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CORPSES, LIVING BODIES AND STUFFS Pre-Platonic Concepts of σώμα

LASSI JAKOLA*

ἄθάναται δὲ βροτοῖς ἄμέραι,
σῶμα δ' ἔστι θνατόν.
Pindar, *Parth* 1, 14–15

Abstract: Taking Plato's uses of the noun σώμα as a starting point, this article presents an overview of the development of the Greek concept of body/σῶμα from Homer to the early 4th Century BCE by examining the uses of the word σώμα in Greek poetry and literature. Four stations of the term's semantic development are identified: (i) σώμα as a corpse or a body of a moribund living being, (ii) σώμα as a living mortal being, (iii) σώμα in contrast with its parts and (iv) σώμα in abstraction. It is argued that the development may be viewed as a continuous extension of the scope of the term, where none of the previous uses become obsolete. The Stations (iii) and (iv) also testify of an emergence of a new, abstract criterion for the use of the term. This conceptual history also partly explains the multifaceted use of the word in the 4th century BCE, setting the stage for further developments.

* This article is based on a presentation given in *Platonsällskapets* gathering Σῶμα / Kropp, organized in June 2019 in Reykjavik. I thank all the participants for illuminating discussions. Professors Holger Thesleff and Thomas Buchheim both read and commented in detail an earlier draft and encouraged me to develop my sketchy presentation into an article. I am grateful for their help and support. I am also indebted to Jan-Ivar Lindén, Mika Perälä and Alberto Emiliani as well as two anonymous reviewers, whose suggestions have considerably sharpened my argument.

1. Methodological introduction

Not all scientific and philosophical concepts are concepts known to each of us from everyday life. Some important concepts, however, belong simultaneously to all these three categories. One example is the concept of *body*: all animals and plants have a *living body*, and we continuously encounter in our surroundings *non-living bodies* of various kinds, e.g. natural objects – like stones, minerals or heaps of clay –, and artefacts – like chairs, pens or wine bottles. Indeed, as spatio-temporal particulars, bodies seem to constitute a pervasive category in our basic conceptual scheme. In professional circles, we also speak of a *body of knowledge*, comprising of the most basic concepts, activities and pieces of information of a given professional domain. In philosophy, one may analyse the specific features of *living bodily experience* or contrast *bodily existence* with spiritual levels of being. And from very early on, scientific thinkers have strived to understand and define the nature of *physical bodies* in their own right. The question concerning the nature of bodies has always been closely intertwined with reflections concerning their *composition* and, hence, with basic questions concerning the nature of the material reality. Furthermore, there are interesting similarities and differences between different languages' terminology for what, in English, is referred to as bodies.¹

The concept of body has a long and winding history, which testifies of many conceptual changes. The earliest phases of this conceptual history form the topic of this essay. In this article, I trace the main lines of development of the semantics and meaning of the Greek word *σῶμα* in early literature from Homer to the early 4th century BCE. The present investigation makes no pretensions to be a comprehensive overview: I shall focus solely on the word *σῶμα* and its derivatives, and shall, for example, not treat any partial synonyms of the word. Furthermore, my approach is openly teleological: what I have chosen to

¹ In German, for example, there are words reserved exclusively both for the *living* animate body, namely 'Leib', and for the deceased body, namely 'Leiche'. Bodies in general, be they animate or inanimate, may still be referred to as 'Körper', derived from the Latin 'corpus', which was used to translate the Greek 'σῶμα'. Even more radically, the Finnish language has 'kappale' for inanimate material and geometrical bodies. But it would sound peculiar to use this word for a living body. In Finnish, words like 'keho' and 'vartalo' are reserved exclusively for living animal bodies, whereas 'ruumis' may designate both living and dead bodies but not inanimate bodies. If used of a living being, the word 'ruumis' retains strong connotations to mortality.

pinpoint is motivated by a will to understand better the conceptual roots of the later philosophical and scientific developments which become evident in the 4th century BCE, and especially so in the works of Plato and Aristotle. With an eye on Plato's conceptions of σῶματα, summed up briefly in Section 2, I have chosen to pinpoint four earlier 'stations' in the term's use, which seem, in my view, significantly to extend or add to the previous uses.

