

Carneades' theological arguments (David Sedley)

Sextus Empiricus and Cicero record a series of theological sorites (or little-by-little) arguments stemming from Carneades, the great second-century BC head of the Academy. These turn in one way or another on the difficulty of finding a cut-off point between divine and non-divine beings. If there are any gods, a typical argument maintains, clearly Poseidon is a god, and equally clearly a tiny stream of water is not a god; but given the supposed existence, between these two extremes, of sea gods, river gods and gods of springs, it become hard if not impossible to find a point in the scale at which divinity ceases.

Although these sorites syllogisms have attracted much scholarly attention, they are in fact recorded as just one part of a larger and more diverse family of theological arguments, which can as a whole be traced back to Carneades. That larger group jointly constitute the richest single body of Carneadean argument to have come down to us, and many of them raise philosophically more challenging puzzles about the concept of a divine being than the sorites arguments do. My paper's aim is to uncover the methodology underlying this body of arguments.

For at least seventy years there has been an almost universal scholarly consensus that Carneades' theological syllogisms were strictly *ad hominem* arguments, targeted at the Stoics.¹ I wish to challenge that consensus. I have so far found only one note of dissent from it, briefly but discerningly voiced by Woldemar Görler in his fine 1994 chapter on Hellenistic scepticism.²

The reason for such near-unanimity among scholars is easy to identify. It derives from a remark made by Cicero's Academic spokesman Cotta in explanation of the theological sorites arguments (*ND* 3.44):

Carneades used to say these things, not in order to eliminate the gods (for what could be less fitting for a philosopher than that?), but to convict the Stoics of failing to explain anything about the gods.³

[Apologies for the currently excessive length of this paper's footnotes. In addition to the original Greek and Latin of all the texts translated, these notes contain some of the material I have had to cut from the main text in order to get the length down to the required 40 minutes.]

¹ The classic defence of this interpretation is P. Coussin, 'Les sorites de Carnéade contre le polythéisme', *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 54 (1941), 43-57. For more or less the same view as Coussin's, see e.g. M. Dal Pra, *Lo scetticismo greco* (Rome and Bari 1975), 194-205; S. Nonvel Pieri, *Carneade* (Padua 1978), esp. 66-70; M.F. Burnyeat, 'Gods and heaps', in M. Nussbaum and M. Schofield (eds.), *Language and Logos* (1982), 315-38, esp. 330, 332; A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1987), 1.465, 2.454-5; A.A. Long, 'Scepticism about gods in Hellenistic philosophy', in M.G. Griffith and D.J. Mastrorarde (eds.) *Cabinet of the Muses* (Atlanta 1990), 279-91, esp. 281; C. Lévy, *Cicero Academicus* (Rome 1992), 43-4, 578; R.J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics* (London 1995), esp. 240, 242-3; J. Mansfeld, 'Theology', in K. Algra et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1999), 452-78, pp. 476-7 (although he does not altogether limit the target to Stoicism); J. Allen, 'Carneades', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (on line); H. Thorsrud, *Ancient Scepticism* (Stocksfield 2009), 60-5; id. 'Arcesilaus and Carneades', in R. Bett (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge 2010), 58-80, p. 70

² W. Görler, 'Fünftes Kapitel: Älterer Pyrronismus. Jüngere Akademie. Antiochos aus Askalon', in H. Flashar (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Antike 4: Die hellenistische Philosophie* (1994) 717-989, at 886-7. Elsewhere in his section on Carneades' theological arguments (884-7) he detects more targeting of the Stoics than I do, but overall his remarks seem to me outstandingly well judged.

³ For Latin text, see n. 13 below,

It is surprising that this explanation has regularly been accepted at face value. The objections that it invites are partly historical, partly philosophical. I start with the historical ones.

Carneades' impact on the Academy was so profound that he came to be treated as its virtual re-founder, with his successors vying over the correct interpretation of his philosophical stance. Among these competing interpretations, there is very good reason to sympathise with the one maintained by Clitomachus, who played a major role in establishing a written record of his master's arguments. Clitomachus interpreted Carneades as a Herculean opponent of assent,⁴ in other words as a great champion of *epochē*, suspension of assent. On such an interpretation, Carneades recognised equally strong arguments on both sides of each philosophical debate and chose to leave the matter evenly balanced.

One important piece of evidence confirming this picture of a Carneades working systematically towards *epochē*⁵ is the celebrated story of his ambassadorial visit to Rome in 155 BC. On one day Carneades gathered an audience and spoke warmly in defence of justice; on the next day he shocked his Roman public by delivering a second speech, denouncing justice. It is highly plausible that this scandalous ambivalence with regard to the merits of justice was a tactic aimed at promoting *epochē*, in line with Clitomachus' general interpretation.

From a lost page of Cicero's *De republica*, Lactantius preserves a telling remark on Carneades' aim in putting on this performance:

With the object of refuting Aristotle and Plato, supporters of justice, Carneades in his first discourse assembled all the arguments in favour of justice in order that he might overturn them, as he did ... not because he thought justice ought to be disparaged, but to show that its defenders had no certain or firm arguments about it.⁶

Notice the correspondence between the two Ciceronian explanations. According to the *De natura deorum*, Carneades criticised the notion of god, not because he wanted to deny the existence of gods, but in order to show that the Stoics had no philosophically coherent account of gods to offer. According to the *De republica*, Carneades criticised justice, not because he wanted to disparage justice, but in order to show that Plato and Aristotle had no philosophically coherent defence of justice to offer. It seems overwhelmingly probable that in both cases we are witnessing a Ciceronian exercise in apologetics, making Carneades' arguments less shocking to a

⁴ Cf. Cic. *Luc.* 108, 'credoque Clitomacho ita scribenti, Herculi quendam laborem exanclatum a Carneade, quod ut feram et inmanem beluam sic ex animis nostris adsensionem id est opinionem et temeritatem extraxisset.'

⁵ A further confirmation is found in Cicero's *De fato*, where we learn how Carneades set out to strengthen the Epicurean anti-determinist position by freeing it from dependence on the notoriously controversial doctrine of the atomic swerve. By showing how it could manage without the swerve, he remarked, he was making the Epicurean anti-determinist position strong enough to stand up against Stoic determinism (*Fat.* 23). Although Cicero and no doubt others preferred to associate Carneades primarily with the anti-determinist position, which was after all largely his own original philosophical creation, his recorded remark strongly suggests that his aim was in fact to maintain an equal balance, with *epochē* the expected outcome.

⁶ Lact. *Inst.* 5.14, 'Carneades autem, ut Aristotelem refelleret ac Platonem, iustitiae patronos, prima illa disputatione collegit ea omnia quae pro iustitia dicebantur, ut posset illa, sicut fecit, evertere, ... non quia vituperandam esse iustitiam sentiebat, sed ut illos defensores eius ostenderet nihil certi, nihil firmi de iustitia disputare.'

