in *M* viii 326.

²⁶ Part of the research in the present section was presented at the Symposium *Transformation of Ancient Theories* (University of Athens-November 2012) and appeared in Tigani (Τηγάνη) 2019.

²⁷ Cf., e.g., Annas 1992, 217-218; Annas/Barnes 1994, 175n150; Bett 2012, 84n7; Algra 2015, 213-214.

²⁸ This is the place that Aristotle defines as ‘the limit of the surrounding body, at which it is in contact with that which is surrounded’ (*Physics* 212a6-7, Hussey trans. 1983).

takes Sextus as considering narrow place to be place as the philosophers discuss it and broad place to be the places that we speak about ἀφελῶς in ordinary life.

Burnyeat 1997, 109 argues that in both Aristotle and Sextus ‘the ordinary concern with place and the theoretical concern are seen as continuous with each other’. He supports this claim with two key points. The first is that we reach the conception that the philosophers are interested in, i.e., for Burnyeat the narrow Aristotelian place, by following to its limit a common move in the language game of locating things in their places. We may say loosely, for example, that something is in Alexandria, but we can ask for its precise location again and again until we arrive at the particular place that precisely and exclusively surrounds and contains the thing we are interested in, in this way attaining its narrow place. To use my earlier example of the debate about Alexander’s tomb, we could say that the question about the narrow place of the tomb not only is *not* irrelevant but is exactly what is at issue in the debate. This point in Burnyeat’s reading clearly contradicts my own earlier claim that the questions and the distinctions that determine place κατὰ περιγραφὴν and that in *M* x 14-15 identify this place as the subject matter of the philosophers’ debate are in fact alien to any ordinary concern with locating things in their places.

Burnyeat’s second point is also in contrast to my own reading. Taking into consideration the passages in which we find the distinction πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν-ἐν πλάτει both as an answer to Diodorus Cronus’ puzzle against local motion (*PH* iii 75; *M* x 95 and 108-110) and as an introductory distinction in the chapter on place in *PH* iii 119, Burnyeat 1997, 113-114 argues that Sextus’ usage of this distinction commits him to two ideas. The first is the idea that the ‘place’ of ordinary language, broad place, presupposes the philosophers’ exact place. The second is the idea that the proper meaning of ‘place’, place κυρίως, is the philosophers’ exact place, so use of the word ‘place’ to denote broad place is nonsense and a misuse of language (it is a κατάχρησις). Based on these two points, Burnyeat concludes, in contrast to my reading, that Sextus is unable consistently to ‘insulate’ the philosophers’ ‘place’ and the places of persons and things in ordinary life.

Against Burnyeat’s reading, I argue that the distinction κατὰ περιγραφὴν-κατὰ πλάτος in *M* x 14-15 is *not the same* as the distinction πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν-ἐν πλάτει found in other passages in Sextus’ works. Therefore there is no inconsistency between Sextus using the first distinction descriptively to demarcate the philosophers’ conception of place and the way we refer to places ordinarily, while rejecting the second as one technical distinction introduced by the Dogmatists.

A. Κατὰ περιγραφὴν-κατὰ πλάτος in *M* x 14-15

The literal meaning of περιγράφω, defined in Liddell/Scott’s dictionary as ‘draw a line round, enclose as it were within brackets’, as well as the contrast with κατὰ πλάτος, in which, if we take πλάτος literally, a reference to extension and breadth is suggested, can easily mislead us into understanding the distinction κατὰ περιγραφὴν-κατὰ πλάτος in the terms of geometrical exactness in the deter-

mination of the location of something or someone. Aiming at such exactness, we can draw a line around the extension of place that coincides precisely with the body in it, in this way delimiting the exact place of this body in contrast to a place of broader extension, to which we usually refer when we say ordinarily where something is. Although this understanding appears quite plausible, neither the ‘replacement’ argument nor Sextus’ objection to it in *M x* 14-15 (where *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* is used just once in Sextus to qualify ‘place’) rely on such a distinction between the geometrically narrow, precise place of a body and the broad, vague place of the same body. Furthermore, Sextus’ usage of the phrase *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* in other contexts, as we are going to see, suggests a quite different understanding.²⁹

The extension of place, precise or broad, plays no role in the ‘replacement’ argument. This becomes clear through the examples that illustrate the argument.