Though my aim is to investigate conceptual history, the method used in this examination is philological. In the temporal period examined in this article, we rarely encounter anything like definitions or explanations of any linguistic terms. Such explicit characterisations become more common with the emergence of technical and specialized philosophical and scientific vocabulary in the 4th century BCE, and we shall encounter such devices only at the final 'station' identified in this article.² When dealing with earlier history of concepts, our only access to their content is typically the *instances* of the corresponding words in texts preserved through a long (and highly selective) textual tradition. These instances, in turn, typically reflect the *uses* of these terms in a given socio-temporal linguistic framework. Often these uses are normative and rule-governed, i.e. based on commonly accepted and shared linguistic practices. Thus, the uses are also embedded in social contexts, which need to be considered in the philological analysis. In some cases, the uses may also be idiosyncratic – and in many cases it may be difficult to say whether they are so. In some other cases they are 'revolutionary', i.e. they may suggest significant *changes* to what was before considered correct uses of the term, or, alternatively, suggest *new* uses that will co-exist with the older ones. In such cases, we may say that the concepts in question are moulded, as the normative framework related to their uses is changed. It is precisely this kind of transitions in the uses of σῶμα that I am primarily interested in.

² In the 4th century BCE, the discussion of definition becomes the hallmark of the Socratic-Platonic philosophy. Eric Havelock (1983, 28–29) depicts the emergence of gradually specialized philosophical vocabulary as the result of the "linguistic task" undertaken by the pre-Socratic thinkers. Havelock points out that definitions of many key philosophical terms are introduced only towards the late 5th century BCE. In the wake of Havelockian ideas, Edward Schiappa and David Timmerman (2010) have shown how such definitory practices "disciplined" the discourse of rhetoric in the 4th century, simultaneously creating more specific scientific disciplines. My own approach to the conceptual history of σῶμα is methodologically indebted to this conceptually-driven approach to intellectual history.

The changes in concepts thus need to be examined on the basis of the instances of the uses of words. But what aspects of uses are important, and what kind of changes in use may be taken to imply *conceptual* changes? – In preparing this article, I have focused especially on the following three features, the changes of which may often be inferred on basis of the preserved instances:

- *Extension*. What is the *range of subjects* the term σῶμα is used of? Or: What kind of things σῶμα is *predicated* of?
- *Contrastive terms*. What is the contrary of the term σῶμα? Or: What is the term σῶμα typically *contrasted* with?
- *Criteria of use*. What are the *criteria* of being a σῶμα? Or: What other features a given thing needs to have in order to be a σῶμα?

Before moving on, I should like to acknowledge my debt to a recent volume, edited by Thomas Buchhem, David Meißner and Nora Wachsmann under the title ΣΩΜΑ. *Körperkonzepte und körperliche Existenz in der antiken Philosophie und Literatur* (2016). While the collection does not contain articles on the early history of bodies, it contains Nora Wachsmann's informative "Stellensammlung" of early instances of σῶμα in Greek literature. My overview builds on her collection. Besides mentioning typical editions, I give references to her collection with the abbreviation W, [page number].

2. ΣΩΜΑ in the 4th Century BCE: Uses in Plato

Before going back to the very beginnings, I would like to point out for orientation three features of the use of σῶμα, which are evident in the texts of the Platonic corpus (4th century BCE). The examples testify of various, and sometimes even potentially conflicting, articulations and uses of the term within a corpus of one single author. Plato's uses will provide us with a point of reference for examining the emergence of (some of) these uses in earlier texts, examined in Section 3, below.

Feature I. *Evaluative and contrastive uses of σῶμα*. In the 4th Century BCE, the word σῶμα is regularly used as a contrastive term with the word ψυχή. This

opposition is rarely a neutral one; rather, the contrast is typically an *evaluative* one, where one member of the pair is valued more highly than the other. Isocrates, writing in the mid 4th century BC, reports that

ὁμολογείται μὲν γὰρ τὴν φύσιν ἡμῶν ἔκ τε τοῦ σώματος συγκεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς, αὐτοῖν δὲ τούτοις οὐδεὶς ἔστιν ὅστις οὐκ ἂν φήσειεν ἡγεμονικωτέραν πεφυκέναι τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ πλέονος ἀξίαν. (*Antid.* 180.)

[i]t is agreed that our nature is compounded of the body and the soul, and there is no-one who would deny that of these two the soul is primary and of greater worth. (My translation.)

The verb ὁμολογεῖν (in passive voice) suggests that the soul–body contrast is presented as a commonplace.³ Furthermore, the contrast definitely contains an evaluative element, as the psyche is considered to be primary (or more ruling / authoritative, ἡγεμονική) and more valuable (πλέονος ἀξία) than the body.⁴ This contrastive and evaluative use often surfaces in Plato’s works.