Roman audience. The apologetics represent the main alternative strategy to that of Clitomachus for interpreting Carneades' philosophical intent.

Indeed, it was probably the entry of Academic philosophy into the Roman world that did most to ensure the eventual success of the rival, non-Clitomachean interpretation of Carneades, under the school-headship of Philo of Larissa. Philo became Academic scholarch in 110, and thereafter fell under the influence of Metrodorus of Stratonicea, who unlike Philo had known Carneades personally, and who claimed to be privy to the master's inner thoughts. According to Metrodorus, and to Philo too in due course, Carneades' attacks on cognitive certainty had not been an expression of strong scepticism, but an anti-Stoic tactic.⁷ In reality, they explained, Carneades had allowed that the sage could freely hold philosophical beliefs, so long as he recognised their fallibility.⁸

It is plainly this interpretation that we are witnessing when we read Cicero's apologetic explanations of Carneades' seeming attacks on god and on justice. According to the Metrodorean-Philonian school of thought, Carneades' critique was in both cases aimed at demolishing, not the targeted concept itself, but the supposed authorities (the Stoics in the one case, Plato and Aristotle in the other) who professed to offer philosophically coherent accounts of it. His doing so was, according to this same interpretation, entirely compatible with his holding the sincere beliefs that there are gods, and that justice is a good thing. Indeed, what could be less worthy of a philosopher than to deny the existence of god, or to disparage justice?

Like many, I find the Clitomachean interpretation of Carneades as a champion of *epochē* historically more credible than the weaker thesis which eventually superseded it under Philo's headship. But in the case of the theological arguments we do not need to rely on mere historical preferences. It is, I think, quite easy to demonstrate that the anti-Stoic reading of them represents a systematic revision by the Philonians.

Take the sorites arguments. Sextus introduces them with these words:

There are also some arguments which Carneades posed in soritical fashion, and which his associate Clitomachus wrote up as his most serious and effective. They take the following form.⁹

Carneades wrote nothing, and it was left primarily to Clitomachus to catalogue his arguments, which he did at enormous length. Sextus' introduction has given us every reason to suppose that we are reading Carneades' soritical arguments in the form in which Clitomachus himself recorded them. Observe, then, how the first argument runs (SE *M.* 9.182-3):

If Zeus is a god, Poseidon too is a god.

For we three brothers were sons of Zeus, born to Rhea:

I, Zeus, and thirdly Hades, who reigns among the dead.

All things have been divided three ways among us, and each has his share of honour.

[Homer, *Iliad* 15.187-9].

So if Zeus is a god, Poseidon too, being his brother, will be a god. But if Poseidon is a god, the [river] Achelous will be a god too. And if the Achelous is, so is the

⁷ Aug. *C. Acad.* 3.41: '[Philo] qui iam veluti aperire cedentibus hostibus portas coeperat, et ad Platonis auctoritatem Academiam legesque revocare – quamquam et Metrodorus id antea facere tentaverat, qui primus dicitur esse confessus non decreto placuisse Academicis nihil posse conprehendi, sed necessario contra Stoicos huiusmodi eos arma sumpsisse.'

⁸ Cic. *Luc.* 78.

⁹ ἡρώτηνται δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Καρνεάδου καὶ σωριτικῶς τινες, οὓς ὁ γνώριμος αὐτοῦ Κλειτόμαχος ὡς σπουδαιοτάτους καὶ ἀνυκτωτάτους ἀνέγραψεν, ἔχοντας τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον.

Nile. If the Nile is, so are all rivers. If all rivers are, streams too would be gods. If streams were, torrents would be. But streams are not. Therefore Zeus is not a god either. But if there were gods, Zeus too would be a god. Therefore there are no gods.¹⁰

Note first that this is an argument with an explicitly atheistic conclusion: there are no gods. The same conclusion is found in every one of the numerous Carneadean arguments which surround it in the text of Sextus (*M.* 9.138-90). It is, in any case, just what we would expect of Carneades as seen through Clitomachus' eyes. Assume with Clitomachus that Carneades' aim was to secure suspension of judgement regarding the existence of god. Innumerable philosophical arguments in favour of the existence of god were already in place.¹¹ What the philosophical tradition had altogether failed to bequeath, as far as we know, was any argument *against* the existence of god. It fell to Carneades to make up that deficiency, despite the opprobrium that arguing for atheism was likely to bring upon him and his school – opprobrium which we have already seen Cicero's Academic spokesman Cotta working hard to deflect.

It is easy for us to overlook the fact that this group of syllogisms constitutes the earliest recorded arguments for atheism in the entire Western canon. The fact that Carneades devised and propounded them does not of course make him an atheist, since he will have acknowledged the existence of equally strong arguments on the other side, thus encouraging his listeners to suspend judgement. But his overall stance, at least on the highly credible Clitomachean interpretation of it, does make him a theological agnostic. Once he is seen to have combined formal arguments for atheism with an overall suspension of judgement about the existence of god, Carneades becomes a more important figure in the history of religious doubt than he has been recognised to be. It is the Philonian reinterpretation of his arguments as purely anti-Stoic that has done most to rob him of this recognition.

I have emphasised the characteristically atheistic outcome of the first sorites argument. A second point to notice is that it contains no distinctively Stoic premise, and therefore cannot be said to attack the Stoics by drawing embarrassing consequences from their own doctrines. The opening premise that Zeus is a god is common ground to Stoicism, Platonism, the poets and popular belief. The second step, according to which Poseidon too is a god, is here established by appeal, not to any philosophical thesis, Stoic or otherwise, but to the intrinsically compelling premise that any brother of a god must be a god, combined with Homer's verbatim evidence that Zeus and Poseidon are indeed brothers. The further descent through the rivers Achelous and Nile does not appeal to any philosophical thesis either, but presumably relies on a cultural fact, namely that both these rivers were the objects of religious cults. And the addition of other rivers, streams and finally torrents relies on a simple principle of resemblance, basic to the sorites. Altogether, there is nothing distinctively Stoic about any of the premises cited or assumed. Nor, for that matter, is there anything distinctively *anti*-Stoic about the conclusion, that there are no gods,

¹⁰ εἰ Ζεὺς θεὸς ἐστὶ, καὶ ὁ Ποσειδῶν θεὸς ἐστίν· τρεῖς γάρ τ' ἐκ Κρόνου ἦμεν ἀδελφοί, οὓς τέκετο Ῥέα, Ζεὺς καὶ ἐγώ, τρίτατος δ' Αἴδης ἐνέροισιν ἀνάσσω. τριχθὰ δὲ πάντα δέδασται, ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς. ὥστε εἰ ὁ Ζεὺς θεὸς ἐστὶ, καὶ ὁ Ποσειδῶν ἀδελφὸς ὢν τούτου θεὸς γενήσεται. εἰ δὲ ὁ Ποσειδῶν θεὸς ἐστὶ, καὶ ὁ Ἀχελῷος ἐστὶ θεός· εἰ δὲ ὁ Ἀχελῷος, καὶ ὁ Νεῖλος· εἰ ὁ Νεῖλος, καὶ πᾶς ποταμός· εἰ πᾶς ποταμός, καὶ οἱ ῥύακες ἂν εἴεν θεοί· εἰ οἱ ῥύακες, καὶ αἱ χαράδραι. οὐχὶ δὲ οἱ ῥύακες· οὐδὲ ὁ Ζεὺς ἄρα θεὸς ἐστίν. εἰ δέ γε ἦσαν θεοί, καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς ἦν ἂν θεός. οὐκ ἄρα θεοὶ εἰσίν. One would have expected οὐχὶ δὲ οἱ χαράδραι instead of οὐχὶ δὲ οἱ ῥύακες.