When the liquid in the wine-jar has been emptied out and another one has been poured in, we say that the wine-jar exists, being the place of both the previous liquid and the one put in later, so if another person now holds the place that Socrates held when he was alive, there is some place. (*M x* 8)

In the wine-jar example we do not have a place broad in extension; on the contrary, it is the standard Aristotelian example of a place narrow in extension.³⁰ Therefore an objection to this argument based on the lack of geometrical exactness in reference to the body’s place would miss the point; as for example the objection that it is impossible for Plato to be now where Socrates was because Plato can never occupy Socrates’ place as they do not have the same body size and shape. Sextus does not use such an objection and when he objects to the replacement argument saying that ‘our inquiry is not about place *κατὰ πλάτος* but about place *κατὰ περιγραφὴν*’ (in *M x* 15) he would totally miss the point, if the distinction he uses concerned the exact or loose extension of the body’s place.

In both examples used in the replacement argument, that is the wine-jar and Socrates’ place, the feature that makes what we say the wrong answer to the dialectical issue under investigation is not that the extension of place is not narrowed down properly but that in these statements, as Sextus remarks, we speak *ἀφελῶς*, i.e., in an ordinary manner, paying no attention to the status of place and therefore to the question of whether the body’s place is distinct from the body or not. By ignoring this question, we do not speak about place *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* but only about place *κατὰ πλάτος*, no matter whether we say that the water is in the wine-jar or that Plato is where Socrates was or that someone is in Alexandria.

In *M x* 14-15, as we have seen, Sextus identifies place *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* as the *ζητούμενον*, the subject under investigation: under investigation is place taken as distinct *from the body* that is said to be contained in it. It is not the place of the body that is narrowed down, so as to be taken separately *from the places* of all

²⁹ For the semantic difference between the verb *περιγράφω* and the noun *περιγραφή* in Sextus, as it is used always in the phrase *κατὰ περιγραφὴν*, cf. Castagnoli 2010a, 254-255, esp. n10.

³⁰ Sextus himself cites it in *M x* 95 as an example of the Aristotelian narrow place.

other bodies, and therefore it is not, as Burnyeat 1997, 105 claims, the body's 'own unique place in the world, distinct from the places of all other things'. 'The line we draw' in the place *κατὰ περιγραφὴν*, according to Sextus' remarks, rather aims to individuate two entities, the place of the body and the body in this place, not two places. What is under investigation is the status of the place of the body, whether this place is something that exists individually or something that exists always in relation to the body, being inseparable from it. This is a problem we do not consider when we speak *ἀφελῶς* relying on a broad or loose (*κατὰ πλάτος*) conception of place. Such an understanding of *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* squares with Sextus' usage of *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* in other contexts in which he uses the phrase to describe the status of entities that are supposed to be conceived on their own, absolutely or individually, in contrast to relative things that are not conceived in this way. Sextus attributes such a general distinction to the Sceptics (*M* viii 161-162) and he uses it in Sceptical arguments against sign (*M* viii 163ff.) and demonstration (*M* viii 387, 394).

Therefore, place *κατὰ περιγραφὴν*, i.e., place conceived separately from the body in it, does not signify the Aristotelian exact place. However, the question whether place can be conceived *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* arises because of the Aristotelian exact place. The question of whether the place of the body is inseparable from it and vanishes together with it is of a different type to the question of whether our soul vanishes together with our body. We may ask the second question independently of any philosophical discussion, but the first question seems to arise only within the philosophical debate on 'place' and as a result of a conception of place as tight-fitting to the body: if place is glued around the body, why does it not vanish together with the body? And should we conceive the place of the body as always together with the body or not (cf. Algra 2014, 14ff.)? These questions do not help determine the exact place of a body or concern the process of locating something, but they do concern the process of philosophically investigating the conception of a place tight-fitting to the body.