Examples: Σῶμα in evaluative contrast to ψυχὴ in Plato

It is well known that Plato tends to articulate σῶμα, ‘the body’, *in contrast* to ψυχὴ, ‘the soul’. In these uses, σῶμα typically signifies a body of a living sentient being, not any corporeal thing. These articulations almost always contain a strong evaluative element: whereas the soul is associated with truth and eternal life, the body and bodily existence are connected with ephemerality and viewed as something that *hinders* us from attaining truth. A particularly good example of such reasoning occurs in *Phaedo* 65c11 ff., where the body and sense perception are condemned in favour of rational inquiry, striving for the knowledge of the Beautiful, Good, Bigness or Health (i.e. the forms). In 65e, Socrates rhetorically

³ Robert Renehan (1980, 133) has suggested that passage represents a *communis opinio*. But exactly what is this *communio*, then? – Every Greek living in Isocrates’ time? – Every Athenian? – Some important segment of Athenians, e.g. every *educated* Athenian or Athenians who have participated the Eleusian mysteries? Or Isocrates’ intended audience/reader? – The *communio* that Renehan has in mind seems to be “Plato’s educated contemporaries”, which is probably right.

⁴ For a parallel, see e.g. Antiph. 5,93: τὸ σῶμα ἀπειρηκός ἢ ψυχὴ συνεξέσωσεν, which alludes to the dominance of the psyche over the body.

asks Simmias whether the best and “purest” (καθαρώτατα) approach would not be to make use of thought (διανοία) only,

ἀπαλλαγείς ὅτι μάλιστα ὀφθαλμῶν τε καὶ ὠτῶν καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν **σύμπαντος τοῦ σώματος, ὡς ταραττοντος καὶ οὐκ ἔῶντος τὴν ψυχὴν κτήσασθαι ἀλήθειάν** τε καὶ φρόνησιν ὅταν κοινωνῇ; (66a3-6.)

freeing himself as far as possible from eyes and ears and, in a word, from the whole body, because the body confuses the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom whenever it is associated with it.

(Text Burnet, Tr. G. M. A. Grube, from Cooper et al.)

Indeed, in the *Phaedo*, the contrast between the body and soul is connected with the suggestion that philosophy is a purificatory activity, which aims to free the soul from the corrupting association with the body (e.g. 65a). The body is condemned as the source of error, confusion, and even – via bodily needs and desires of wealth – as the *only* cause of “war, civil discord and battles” (66b–d.). The evaluative contrast could hardly be stronger.

Another striking passage, albeit with a different stress, is *Alcibiades I*, 129d ff.⁵ Whereas the passage from *Phaedo* articulated the soul-body opposition in epistemological and evaluative terms, here the opposition is framed ontologically. The human being is straightforward *identified* with his soul – and the body is deemed to be a kind of instrument of the body at best. In the light of this passage, the person, or the human being, *is* the soul, not the body or the living being as a whole (130c1–c7):

ΣΩ. Ἐπειδὴ δ' οὔτε σῶμα οὔτε τὸ συναμφοτέρον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, λείπεται οἷμαι ἢ μηδὲν αὐτ' εἶναι, ἢ εἴπερ τί ἐστι, μηδὲν ἄλλο τὸν ἄνθρωπον συμβαίνειν ἢ ψυχὴν.

ΑΛΚ. Κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν.

ΣΩ. Ἔτι οὖν τι σαφέστερον δεῖ ἀποδειχθῆναί σοι, ὅτι **ἡ ψυχὴ ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος;**

ΑΛΚ. Μὰ Δία, ἀλλ' ἰκανῶς μοι δοκεῖ ἔχειν.

⁵ I thank Dr. Thomas Macher for directing my attention to this passage in discussion.

soc. Since a man is neither his body, nor his body and soul together, what remains is, I think, is either that he's nothing, or else, if he *is* something, he's nothing other than his soul.

alc. Quite so.

soc. Do you need any clearer proof that the soul is the man?

alc. No, by Zeus, I think you've given ample proof.

(Text Burnet, Tr. D. S. Hutchinson, from Cooper et al.)

With such highly evaluative and contrastive uses of the terminological pair σῶμα/ψυχή, Plato certainly became a pivotal figure in introducing the soul-body -dualism in philosophy.⁶ Even though he surely had precursors in the earlier tradition,⁷ nobody before him seems to have put so much philosophical – both ethical, epistemological and ontological – weight on the distinction.