¹¹ This is in fact just what Sextus says at 9.137, and it is likely that the remark is itself part of the Academic material he has taken over.

since the existence of gods is a commonplace of philosophy, literature and popular belief.

This sorites argument, then, was presented by the original source Clitomachus, and probably intended by Carneades himself, as an independent philosophical argument against the existence of god. There is absolutely no reason to think of it as an attack on any particular philosophy or creed.

Now compare the (presumably Philonian) style of rewriting that we find in Cicero. Although none of the sorites arguments selected by Sextus corresponds precisely to any one of those selected by Cicero,¹² there can be no doubt that they all belong to the same original group, with much overlap of material between them. We may therefore legitimately compare Cicero's opening two examples with the one we have already met in Sextus. I quote them here with enough of their context to bring out the anti-Stoic colouring that has been added to the Clitomachean original. Cotta, it should be borne in mind, is addressing a Stoic, Balbus. My translation will use Greek rather than Latin divine names, in order to emphasise the common ground with the Sextan material.

Since my speech has brought me to this topic, I shall show that I have learnt better lessons about cultivating the immortal gods from pontifical law and ancestral custom ... than from the arguments of the Stoics. For if I were to follow you Stoics, tell me how to answer someone who asks me the following:

If there are gods, are the Nymphs goddesses too? If the Nymphs are, what about the Pans and Satyrs? But these last are not gods. Then are the Nymphs not goddesses either? Yet there are temples of them, publicly consecrated and dedicated. So are the others who have dedicated temples not gods either?

Or again:

You [Balbus] count Zeus and Poseidon as gods. Therefore their brother, Hades, is a god. But are those [rivers] that are said to flow in the underworld – Acheron, Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon, not to mention Charon and Cerberus – to be considered gods? That must be denied. If so, Hades is *not* a god. So what do you [Stoics] say about his brothers?

Carneades used to say these things, not in order to eliminate the gods (for what could be less fitting for a philosopher than that?), but to convict the Stoics of failing to explain anything about the gods.¹³

Although, as I have said, neither of these arguments corresponds precisely to the one we examined in Sextus' catalogue, the second of them is its twin. It too relies – albeit this time only implicitly – on Homer's authority for the brotherhood of Zeus, Poseidon and Hades. But instead of Poseidon, the focus of Sextus' opening syllogism,

¹² Couissin, *art. cit.* 43 says that three of the sorites arguments 'sont communs, sous quelques réserves' between Sextus and Cicero, but correctly concedes (*ib.* 44) that they 'ne coïncident jamais réellement'.

¹³ Cic. *ND* 3.43-4: 'quando enim me in hunc locum deduxit oratio, docebo meliora me didicisse de colendis dis immortalibus iure pontificio et more maiorum capedunculis his, quas Numa nobis reliquit, de quibus in illa aureola oratiuncula dicit Laelius, quam rationibus Stoicorum. si enim vos sequar, dic, quid ei respondeam, qui me sic roget: "si di sunt, suntne etiam Nymphae deae? Si Nymphae, Panisci etiam et Satyri; hi autem non sunt; ne Nymphae quidem igitur. At earum templa sunt publice vota et dedicata. Ne ceteri quidem ergo di, quorum templa sunt dedicata. age porro: Iovem et Neptunum deum numeras; ergo etiam Orcus frater eorum deus, et illi, qui fluere apud inferos dicuntur, Acheron, Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon; tum Charon, tum Cerberus di putandi. at id quidem repudiandum; ne Orcus quidem igitur; quid dicitis ergo de fratribus?" haec Carneades aiebat, non ut deos tolleret — quid enim philosopho minus conveniens —, sed ut Stoicos nihil de dis explicare convinceret.'

it picks on the third brother, Hades, and as a result, instead of passing through diminishingly divine-seeming terrestrial manifestations of water, it does so with the *underground* waterways and allied beings. Clearly the Sextan and the Ciceronian argument originated as a closely linked pair, and can legitimately be compared on that basis.

Notice then how in Cicero the material has been reworked in order to provide arguments targeted specifically at the Stoics.

First, Cotta's attack on Stoic theology is explicit – hardly a surprise in itself, since his speech is precisely a reply to Balbus' exposition of Stoic theology in book 2. His critique is reinforced by contrasting Stoic theology unfavourably with the traditional religion Cotta himself has learned in his role as priest. His Academic stance in this book is a form of fideism: in his eyes religious faith is superior to the use of reason,¹⁴ and it is Stoicism that epitomises the failed attempt to found religion on reason.

Second, this targeting of the Stoics has had a visible impact on the style and content of the arguments themselves. Their syllogistic structure has been relaxed, even abandoned, one result being that neither these two nor any of the other arguments reported by Cicero any longer has an explicitly atheistic conclusion. Instead, the arguments are so worded as to generate internal problems for Stoicism. How, for example, are *the Stoics* going to explain the separation of the divine Nymphs from the non-divine Satyrs? Or the separation of the divine Zeus and Poseidon from the (arguably) non-divine Hades, their brother?

However, even in this revised form the arguments do not target specific doctrinal points of Stoic theology. No recognisably Stoic or anti-Stoic premises are invoked in them. The Stoics are treated as vulnerable merely because they are a school that assumes theology to be an area in which reasoned argument is possible, and the fallibilist and/or fideist Cotta intends to show what intractable difficulties that assumption gets them into.¹⁵

This rewriting of the arguments has the merit, from the Philonian Academy's point of view, of saving Carneades from appearing to side with atheism, just as he had had to be saved from appearing to disparage justice in his scandalous speech of 155 BC. Any historical attempt to recover Carneades' own philosophical stance and motivation will, I conclude, do much better to work with Sextus' evidence than with Cicero's.