Given the above analysis, it becomes clear that the distinction *κατὰ περιγραφὴν-κατὰ πλάτος* in *M* x 14-15, concerns a *conceptual* exactness, the pursuit of which is peculiar to the natural philosophers' investigation into the status of place and alien to ordinary practices of locating things in their places. Therefore, it is different from the distinction *πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν-ἐν πλάτει* that concerns *geometrical* exactness in specifying the location of a body and prescribes the geometrically exact place of the body as the body's place properly speaking.

One further point confirms the difference between the two distinctions. In *M* x 14-15, Sextus does not refer to any comparative evaluation between place *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* and place *κατὰ πλάτος*. Certainly, we do not find there any implication that the former has any priority over the latter, as occurs in the distinction between place *πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν* and place *ἐν πλάτει*, when the first is taken as place *κυρίως* and the second as place *καταχρηστικῶς*. Sextus' remark at the end of *M* x 14-15—that those who use the 'replacement' argument by relying on ordinary statements have no power to establish answers to any of our questions

about the status of place—does not evaluate the ordinary statements themselves as inferior to the standards the Dogmatists’ investigation sets. Sextus does not criticize the fact that, when we speak in an ordinary manner, we do not take into consideration or pay attention to the distinctions the natural philosophers are interested in. It is not that the ordinary way of speaking fails to make the proper distinctions, but that the ‘replacement’ argument, begging the question, makes improper use of the ordinary ways of speaking, and for that reason fails to meet the requirements that a philosophical investigation establishes. Thus, in *M* x 14-15, Sextus does not criticize place *κατὰ πλάτος* as inferior to place *κατὰ περιγραφὴν*; he instead criticizes only a certain usage of the ordinary ways of speaking in philosophical arguments.

B. Πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν-ἐν πλάτει/κατὰ πλάτος

Still, we need to examine the distinction *πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν* place and *ἐν πλάτει/κατὰ πλάτος* on its own to see whether this is another distinction between the philosophical and the ordinary conception of place, even if it is drawn in different terms of exactness when compared to Sextus’ distinction between *κατὰ περιγραφὴν* place and place *κατὰ πλάτος*. If it were a distinction between the philosophical and the ordinary conception of place and Sextus was actually committed to the subordination of the ordinary to the philosophical conception, as Burnyeat argues, then Sextus’ use of the distinction *πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν* place and *ἐν πλάτει/κατὰ πλάτος* would be inconsistent with his attempt in *M* x 14-15 to insulate between ordinary claims about places and philosophers’ investigation into the conception of place; consequently Burnyeat’s thesis that Sextus was not able consistently to insulate the one from the other would gain considerable support.

Apart from their seemingly similar form and language, *κατὰ περιγραφὴν-κατὰ πλάτος* and *πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν-ἐν πλάτει/κατὰ πλάτος* are regarded by Burnyeat 1997, 101 as the same distinction because he assumes that *M* x 14-15, in which we find the first, and *PH* iii 119, in which we find the second, are ‘parallel’ given that both aim, as he assumes, to distinguish the conception of place under investigation from the ordinary conception of place. Yet, I show that although this is the aim of *M* x 14-15, *PH* iii 119 does not serve the same aim, for the distinction found there is not a distinction between a philosophical and an ordinary conception of place.

Place then is used in two senses, strictly and loosely (*κυρίως* και *καταχρηστικῶς*), loosely of place taken broadly (*ὁ ἐν πλάτει*), as the city is my place, and strictly of the place that exactly (*πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν*) is occupied, whereby I am exactly embraced. We are investigating now the exact place. Some have posited it, some have rejected it, and others have suspended judgment about it.³¹ (*PH* iii 119)

³¹ Τόπος τοίνυν λέγεται διχῶς, κυρίως και καταχρηστικῶς, καταχρηστικῶς μὲν [ὡς] ὁ ἐν πλάτει, ὡς ἐμοῦ ἢ πόλις, κυρίως δὲ ὁ πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν κατέχων, ὑφ’ οὗ περιέχομαι πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν. ζητούμεν οὖν περὶ τοῦ τόπου <τοῦ> πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν. τοῦτον δὲ οἱ μὲν ἔθεσαν, οἱ δὲ ἀνεῖλον, οἱ δὲ ἐπέχον περὶ

Sextus here distinguishes exact place (πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν) from broad place (ἐν πλάτει), and he identifies the former as the subject matter of investigation in the following chapter of *PH* on place. He makes clear that the exactness he refers to concerns the extension that is exactly occupied by a body, in contrast to an extension that is broader, as in the city being my place.