Feature II. *From concrete to abstract uses of σῶμα.* In the Platonic corpus, the noun σῶμα has a broad extension: it is used to refer to things of various kinds and at various levels of abstraction. Both human persons, animate bodies, corpses, inanimate things, celestial bodies, or even the cosmos as a whole may be called σῶματα. In abstraction, the term may also signify geometrical three-dimensional figures and all kinds of material stuffs that have any spatial extension at all. This implies that the field of application is potentially very broad, and little limitations seem to be set to what kind of subjects the term may be predicated of.

Examples: Abstract characterisations of σῶμα in late Plato

In Plato's dialogues, there are several passages where σῶμα is used (and characterized) abstractly. In these passages, σῶμα emerges as an abstract concept, which stands for *everything* that is material or has a spatial extension. As examples, I have picked up three passages, each of which characterises σῶμα abstractly in slightly different ways: *Phileb.* 29d–e, *Soph.* 246a–b and *Tim.* 53c.

⁶ Plato's evaluative *contrast* between σῶμα and ψυχή is connected with the tendency of associating σῶμα closely with σῆμα, and hence articulating the body as the 'tomb' or 'sign' of the soul: *Crat.* 400c reports an etymological explanation of σῶμα via σῆμα, and the idea surfaces also in *Gorg.* 492e–493a. For elaboration, see Bernabé 1995 and Ferwerda 1985, who discuss the Orphic and Pythagorean background of this association.

⁷ For the contrast in Homer, see Section 3, Station IB below and note 35.

In the first passage, *σῶμα* is characterised as something which is *composed* out of simple elements (fire, earth, water and air), and the idea is then generalized anything which is so composed. *Σῶμα* is thus contrasted not primarily with the soul, but rather with the *constituents* out of which the complex body is made of (29d6–e4):

ΣΩ. [...] ἀλλὰ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐξῆς ἔπου. πάντα γὰρ ἡμεῖς ταῦτα τὰ νῦνδὴ λεχθέντα ἄρ' οὐκ εἰς ἓν συγκείμενα ἰδόντες ἐπωνομάσαμεν σῶμα;

ΠΡΩ. Τί μήν;

ΣΩ. Ταῦτὸν δὴ λαβὲ καὶ **περὶ τοῦδε ὄν κόσμον λέγομεν**. [διὰ] τὸν αὐτὸν γὰρ τρόπον **ἂν εἶη που σῶμα, σύνθετον ὄν ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν**.

ΠΡΩ. Ὅρθότατα λέγεις.

soc. [...] But now see what follows. To the combination of all these elements [earth, fire, water, air, L.J.] taken as a unit we give the name “body”, don’t we?

pro. Certainly.

soc. Now, realize that the same holds in the case of what we call the ordered universe. It will turn out to be a body in the same sense, since it is composed of the same elements.

pro. What you say is undeniable.

(Text Burnet, Tr. D. Frede, from Cooper et al.)

The second passage has been extracted from the dialogue *Sophist*. It occurs in the discussion concerning the dispute between the materialists and those who posit the existence of non-material forms. The former tend to equate all being (*οὐσία*) with *σώματα* (246a–247d). The Eleatic visitor introduces the first party as follows (246a6–b3):

ΧΕ. Οἱ μὲν εἰς γῆν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀοράτου πάντα ἔλκουσι, ταῖς χερσὶν ἀτεχνῶς πέτρας καὶ δρυὲς περιλαμβάνοντες. τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐφαπτόμενοι πάντων δισχυρίζονται τοῦτο εἶναι μόνον ὃ παρέχει προσβολὴν καὶ ἐπαφήν τινα, **ταῦτὸν σῶμα καὶ οὐσίαν ὀρίζομενοι**, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων εἴ τις (τί) φήσει μὴ σῶμα ἔχον εἶναι, καταφρονούντες τὸ παράπαν καὶ οὐδὲν ἐθέλοντες ἄλλο ἀκούειν.

Visitor: One group drags everything down to earth from the heavenly region of the invisible, actually clutching rocks and trees with their hands. When they take hold of all these things they insist that only what offers tangible contact is, since they define being as the same as body. And if any of the others say that something without a body is, they absolutely despise him and won't listen to him any more.

(Text Burnet, Tr. Nicholas P. White, from Cooper et al.)

The main drive of this passage is ontological, as the Eleatic Visitor describes the materialists' tendency of equating all *being* with bodily being. While the more specific structure of bodies is not discussed (compare the previous passage), this passage does provide a criterion for the bodily being. This is suggested by the association of σώματα with things that may function as objects of haptic contact (προσβολή) or touch (ἐπαφή): Being, the materialists argue, is the same as body; and to be of a bodily nature, is to be perceptible by haptic means.