I set out next the overall structure of the Sextus passage, with some correspondences in Cicero marked in the right-hand column:

¹⁴ Moreover, this fideistic stance is clearly formulated as a proper application of Platonic tradition. At *ND* 3.5-6, Cotta proudly emphasises his reliance on ancestral teaching about religion in preference to the guidance of Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus; and he closes with the following words: 'There, Balbus, you have the opinions of Cotta, a priest. Now make me understand your opinions. For from you, who are a philosopher, I ought to receive a reasoned account of religion, whereas our ancestors I ought to believe even though they have given no reasoned account.' There is an echo here of *Timaeus* 40d-e, where we are advised by Plato's speaker to accept the traditional poetic accounts of the Olympian gods, even though they cannot be subject to any kind of reasoning in the way that the stellar and other cosmic gods are. In Philo's Academy, the policy of fallibilism was undoubtedly founded in part on an appeal to the authority of the *Timaeus*, with its reliance on an εἰκῶς λόγος, and here we can detect a hint at how that Platonic input was worked out in detail when it came to the uniquely delicate subject of traditional deities.

¹⁵ That the Stoics in particular should be his target for this is to some extent an accident of history. Metrodorus did, we know, interpret at least some of Carneades' arguments as shaped by the need to combat the Stoics, so it is likely that Cicero already for that reason inherited this material in the anti-Stoic form we find it in. And of course that is the form in which it best serves his own purposes in *De natura deorum* 3, which is set up to be precisely the Academic reply to Stoic theology.

Sextus Empiricus, M. 9.138-90	Cicero, ND 3
138-147 all living body is subject to wear and tear [Carneades cited, 140]	29-34 [explicitly from Carneades, 29] all living body is subject to wear and tear
148-151 dilemmatic arguments 148-50 is god finite or infinite? (And moving/stationary) 151 is god bodily or non-bodily?	
152-75 to be happy god must have all the virtues, but he cannot have ... 152-7 endurance 158-60 courage 161 magnanimity 162-6 wisdom 167-70 deliberative soundness (<i>euboulia</i>) 171-3 expertise (<i>technē</i>) 174-5 moderation (<i>sōphrosunē</i>)	38-9 god cannot have virtue: prudence, intelligence, justice, moderation, courage
176-81 More dilemmatic arguments 176-7 Does god have virtue or not? 178-9 Does god have speech or not? 180-1 Is god bodily or non-bodily?	
182-90 sorites arguments (selected from Clitomachus' report of Carneades)	43-52 sorites arguments (attributed to Carneades)

Surveying a wide range of these Carneadean arguments helps confirm that they do not have a specifically Stoic target.¹⁶ Let me illustrate the point with an initial focus on Sextus' first section (138-47).

The opening move (138), prefatory to the whole group of arguments, is to establish that, if there are gods, they are living beings (ζῷα). This premise can be formally established by a quasi-Stoic syllogism, we are told: a living being is superior to a non-living being; nothing is superior to god; therefore god is a living being.¹⁷ But in any case, the passage continues,¹⁸ the premise that god is a living being is common ground, being endorsed by ordinary people and intellectuals alike. That passing suggestion of a quasi-Stoic proof that god is a living being will turn out to have been the one explicit reference to Stoicism in the entire passage. The ensuing appeal to authority refers specifically to the beliefs of 'ordinary life (ὁ βίος), the poets, and the majority of the best philosophers'.¹⁹ These are, we might say, the 'standard' views or (to borrow the Aristotelian term) *endoxa* on which the ensuing arguments will largely rely. Stoics will no doubt be included among the last group named, 'the majority of

¹⁶ There has been less comment on the status of these other arguments than on that of the sorites arguments. For the view that they too are primarily anti-Stoic, see esp. Long, *art. cit.*

¹⁷ SE M 9.138: εἴπερ τοίνυν εἰσὶ θεοὶ, ζῷά εἰσιν· καὶ ᾧ λόγῳ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς ἐδίδασκον, ὅτι ζῷόν ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος, τῷ αὐτῷ χρησάμενος ἄν τις κατασκευάζει, ὅτι καὶ ὁ θεός ἐστι ζῷον. τὸ γὰρ ζῷον τοῦ μὴ ζῷου κρείττον ἐστιν, οὐδὲν δὲ κρείττον ἐστι θεοῦ· ζῷον ἄρα ἐστιν ὁ θεός, ...

¹⁸ (*ib.*) ... συμπαραλαμβανομένης τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τῆς κοινῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐννοίας, εἶγε καὶ ὁ βίος καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ καὶ ἡ τῶν ἀρίστων φιλοσόφων πληθὺς μαρτυρεῖ τῷ ζῷον εἶναι τὸν θεόν. ὥστε σφῆζεσθαι τὰ τῆς ἀκολουθίας.

¹⁹ For god as a ζῷον, see e.g. Plato, *Ti.* 39e, Aristotle, *Met.* A 7, 1072b29, Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 123; DL 7.147 (Stoic).

the best philosophers’, but as we will see they are not especially privileged among them.

The first substantive argument to follow maintains that god, as a living being, must have at least the five senses that humans have:

For if man has a greater abundance of senses he will turn out to be better than god. Rather, as Carneades said, along with these five senses that everyone has we ought to ascribe an additional abundance of them to god, so that he may be able to apprehend a larger number of things, far from depriving him of the five.²⁰

The ascription to Carneades by name is not hard to explain. Whereas, as we shall see, most of the premises will be drawn from established *endoxa*, the imaginative idea that god should if anything have *additional* senses beyond our five was an innovation, presented as Carneades’ own positive proposal, and is duly noted as such by Sextus.

This argument and the next three (139-47) all go on to draw anti-theistic consequences from the interim premise that god possesses at least our five senses. Use of the various sense-modalities, it is argued, in its very nature involves unwelcome as well as welcome sensory experiences, for example of bitter as well as sweet; these unwelcome sensations involve disturbance (ὄχλησις), which is a change for the worse; and what can change for the worse can eventually perish. Hence god is perishable, which conflicts with the common conception of god. Therefore there are no gods.

So far the considerations invoked have been fairly generic. But at 144-5, where one particular sense modality is addressed, namely sight, we find specific philosophical theories being invoked, and they are not Stoic:²¹

It is possible also to base the argument more effectively on a single sense, such as sight. For if the divine exists, it is a living being. If it is a living being, it sees: ‘Whole he sees, whole he thinks, whole he hears’ [Xenophanes B24]. But since white is that which is divisive of sight, black that which is compressive of sight, god is divided and compressed with respect to his sight. But if he is susceptible to division and compression, he is also susceptible to destruction. Therefore if the divine exists, it is destructible. But the divine is not destructible. Therefore it does not exist.