In the corresponding chapter on ‘place’ in *M*, we do not have any similar introductory paragraph identifying the subject matter of the chapter. This absence is not coincidental; it is due to the structural differences between the section written against the physical part of philosophy in *PH* iii 1-167 and the corresponding section in *M* ix-x. In *PH*, the section on motion (iii 63ff.) comes right before the chapter on place (iii 119ff.), while in *M* the order is reversed: this time the chapter on place (*M* x 6ff.) directly precedes the section on motion (*M* x 37ff.). Consequently, when Sextus comes to the chapter on place in *PH* iii 119, he has already, less than forty paragraphs earlier, presented and discussed (in iii 75-81) the distinction between πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν place and ἐν πλάτει place as one of the suggested solutions to Diodorus’ puzzle against local motion. It therefore makes sense to inform the reader at the beginning of the new chapter (on place) that the following chapter concerns only place πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν and not place ἐν πλάτει, since Sextus has already argued against the latter conception of place some paragraphs earlier.

Yet, when Sextus comes to the chapter on place in *M*, he has not referred to place ἐν πλάτει in any way, since he introduces and discusses place ἐν πλάτει—again as a proposed solution to Diodorus’ puzzle (in *M* x 95 and 108ff.)—in the section on motion that follows the chapter on place. Consequently, there would be no point in here informing the reader about his subject matter in the same way he does in the introductory paragraph in *PH* iii 119. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Sextus states in *PH* iii 119 that he will leave broad place out of the discussion on place, not because it represents an ordinary conception of place that he chooses not to attack, but because it is part of a particular Dogmatic theory he has already attacked in the chapter on motion. Thus, the aim in *PH* iii 119 is not ‘parallel’ to that in *M* x 14-15, since it identifies the subject matter under investigation in the specific chapter and not the subject matter of Sextus’ or the natural philosophers’ investigation into place in general.

If this is right, then *PH* iii 119 is neither parallel to the introductory paragraphs in the chapters on the criterion of truth and on the sign of both *PH* and *M*. In these introductory paragraphs Sextus distinguishes between two conceptions of his subject matter, one of which is presented as clearly connected with ordinary life and the other as adopted or invented by the Dogmatists; he also specifies that the discussion that follows does not concern the former but only the latter. For example, in the chapter on the criterion of truth, Sextus specifies that the purpose of the chapter is to discuss ‘the so-called criterion of truth’ and not the criterion ‘by attending to which we live our lives’ (*PH* ii 14 and similarly in *M* vii 29). Meanwhile, in the chapter on the sign, Sextus presents a distinction between two

senses of sign (*PH* ii 100-101 and *M* viii 151-155), and then states that the Sceptics argue only against the one that is ‘a fiction of the Dogmatists’, and not against the other, which is ‘found convincing by everyday life’, thereby emphasizing that the Sceptics not only *do not* attack ordinary life but ‘they struggle on its side...against the private fictions of the Dogmatists’ (*PH* ii 102 and similarly *M* viii 156-158). Now, in *PH* iii 119 no similar reference to ordinary life or to a conception forged by the Dogmatists is found, and thus there is no similar explicit identification of ἐν πλάτει place with the ordinary conception of place, and of place πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν with the philosophical conception of place. No such explicit identification is found either earlier in *PH* iii 75 or in *M* x 95 and 108ff., where Sextus presents this distinction as a proposed solution to Diodorus’ puzzle.