The earlier invocation of ‘the poets, and the majority of the best philosophers’ as chosen authorities is amply followed up here, with a verse quotation from

²⁰ *ib.* 139-40, εἴγ’ ἄρ’ εἰσὶ θεοὶ, ζῶν εἰσιν. εἰ δὲ ζῶν εἰσιν, αἰσθάνονται· πᾶν γὰρ ζῶν αἰσθήσεως μετοχὴ νοεῖται ζῶν. εἰ δὲ αἰσθάνονται, καὶ πικράζονται καὶ γλυκάζονται· οὐ γὰρ δι’ ἄλλης μὲν τινοῦ αἰσθήσεως ἀντιλαμβάνονται τῶν αἰσθητῶν, οὐχὶ δὲ καὶ διὰ τῆς γεύσεως. ὅθεν καὶ τὸ περικόπτειν ταύτην ἢ τινα αἴσθησιν ἄλλην ἀπλῶς τοῦ θεοῦ παντελῶς ἐστὶν ἀπίθανον· περιττοτέρας γὰρ αἰσθήσεις ἔχων ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀμείνων αὐτοῦ γενήσεται, δέον μᾶλλον, ὡς ἔλεγεν ὁ Καρνεάδης, σὺν ταῖς πᾶσιν ὑπαρχούσαις πέντε ταύταις αἰσθήσεσι καὶ ἄλλας αὐτῷ περισσοτέρας προσμαρτυρεῖν, ἴν’ ἔχη πλειόνων ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι πραγμάτων, ἀλλὰ μὴ τῶν πέντε ἀφαιρεῖν. I see no reason to emend, with Bekker, to περιττοτέρας γὰρ αἰσθήσεις ἔχων [ὁ ἄνθρωπος] ἀμείνων αὐτοῦ γενήσεται, which Bury accepts, translating ‘For the more numerous the senses he has, the better he will be’.

²¹ ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ μιᾶς αἰσθήσεως ἐξεργαστικώτερον τιθέναι τὸν λόγον, οἷον τῆς ὀράσεως. εἰ γὰρ ἔστι τὸ θεῖον, ζῶν ἐστίν. εἰ <δὲ> ζῶν ἐστίν, ὄρᾳ [ὄλος] οὖλος γὰρ ὄρᾳ, οὖλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὖλος δὲ τ’ ἀκούει. εἰ δὲ ὄρᾳ, καὶ λευκὰ ὄρᾳ καὶ μέλανα. ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ λευκὸν μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ διακριτικὸν ὄψεως, μέλαν δὲ τὸ συγχυτικὸν ὄψεως, διακρίνεται τὴν ὄψιν καὶ συγχέεται ὁ θεός. εἰ δὲ διακρίσεως καὶ συγχύσεως ἐστὶ δεκτικός, καὶ φθορᾶς ἔσται δεκτικός. τοῖνον εἰ ἔστι τὸ θεῖον, φθορτὸν ἐστίν. οὐχὶ δὲ γε φθορτὸν ἐστίν· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν. With Bury, I accept Heintz’s deletion of ὄλος after ὄρᾳ in 144. It is ungrammatical, irrelevant to the argument, and easily explained as a virtual dittography of the ensuing οὖλος.

Xenophanes in supplementary support of the initial claim the god sees, followed by Plato's formal physical definition (*Tim.* 67e) of white and black as respectively that which is divisive and that which is compressive of sight.

The jury of philosophical authorities is further enlarged in the immediately ensuing argument (146-7),²² which starts from the recognisably Aristotelian premise that perception is a 'kind of alteration' – ἑτεροίωσις τις, immediately recalling *De anima* 2.5 (416b34, ἀλλοίωσις τις). If god is susceptible to alteration, the argument continues, he is susceptible to deterioration, and hence ultimately to destruction. This principle – that if god were, *per impossibile*, to change he would deteriorate – may look in need of defence, but it is worth noting in mitigation that it had been endorsed without additional argument by both Plato (*Rep.* 2.381b-c) and Aristotle (*Met.* Α 9, 1074b25-7).

By contrast, god's unchangeability is not, and could not be, a Stoic tenet, since all the Stoic gods other than Zeus do in fact undergo radical change, indeed destruction, in the periodic conflagration.²³ This is itself a further reason for assuming the Stoics not to be prominent among Carneades' targets here. Our present group of arguments is united in its aim of showing that a living god would, contrary to the common conception, have to be destructible. If the Stoics were Carneades' main target he would have the much easier, indeed almost too easy, task of simply pointing out that their concession of divine destructibility is in direct conflict with the basic conception of god.²⁴

I shall pass fairly quickly over the next group of arguments (148-51),²⁵ which are dilemmatic in form: is god finite or infinite, and, again, corporeal or incorporeal? Both horns of each dilemma are shown to cause problems. For example, a finite god would be only a part of, and therefore inferior to, the entire universe; but an infinite god could not be alive, since soul holds a living being together by means of two motions between the centre and the extremities, and an infinite being can have neither centre nor extremities. Here we finally have a citation of a genuinely Stoic premise.

²² καὶ μὴν ἡ αἰσθησις ἑτεροίωσις τις ἐστίν· ἀμήχανον γὰρ τὸ δι' αἰσθήσεώς τινος ἀντισταμβανόμενον μὴ ἑτεροιοῦσθαι, ἀλλὰ οὕτω διακεῖσθαι, ὡς πρὸ τῆς ἀντιλήψεως διέκειτο. εἰ οὖν αἰσθάνεται ὁ θεός, καὶ ἑτεροιοῦται· εἰ δὲ ἑτεροιοῦται, ἑτεροίωσεως δεκτικός ἐστι καὶ μεταβολῆς· δεκτικός δὲ ὢν μεταβολῆς πάντως καὶ τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον μεταβολῆς ἔσται δεκτικός. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ φθαρτός ἐστιν. ἄτοπον δὲ γε τὸ λέγειν τὸν θεὸν φθαρτὸν ὑπάρχειν· ἄτοπον ἄρα καὶ τὸ ἀξιοῦν εἶναι τοῦτον.

²³ Cf. *SVF* 2.1049-60, a section which von Arnim headed 'Deum mutabilem esse'. Particularly relevant are the verbatim quotations from Chrysippus at *SVF* 2.1049. The significance of this problem, that the Stoic gods are not indestructible, is well brought out by Long, *art. cit.* 284-7. I part company with him only regarding his solution, which is to single out a Stoic target, Antipater of Tarsus, who went against the trend and did maintain the indestructibility of god. If as I am urging we set aside Long's starting point, 'The anti-Stoic tenor of these arguments is obvious' (283), I suggest that no such remedy is necessary.

²⁴ Cf. Plutarch's Academic or Academic-inspired criticism of the Stoics on this score at *Comm. not.* 1075A-C.

²⁵ πρὸς τοῦτοις· εἰ ἔστι τι θεῖον, ἦτοι πεπερασμένον ἐστὶν ἢ ἄπειρον. καὶ ἄπειρον μὲν οὐκ ἂν εἴη, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἀκίνητον ἂν εἴη καὶ ἄψυχον. εἰ γὰρ κινεῖται τὸ ἄπειρον, τόπον ἐκ τόπου μετέρχεται· τόπον δὲ ἐκ τόπου μετερχόμενον ἐν τόπῳ ἐστίν, ἐν τόπῳ δὲ ὄν πεπερασται. εἰ ἄρα ἐστὶ τι ἄπειρον, ἀκίνητόν ἐστιν· ἢ εἴπερ κινεῖται, οὐκ ἐστὶν ἄπειρον. ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ ἄψυχόν ἐστιν· εἰ γὰρ ὑπὸ ψυχῆς συνέχεται, πάντως ἀπὸ τῶν μέσων ἐπὶ τὰ πέρατα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν περάτων ἐπὶ τὰ μέσα φερόμενον συνέχεται. ἐν δὲ ἀπείρῳ οὐδὲν ἐστὶ μέσον οὐδὲ πέρας· ὥστε οὐδὲ ἔμψυχόν ἐστὶ τὸ ἄπειρον. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο εἰ ἄπειρόν ἐστι τὸ θεῖον, οὔτε κινεῖται οὔτε ἔμψυχόν ἐστιν. κινεῖται δὲ τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἔμψυχίας ἀξιοῦται μετέχειν· οὐκ ἄρα ἄπειρόν ἐστι τὸ θεῖον. καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ πεπερασμένον. ἐπεὶ γὰρ τὸ πεπερασμένον τοῦ ἀπείρου μέρος ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ ὅλον τοῦ μέρους κρείττον ἐστὶ, δῆλον ὡς τὸ ἄπειρον τοῦ θεῖου κρείττον ἔσται καὶ κρατήσῃ τῆς θείας φύσεως. ἄτοπον δὲ τὸ λέγειν θεοῦ τι κρείττον καὶ κρατοῦν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ φύσεως· τοίνυν οὐδὲ πεπερασμένον ἐστὶ τὸ θεῖον. ἀλλ' εἰ μὴτε ἄπειρόν ἐστι μῆτε πεπερασμένον, παρὰ δὲ ταῦτα οὐδὲν ἐστὶ τρίτον νοεῖν, οὐδὲν ἔσται τὸ θεῖον. καὶ μὴν εἰ ἔστι τι τὸ θεῖον, ἦτοι σῶμα ἐστὶν ἢ ἀσώματον· οὔτε δὲ ἀσώματόν ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ ἄψυχόν ἐστι καὶ ἀναίσθητον καὶ οὐδὲν δυνάμενον ἐνεργεῖν τὸ ἀσώματον, οὔτε σῶμα, ἐπεὶ πᾶν σῶμα μεταβλητόν τε ἐστὶ καὶ φθαρτόν, ἄφθαρτον δὲ τὸ θεῖον· οὐ τοίνυν ὑπάρχει τὸ θεῖον.

The two-way tensile motion is the one which according to Stoic physics is manifested by the portion of *pneuma* holding any discrete body together.²⁶

Thus in this presumed Carneadean text the Stoics have not been altogether forgotten as a source of *endoxa*, even if they are not being privileged above others. However, the inspiration of the arguments themselves looks more Aristotelian than Stoic. The dilemma as to whether god is finite or infinite originated from *Physics* 8.10 and *Metaphysics* Λ 7 (1073a5-11), even if Aristotle's own favoured solution – that god is altogether unextended – is quietly left aside in the argument reported by Sextus.

A similar division of labour between Aristotle and the Stoics recurs in the immediately following set of arguments (152-75), concerning god's virtues. These arguments too appear to be inspired by Aristotle, specifically by *Nicomachean ethics* 10.8 (1178b7-18), where it is maintained that god cannot be credited with moral virtues, the exercise of which would lower his existence below its contemplative best. However, this time the specific premises of the arguments are largely borrowed from the Stoics. Consider the first argument (152-7):

If the divine exists, it is certainly also a living being. If it is a living being, it is certainly both completely virtuous and happy (and happiness is impossible without virtue). If it is completely virtuous, it also has all the virtues. But it is not the case that, while it has all the virtues, it does not have self-control (*enkrateia*) and endurance (*karteria*). And it is not the case that, while it has these virtues, there are not some things that are hard for god to abstain from and hard for him to endure. For self-control is an insuperable disposition for things done in accordance with right reason, or a virtue which places us above the things thought to be hard to abstain from. For self-controlled behaviour, they say, is not that of one who abstains from an old woman on the brink of death, but that of one who is able to enjoy Lais or Phryne or some woman like them, but then abstains from doing so. And endurance is knowledge of things to be borne and not to be borne, or a virtue which places us above the things thought to be hard to bear. For the person who uses endurance is he who is being cut and burnt but then endures it, not he who is drinking honeyed wine. Therefore there will be some things that are hard for god to bear and hard for him to abstain from. For unless there are, he will not possess these virtues, namely self-control and endurance. And if he does not possess these virtues, since there is nothing between virtue and vice, he will have the vices opposed to these virtues, softness and lack of control. For just as one who does not have health has sickness, so too one who does not have self-control and endurance is in the opposite states, namely vices, which is an absurd thing to say about god. And if there are some things that are hard for god to abstain from and hard for him to bear, there are some things that also change him for the worse and produce disturbance in him. But if that is so, god is susceptible to disturbance and to change for the worse, and hence also to destruction. So if god exists, he is destructible. But not the second, therefore not the first.²⁷

²⁶ Evidence in Long and Sedley, *op. cit.* 47I-J. Although the particular kind of *pneuma* at issue here is of a very high grade, psychic *pneuma*, the same point could have been made about the 'nature' holding together a plant, or even the *hexis* holding together a rock. The outward movement is said to generate qualities, the internal movement cohesion.

²⁷ εἶγε μὴν ἔστι τὸ θεῖον, πάντως καὶ ζῶν ἔστιν. εἰ δὲ ζῶν ἔστιν, πάντως καὶ πανάρετόν ἐστι καὶ εὐδαιμόνιον (εὐδαιμονία γὰρ χωρὶς ἀρετῆς οὐ δύναται ὑποστῆναι). εἰ δὲ πανάρετός ἐστι, καὶ πάσας ἔχει τὰς ἀρετάς. ἀλλ' οὐ πάσας μὲν ἔχει τὰς ἀρετάς, οὐχὶ δὲ γε καὶ ἐγκράτειαν ἔχει καὶ καρτερίαν. οὐχὶ δὲ γε ταύτας μὲν ἔχει τὰς ἀρετάς, οὐχὶ δὲ γε ἔστι τινὰ δυσασόσχετα καὶ δυσεγκαρτέρητα τῷ θεῷ

This complex piece of reasoning, especially in its closing moves, has enough in common with the Carneadean arguments we inspected earlier to encourage the common assumption that it too is Carneadean.²⁸ However, despite the argument's continuity with what precedes, and despite the Aristotelian inspiration of the question it addresses, within the current sequence of arguments it represents a new departure, to the extent that it draws its premises exclusively and emphatically from Stoicism.