However, in *PH* iii 119 and in iii 75, Sextus uses the adverbs κυρίως and καταχρηστικῶς to qualify the two senses of place, πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν-ἐν πλάτει, respectively, and as Spinelli 2014, 163 claims, following Burnyeat’s interpretation that place ἐν πλάτει stands for the ordinary conception of place, ‘the special occurrence here of the adverb καταχρηστικῶς seems to be clear enough... Indeed, each time we find the semantic family linked to κατάχρησις in Sextan works, this is in relation to everyday life and its usages/habits’. Nevertheless, Spinelli does not provide text evidence for this claim, and as I will show the use of the adverb καταχρηστικῶς is not enough for the identification of place ἐν πλάτει with the ordinary conception of place.

Some philological and historical details are needed here. Concerning κατάχρησις/καταχρηστικῶς, Corti 2009, 131-132 has shown that when καταχρηστικῶς is opposed to κυρίως, it denotes the usage of a term that is well known and accepted, legitimate, and quite correct, and explained with reference to a central usage. From the first century BCE down to Sextus’ time, κατάχρησις was also used as a standard technical term for one of the figures of speech (τρόποι), alongside metaphor, allegory, metonymy, synecdoche, etc. Its standard definition, as found in the grammarians’ handbooks, was as follows: ‘Κατάχρησις is a word transferred from what was first named properly and truly (κυρίως τε καὶ ἐτύμως) to a different thing for which there is no common name (ἀκατονόμαστον κατὰ τὸ οἰκεῖον)’ (Tryphon, *Περὶ τρόπων* 192.21-23). Some of the standard examples that accompanied this definition were γόνυ καλάμου, ὀφθαλμὸς ἀμπέλου, χεῖλος κεραμίου, τράχηλος ὄρου (23-25). In these examples, the words γόνυ (knee), ὀφθαλμὸς (eye), χεῖλος (lip), τράχηλος (neck), properly used to denote parts of the human body, were used analogically to name parts of the reed, the grapevine, the jar, and the mountain respectively. What is especially interesting in the case of κατάχρησις is that it was understood as fulfilling the need to provide a name for things that do not have a name, in contrast to other figures, like metaphor, which were chiefly understood as ornaments (cf. *Rhetorica Anonyma*, *Περὶ τρόπων* 3.228.1-5). Thus technical languages could find recourse in κατάχρησις, as does, for example, the grammarians’ technical language: diphthongs where either κύριαι or καταχρηστικάι, a syllable that consists of just one vowel without any consonant is a syllable καταχρηστικῶς, the infinitive was called a

mood καταχρηστικῶς.³² Philosophers could also find recourse in κατάχρησις, when in need of a name for something that does not have one.³³ Philosophers interested in how things really are had to distinguish between the proper (κυρίως) sense of a name from its usage καταχρηστικῶς prescribing in this way that the item named καταχρηστικῶς is subordinated to the item properly called so. Thus, the prescriptive distinction κυρίως-καταχρηστικῶς could lead in some cases to philosophical debates about which meaning was κυρίως and which καταχρηστικῶς, but certainly philosophical language was not considered to be free from κατάχρησις and therefore κατάχρησις, although common in ordinary language, was not a distinctive feature of ordinary language in contrast to philosophical language.³⁴

Let us next examine how we have a κατάχρησις in the case of place ἐν πλάτει and how such a place could be considered as a solution to Diodorus' puzzle against local motion. Diodorus' argument presupposes the Aristotelian conception of place, and as Sextus explains it maintains that a body rests in the place in which it is because it fills it up, but if a thing is to be in motion, it needs more space than its tight-fitting place can provide for it (*M* x 86 and 89).³⁵ However the fact that the body in motion does not move in its exact place does not mean that, if it moves, it necessarily moves in the place in which it is not, which would be as absurd as Diodorus' argument assumes, thereby setting up the paradox.³⁶ Apart from the place in which the body is and the place in which the body is not, a third place, related to the body, was distinguished: this is a place, a subdivision of which is the body's exact place, but, being larger than this, it also contains part of the place in which the body is not. Thus, as Sextus explains, 'the moving

³² Cf. Dionysius Thrax, *Ars grammatica* 1.1:17, Herodianus, *Παραεξβολαὶ τοῦ μεγάλου ῥήματος* 4.8.