The inclusion of the Cynic qualities *enkrateia* and *karteria* as virtues is itself a recognisably Stoic thesis, representing a view pointedly rejected by Aristotle (*NE* 7.1,1145a35-b2). The definitions of these virtues are, moreover, lifted verbatim from Stoic formulations. Famously Stoic too is the principle that there is no state intermediate between virtue and vice. There are even some specifically Stoic touches added to the dialectical form of argument: two negated conjunctions in place of the usual conditionals,²⁹ and the closing abbreviated form 'But not the second, therefore not the first', the form technically called *logotropos* in Stoic logic. Altogether, the spotlight has here been turned emphatically onto the Stoics. And there it largely remains throughout the entire sequence of arguments about divine virtue (152-75).

Note, however, a subtlety in how the Stoic material is used. The amusing illustration of virtuous abstention from sex with the beautiful Lais or Phryne is expressed with a favoured Stoic example, but, significantly, the Stoic paradigm is here reversed to make a directly counter-Stoic claim. The authentic Stoic paradox is that self-controlled abstention from making love to an ugly old woman is in fact just as virtuous as abstention from sleeping with one of these voluptuous courtesans.³⁰ Its reversal here must reflect Carneades' policy of arguing from *endoxa*: the Stoic paradox would not have the appropriate degree of credibility, so he works instead from the *doxa* that it subverts. Thus although the argument is built out of exclusively Stoic materials, it does not assume that the Stoics will concede its premises.

Nevertheless, this apparently exclusive concentration on materials drawn from a single school contrasts with the more eclectic use of *endoxa* that we have encountered in other arguments. Assuming the group of arguments based on god's virtue to stem from Carneades, we must ask how radical a change of methodology this amounts to. In my opinion, not very radical. The result is not, for example, an attack on Stoic theology in particular, but still on theism as such. The general problem about how

ἐγκράτεια γάρ ἐστι διάθεσις ἀνυπέρβατος τῶν κατ' ὀρθὸν λόγον γιγνομένων, ἢ ἀρετὴ ὑπεράνω ποιούσα ἡμᾶς τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι δυσυποσχέτων· ἐγκρατεύεται γάρ, φασίν, οὐχ ὁ θανατιώσης γραδὸς ἀπεχόμενος, ἀλλ' ὁ Λαΐδος καὶ Φρύνης ἢ τινοσ τοιαύτης δυνάμενος ἀπολαῦσαι, εἶτα ἀπεχόμενος. καρτερία δὲ ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη ὑπομενετέων καὶ οὐχ ὑπομενετέων, ἢ ἀρετὴ ὑπεράνω ποιούσα ἡμᾶς τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι δυσυπομενήτων· χρῆται γὰρ καρτερίᾳ ὁ τεμνόμενος καὶ καιόμενος, εἶτα [δὲ] διακαρτερῶν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ οἰνόμελι πίνων. ἔσται οὖν τινα τῷ θεῷ δυσυπομένητα καὶ δυσυπόσχετα. εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἔσται, οὐχὶ ταύτας ἔξει τὰς ἀρετάς, τουτέστι τὴν ἐγκράτειαν καὶ τὴν καρτερίαν. εἰ δὲ ταύτας οὐκ ἔχει τὰς ἀρετάς, ἐπεὶ μεταξύ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας οὐδὲν ἔστι, τὰς ἀντιθέτους ταῖσδε ταῖς ἀρεταῖς ἔξει κακίας ὥσπερ τὴν μαλακίαν καὶ τὴν ἀκρασίαν· καθάπερ γὰρ ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὴν ὑγίαν νόσον ἔχει, οὕτως ὁ μὴ ἔχων ἐγκράτειαν καὶ καρτερίαν ἐν ταῖς ἀντικειμέναις ἐστὶ κακίας, ὅπερ ἄτοπον ἐπὶ θεοῦ λέγεσθαι. εἰ δὲ ἔστι τινα δυσυπόσχετα καὶ δυσυπομένητα τῷ θεῷ, ἔστι τινα καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τὸ χειρὸν αὐτοῦ μεταβλητικὰ καὶ ὀχλήσεως ποιητικὰ. ἀλλ' εἰ τοῦτο, δεκτικός ἐστὶν ὀχλήσεως ὁ θεὸς καὶ τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ χειρὸν μεταβολῆς, διὸ καὶ φθορᾶς. ὥστε εἴπερ ἔστιν ὁ θεός, φθαρτός ἐστίν· οὐχὶ δὲ τὸ δεύτερον· οὐκ ἄρα τὸ πρῶτον.

²⁸ Recall too that these arguments about virtue are briefly replicated in Cicero, thus confirming that they are likely to be Academic in origin.

²⁹ Cf. 169 for another negated conjunction in this same set of arguments, and *Alex. Fat.* 207.5-21 (*SVF* 2.103) for Stoic use of negated conjunctions alongside conditionals in chain syllogisms.

³⁰ See K. Algra, 'Chrysippus on virtuous abstention from ugly old women (Plutarch *SR* 1038E-1039A)', *CQ* 40 (1990), 450-8, who shows that the premise used here actually inverts the authentic Stoic paradox.

gods can have moral virtues is after all as threatening to Platonic and Epicurean as it is to Stoic theology. And the remaining arguments in the same group target virtues, such as courage and prudence, recognised by all these schools and enshrined in popular morality as well. The effect of invoking definitions and other premises drawn from Stoic ethics is not, we may suppose, to limit the target to Stoic theology, but to found the argument on the most up-to-date and precise set of ethical definitions available in Carneades' day.

This explanation is confirmed by the fact that, whereas the opening argument chooses to work entirely with Stoic materials, a later one in the group, despite once more relying on Stoicism for the actual definition of the virtue in question, includes an admixture of Epicurean premises as well. This argument (162-6)³¹ starts by observing that, if god has all the virtues, he has prudence (φρόνησις), defined as 'knowledge of things good, bad and indifferent'. Therefore, since pain is an indifferent, god must know the nature of pain. Thus far we have a Stoic definition, followed by a recognizably Stoic classification (pain as an indifferent).³²

In its second phase, the argument continues as follows. If god knows the nature of pain, he has experienced it: otherwise he would no more have the concept of pain than a person blind from birth has the concept of colour, or than we can know what gout feels like without having suffered from it ourselves. It should be clear that this intermediate step relies on intrinsic plausibility, not on any school doctrine.

But we now come to the third and final step, which I quote verbatim (165-6):³³

'Yes indeed,' they say, 'but although he hasn't encountered pain he has encountered pleasure, and it is from pleasure that he has the concept of pain.' But that is naïve. For, first of all, it is impossible to acquire the concept of pleasure without having experienced pain, since it is in the nature of pleasure that it is constituted by the removal of everything that causes pain. And, secondly, even if this [i.e. that god experiences pleasure without pain] is granted, it once again follows that god is destructible. For if he is susceptible to such a melting (διάχυσις), god is also susceptible to change for the worse, and is destructible. But not this last. Therefore not the original supposition.