³³ Aristotle' use of the verb καταχράομαι for cases in which one bodily organ is used for more than one function, *De anima* 420b16-17 and in *De partibus animalium* 659b34-36 and 683a25-26, seems to be parallel. Καταχράομαι denotes there the extension or the diversity of use, which is something that nature does when it cannot do otherwise, since nature's first choice is one organ for one function. In similar terms κατάχρησις refers to a deviation of the meaning of a word that serves the necessity of naming something for which no literal name is available.

³⁴ Cf., e.g., how Clemens Alexandrinus presents the opposite Stoic and Peripatetic theses on the corporeality or incorporeality of causes in *Stromata* viii 9, 26.1-4: οἱ μὲν οὖν σωμάτων, οἱ δ' ἀσωμάτων φασὶν εἶναι τὰ αἴτια. οἱ δὲ τὸ μὲν σῶμα κυρίως αἰτιόν φασι, τὸ δὲ ἀσώματον καταχρηστικῶς καὶ οἷον αἰτιωδῶς ἄλλοι δ' ἔμπαλιν ἀναστρέφουσι, τὰ μὲν ἀσώματα κυρίως αἴτια λέγοντες, καταχρηστικῶς δὲ τὰ σώματα (=SVF ii 345), and how Sextus presents the disagreement between Cleanthes and Chrysippus on φαντασία in *M* viii 400.

³⁵ Sedley 1977, 85 gives a vivid illustration of this: 'Why is the object necessarily at rest in the place where it is? Because, Sextus explains, it exactly fills it. Any three-dimensional object occupies a space whose boundaries coincide with its own; to expect it to move in that space would be like asking a banana to move about inside its skin.'

³⁶ Sextus explains how the premises of Diodorus' argument work to set up the paradox: 'since there are two places, first the one in which something is, and second the one in which it is not, and a third one beyond these cannot be conceived, the thing in motion, if it is in fact in motion, has to be in motion in one of these places; for it would not be in motion in the inconceivable one' (*M* x 88).

object can move in the place wherein it is—place in the broad sense—as this possesses extension through which the processes of motion may take place’ (*M* x 95).³⁷ In response to the need for a name for this extension of place, it was termed ‘the body’s place’, thus producing an ambiguity (in *M* x 95: ἀμφιβολίαν) or a κατάχρησις (in *PH*, where Sextus qualifies this broad place with καταχρηστικῶς in iii 75 and 119). In short: some natural philosophers, to solve Diodorus’ puzzle, transferred καταχρηστικῶς the term ‘the body’s place’, which they accepted as properly used to name the tight-fitting place of the body, to an extension of place, for which no name was available and that contained the body’s place properly speaking, being larger and permitting the body’s movement.

Thus, broad place is no less the product of the philosophers’ technical elaboration of concepts than narrow place. Indeed, the philosophers who proposed broad place as the solution to Diodorus’ puzzle gave due consideration to a serious puzzle involving the conception of place, and they accordingly proposed an apt distinction that they justified through the necessary conditions of movement. ‘Broad place’ and ‘narrow place’ are similarly both illustrated by ordinary answers to questions of the type ‘Where is x?’ and ‘Where are you?’; while the answer ‘I am in Alexandria’ or ‘at home’ illustrates ‘broad place’, the answer ‘It is in the jar’ illustrates ‘exact place’. Neither of these answers is presented as more ordinary than the other, and both are used to draw attention, through the ordinary manner we say such things, not to the ordinary manner of speaking itself but to the extension of place that we refer to in each case.³⁸

The only case in which Sextus uses the occurrence of κατάχρησις against a philosophical thesis and also clearly connects κατάχρησις to ordinary life occurs in *M* viii 128-129. Here Sextus criticizes the logicians’ use of the name ‘false’ not only for the conjunction in which all parts are false but also for the conjunction in which just one part is false, resulting in this way in a κατάχρησις of the name. He calls silly (εὔηθεε) the logicians’ argument that, as in life we call torn a garment that is just partly torn, so we can call ‘false’ the conjunction in which only one part is false while the other is true. Sextus’ objection points out that the logicians cannot model their names after the names used in ordinary language; the acceptance of a loose name (καταχρηστικὸν ὄνομα) and the inaccurate way we speak in ordinary life does not justify the Dogmatists being equally inaccurate in philosophical language, especially when an accurate name is available. Sextus had already suggested ironically ‘no more true than false’ (μὴ μᾶλλον ἀληθές ἢ ψεῦδος, *M* viii 125) as a more accurate name for the conjunction with one part

³⁷ As Bury 1936, 258 comments, ‘the object in “broad” place does not occupy all that place but has a margin of room wherein to move’.

³⁸ Sextus in *M* x 95 uses Alexandria as an example of broad place, while in *PH* iii 75, he uses ‘the house being my place’. Both draw attention to the extension of place we have referred to, and *not* to an ordinary or less ordinary way of speaking. On the contrary the statement ‘Someone is in Alexandria’ given as an example of place κατὰ πλάτος in *M* x 14-15 draws attention not to the extension of place we refer to but to a way of speaking about place in an ordinary manner (ἀφελῶς), i.e., without taking into account the technical distinctions that are pertinent to the natural philosophers’ debates on the status of place.

false and one part true, making clear that he appeals *ad hominem* to the Dogmatists' ideal of accuracy, an ideal that the Sceptics do not follow when they use, as Sextus remarks, 'indifferently and in a loose sense' (ἀδιαφόρως αὐτὴν παραλαμβάνομεν καὶ καταχρηστικῶς, *PH* i 191) the similar sceptical phrase 'no more this than that' (οὐ μᾶλλον τόδε ἢ τόδε).

The point of Sextus' arguments against the broad-place solution to Diodorus' puzzle is different: he does not argue that broad place fails to solve the puzzle either because it is a *κατάχρησις* or because it is connected in some way with the ordinary conception of place. Sextus' point is rather that the entity named by such a term fails to solve the puzzle it was supposed to solve because it also results in the impossibility of bodily movement. This much stands both for his objections in *PH* and in *M*. However, Sextus' objections in *PH* and in *M* differ in an interesting way that, so far as I am aware, has not been properly recognized.

In *M* Sextus takes for granted that the broad-place-solution to Diodorus' puzzle could only be considered in terms of a model for understanding the body's movement that in *PH* he describes as 'moving over the first part first' (*PH* iii 76). Thus, in *M*, he categorically rejects this solution since 'it is impossible for something to be in motion in place broadly understood unless it has previously been in motion in place understood exactly'. Given the body's position in exact place and the position of exact place inside broad place, he explains that the movement of the body in exact place comes before its movement in the broad place in the same way that someone who moves over the distance of a stade needs to have first moved over the distance of a cubit; therefore, he concludes, if motion is abolished in exact place, there is no argument left for motion in broad place (*M* x 108-110).

Hankinson 2015, 240-241 clearly following Burnyeat, takes the introductory remark: 'place conceived exactly precedes (προηγείται) place conceived broadly' as saying that 'the concept of broad place is parasitic upon that of narrow place' and thus as a point that, being different from the main argument, 'carries no weight in and of itself'. However, instead of interpreting this remark as a different and worthless point, it seems to me more reasonable to understand it as part of Sextus' main argument and as speaking of temporal and spatial priority in the process of motion instead of a conceptual precedence for which no allusion is found: Sextus presents the distinction *πρὸς ἀκριβειαν-ἐν πλάτει* as an 'ambiguity' (*ἀμφιβολίαν*, *M* x 95:) and he does not even use the adverbs *κυρίως-καταχρηστικῶς* that are found in his corresponding discussion in *PH*.