³¹ πρὸς τούτοις· εἶπερ πάσας ἔχει τὰς ἀρετὰς ὁ θεός, καὶ φρόνησιν ἔχει. εἰ φρόνησιν, ἔχει καὶ ἐπιστήμην ἀγαθῶν τε καὶ κακῶν καὶ ἀδιαφόρων. εἰ δὲ ἐπιστήμην ἔχει τούτων, οἶδε ποῖά ἐστι τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ καὶ ἀδιάφορα. ἐπεὶ οὖν καὶ ὁ πόνος τῶν ἀδιαφόρων ἐστίν, οἶδε καὶ τὸν πόνον καὶ ποῖός τις ὑπάρχει τὴν φύσιν. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ περιπέτωκεν αὐτῷ· μὴ περιπεσῶν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἔσχε νόησιν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' ὃν τρόπον ὁ μὴ περιπεπωκὼς λευκῷ χρώματι καὶ μέλανι διὰ τὸ ἐκ γενετῆς εἶναι πηρὸς οὐ δύναται νόησιν ἔχειν χρώματος, οὕτως οὐδὲ θεὸς μὴ περιπεπωκὼς πόνῳ δύναται νόησιν ἔχειν τούτου. ὁπότε γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ περιπεσόντες πολλάκις τούτῳ τὴν ιδιότητα τῆς περι τοὺς ποδαλγικούς ἀλγηδόνας οὐ δυνάμεθα τρανῶς γνωρίζειν, οὐδὲ διηγουμένον ἡμῖν τινῶν συμβαλεῖν, οὐδὲ παρ' αὐτῶν τῶν πεπονθῶτων συμφώνως ἀκοῦσαι διὰ τὸ ἄλλους ἄλλως ταύτην ἐρμηνεύειν καὶ τοὺς μὲν στροφῆ, τοὺς δὲ κλάσει, τοὺς δὲ νύξει λέγειν ὁμοιον αὐτοῖς παρακολουθεῖν, ἢ πού γε θεὸς μὴδ' ὅλως πόνῳ περιπεπωκὼς <οὐ> δύναται πόνου νόησιν ἔχειν. νῆ Δί', ἀλλὰ πόνῳ μὲν, φασίν, οὐ περιπέτωκεν, ἡδονῇ δὲ, κάκ ταύτης ἐκεῖνον νενόηκεν. ὅπερ ἦν εὐήθης. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀμήχανον μὴ πειραθέντα πόνου νόησιν ἡδονῆς λαβεῖν· κατὰ γὰρ τὴν παντὸς τοῦ ἀλγύνοντος ὑπεξαιρέσειν συνίστασθαι πέφυκεν. εἶτα καὶ τούτου συγχωρηθέντος πάλιν ἀκολουθεῖ τὸ φθαρτὸν εἶναι τὸν θεόν. εἰ γὰρ τῆς τοιαύτης διαχύσεως δεκτικός ἐστὶ, καὶ τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ χειρὸν μεταβολῆς ἔσται δεκτικός ὁ θεὸς καὶ φθαρτός ἐστὶν. οὐχὶ δὲ γε τοῦτο, ὥστε οὐδὲ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς.

³² It is the Stoic definition that does the real work of showing that wisdom must include knowledge of pain: that same result would have followed regardless of which of the three classes pain were deemed to belong to. Nevertheless, from the point of view of methodology it is significant that the second of the two conjoined premises is borrowed from the same school as the first, where it would have been easy to declare pain a bad by borrowing either from another school or from popular belief.

³³ For Greek text, see the larger print at the end of note 31 above. The conceptual basis of this argument is closely studied by J. Warren, 'What god didn't know (Sextus Empiricus *AM IX* 162-166)', in D. Machuca (ed.), *New Essays on Ancient Pyrrhonism* (Leiden, 2011), 41-68.

Stoicism has receded as suddenly as it appeared, and the source of *endoxa* is now unmistakably the Epicureans. The proposal that god enjoys pure pleasure already sounds Epicurean, and thoroughly un-Stoic. Although it has Aristotelian credentials as well (e.g. *Met.* Λ 7, 1072b16-18), the next move puts it beyond doubt that the source envisaged is Epicurean: ‘it is in the nature of pleasure that it is constituted by the removal of everything that causes pain’ (κατὰ γὰρ τὴν παντὸς τοῦ ἀλγύνοντος ὑπεξαίρεσιν συνίστασθαι πέφυκεν). This identification of pleasure with the removal of all pain is not only a uniquely Epicurean tenet, it is here even pointedly cast in the language of Epicurus’ *Kuriiai doxai* 3 (ὁρος τοῦ μεγέθους τῶν ἡδονῶν ἢ παντὸς τοῦ ἀλγοῦντος ὑπεξαίρεσις). Note however how Carneades’ rewording suppresses Epicurus’ most controversial claim, that the removal of pain is the ‘limit’ of pleasure, i.e. that there is no greater pleasure than the total absence of pain: the premise’s endoxic appeal is thus suitably broadened.

Finally, the argument’s closing identification of pleasure as a ‘melting’ ingeniously brings the two schools – the Stoic and the Epicurean – into partnership. The terminology of *διάχυσις* as applied to pleasure was Epicurean,³⁴ but was taken up by the Stoics as well.³⁵ Whereas the Epicureans of course regarded this melting as a good state, the Stoics classified it negatively as a passion, explaining that what melts away is nothing less than virtue itself.³⁶ Undoubtedly the attribution of hedonic ‘melting’ to the gods is here primarily Epicurean in spirit, since it is represented as something admirable and divine, but the choice of terminology suggests that the argument, taken as a whole, is drawing its material from an unholy alliance of Stoics and Epicureans.

Such a strategy goes beyond, but is fully in keeping with, what we have discerned again and again in the Carneadean arguments: not an attack on one school’s theology, but an attack on theism as such, borrowing its endoxic premises eclectically from a mixture of philosophical and other sources.

Provided that the various endoxic premises within a single argument are not actually inconsistent with each other – and as far as I can see they are not – the method makes obvious sense. Carneades’ ultimate aim is to find equally strong arguments for and against the existence of god. It is in the very nature of this enterprise, and indeed of Carneades’ basic epistemological stance, that neither side can attain cognitive certainty. What we would expect of him is that each of the two opposed positions should be shown to be equally ‘persuasive’ (*πιθανόν, probable*). And for that he needs to start from premises which themselves have a reasonable degree of persuasiveness. The kinds of *endoxa* we have seen him deploying appear extremely well suited to the task.

Although there are many more of these theological arguments awaiting examination, I have by now probably said enough to rest my case. Carneades’ theological arguments, I conclude, were not attacks on the Stoics, but dialectical defences of atheism, drawing on a broad range of *endoxa*, only some of them Stoic, and aimed at promoting suspension of judgement about the existence of god.

³⁴ Cf. Plut. *Non posse* 1092D.

³⁵ Cf. Galen, *PHP* 4.2.4-6 where the equation of pleasure with *διάχυσις* is attributed jointly to Epicurus and Zeno of Citium.

³⁶ DL 7.114.