Now in *PH*, there is no sign of the confidence in proving this distinction worthless that is demonstrated in his conclusion in *M*. On the contrary, Sextus presents the broad-place-solution as one of the more striking counter-arguments against Diodorus' puzzle (*PH* iii 71), and there he takes into account a possibility he had overlooked in *M*: he also considers this solution in terms of an alternative model for understanding the body's movement, which he describes as 'moving over a divisible interval all at once (*ἄθρόως*)' (*PH* iii 76). According to this model, it does not necessarily follow that the moving body needs to move first in

its exact place, and then in broad place, as Sextus argued in *M*. The model of ‘moving over a divisible interval all at once’ could make possible motion in broad place taken as a whole (iii 78).³⁹

In the context of this special philosophical theory about the process of motion, which departs considerably from the common understanding of motion, Sextus technically analyses the conception of a broad extension of place. He distinguishes different amounts of extension that could be taken to correspond to broad place, among which an extension that is ‘indeterminate’ (ἀόριστον, *PH* iii 79) or an extension ‘that is small but not accurately determined’ (ὅτι μικρὸν μὲν, οὐ πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν δὲ περιορισμένον, iii 80), and he rejects motion within such an interval due to certain difficulties, like for example those raised by the sorites argument. However, none of his arguments rejects this conception of broad place as ordinary or as less legitimate and technical than the conception of the exact place of the body.

Now it becomes clear that contrary to Burnyeat’s assumption, for Sextus, reference to the unique, exact location of things was not the distinctive feature of the natural philosophers’ conception of place and reference to a broad and vague extension of place was not the defective feature of the ordinary conception of place. In *PH* Sextus uses the distinction πρὸς ἀκρίβειαν place and ἐν πλάτει/κατὰ πλάτος, he qualifies the first with κυρίως and the second with καταχρηστικῶς, and he rejects both as technical conceptions of place formed by natural philosophers. Therefore, the subordination of the conception of a broad extension of the body’s place to the conception of the exact extension of the body’s place, denoted by the adverbs κυρίως-καταχρηστικῶς, does not commit Sextus to a similar relation between the ordinary and the philosophical conceptions of place and it does not work against his attempt in *M* x 14-15 to insulate between the ordinary conception of place and the philosophical conception.

Close reading of the relevant texts and examination of Burnyeat’s reading has shown that, at least in the case of Sextus’ discussion of place, there was room for exegesis, and we were not justified in concluding that ‘The matter cannot be settled by careful scrutiny of the pertinent passages. For the passages tell in different directions, and the differences cannot be explained away or airbrushed out: they are collaboratively incoherent’, as Barnes 2007, 327 claims about the issue of the radical or moderate nature of Sextus’ Scepticism.⁴⁰ In the case of Sextus’ discussion of place no inconsistency is found in the texts.

³⁹ For the assumption that the conception of ‘motion ἀθρόως through a divisible interval’ was part of some Stoic doctrine of motion and for an attempt to explain the details of such a doctrine, cf. White 1992, esp. 314-324. For an analysis of motion ἀθρόως in *M* in the context of Sextus’ arguments against those who suppose that place, time, and body are all infinitely divisible (*M* x 121-141), see Hankinson 2015, 247-262.

⁴⁰ Admittedly, approaches that depart from exegesis and explore ‘those possibilities that fall within the logical space of Scepticism as Sextus describes it’ (Perin 2010, 28) have proven both fruitful and valuable. However, they do not justify abandoning the attempt to attain a comprehensive interpretation of Sextus’ scepticism through exegesis, which amounts to the attempt to understand what Pyrrhonian scepticism actually was.

Conclusion

I have argued that Sextus follows common rules of dialectical practice and appeals to legitimate moves against begging the question, to insulate between the context of the philosophical questions we ask about the conception of place and the ordinary answers we give to simple questions about where certain things are. He utilizes a detachment from the here and now of our lives, prescribed by the dialectical rules, to show that the Dogmatists' investigation into the conception of place and the ordinary activity of locating things in their places constitute two distinct contexts, in which we pay attention to different things, pursue different goals, and follow different rules. Hence, if Diodorus has a dislocated shoulder, he can leave aside his arguments against local motion and ask for the appropriate treatment to move his shoulder back to its proper location (cf. *PH* ii 245-246). At the same time, the rule of avoiding begging the question can block Diodorus' opponents' attempt to take this reaction and the conviction that his shoulder can move back to its proper location as committing him to a positive answer to the dialectical problem of whether or not motion is possible. Who if not the Sceptics could care more about guarding philosophical investigation against begging the question?⁴¹

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