The abstract uses are clearly prominent in the *Timaeus*. The following passage is especially noteworthy as it contains a general and abstract characterisation of the body as something that has a three-dimensional extension in space (53c5–d1:)

Πρῶτον μὲν δὴ πῦρ καὶ γῆ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ ἀήρ ὅτι σώματά ἐστι, δῆλόν που καὶ παντί. τὸ δὲ τοῦ σώματος εἶδος πᾶν καὶ βάθος ἔχει. τὸ δὲ βάθος αὐτῶν πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὴν ἐπίπεδον περιειληφέναι φύσιν.

First of all, everyone knows, I'm sure, that fire, earth, water and air are bodies. Now everything that has bodily form also has depth. Depth, moreover, is of necessity comprehended within surface.

(Tr. by Donald J. Zeyl, from Cooper et al.)

This passage is highly interesting in many respects. First, it operates with a definition of σώμα: what is said is meant to characterize the form of the body (τὸ τοῦ σώματος εἶδος), and should thus be applicable to all σώματα. Second, in the characterization that follows, two features surface: (i) σώμα is equated with *everything* that has a bounded depth or a three-dimensional extension in

space.⁸ And (ii) the basic elements, fire, earth, water and air – referred to in the passage from *Philebus*, above – are also explicitly designated as bodies. In the light of this abstract definition, everything which has a spatial extension – even the basic elements – are bodies. This characterization may be taken to articulate an abstract *criterion* for the use of the term σῶμα: what it is to be a body, is to have three-dimensional extension.

Feature III. Σῶμα and its derivatives. In the 4th century BCE, an increasing number of derivatives of the noun σῶμα are introduced. The adjective σωματοειδής, ‘bodily’, and its substantiation τὸ σωματοειδές, ‘the bodily’ first occur in Plato’s corpus in the *Phaedo* and are used in some later dialogues.⁹ These instances often occur in various characterizations of the Platonic soul-body dualism, but the later uses in the *Timaeus* (e.g. 31b3, 36d9) tend towards the abstract uses. The adjective σωματικός abounds in Aristotle’s physical¹⁰, metaphysical¹¹, biological¹² and ethical¹³ works. This adjective is sometimes contrasted with the negated contradictory form ἀσώματος, ‘incorporeal’, ‘non-bodily’.¹⁴ At this point, the verb σωματούσθαι, ‘to become / to be made corporeal’, occurs in Aristotle.¹⁵ This process continues later in the Hellenistic and Roman periods as

⁸ A generation later, in the *Topics*, Aristotle (*Top.* 142b24) referred to a definition of σῶμα as τὸ ἔχον τρεῖς διαστάσεις (having three dimensions); this implies that the definition was in circulation in his circles. In *De Caelo*, he accepted the definition himself (*Cael.* I.1, 268a6ff., see Betegh et. al. 2013). In *Metaphysics* Δ, lemma ποσόν (1020a1–15), a series of geometrical objects – line (γραμμῆ), plane (ἐπιφανεία) and body (σῶμα) – is characterized as three magnitudes that are continuous respectively in one, two or three dimensions. The third dimension, peculiar to σῶματα, is depth (βάθος) also named in *Timaeus* above. Compare *Phys.* 209a4.

⁹ See *Phd.* 81b5, c4, e1, 83d5, 86a2, compare *Resp.* 532c7, *Plt.* 274b4 and *Tim.* 31b4, 36d9.

¹⁰ E.g. *Cael.* 277b14 ff, *Ph.* 242b25.

¹¹ E.g. *Metaph.* 987a6 and 1001b11.

¹² E.g. *De an.* 404b31, 427a27, 433b19; *Gen. an.* 736b24.

¹³ E.g. *Eth. Eud.* 1245a21, *Eth. Nic.* 1128b14, 1176b20.

¹⁴ E.g. *De an.* 404b31, *Cael.* 305a14. The word appears six times already in Plato’s work, see e.g. *Phd.* 85e5, *Soph.* 246b8, 247d1; given that *Phaedo* is earlier than *The Sophist*, the former is the earliest preserved instance of the word. While Gomperz (1932) strived to establish that the term was in use already in the 5th century BCE, this position was challenged by Renehan 1980; many later scholars (e.g. Palmer 2003) have since accepted Renehan’s argument.

¹⁵ *Sens.* 445a2, in medio-passive, applied to air becoming corporeal; compare *Gen. an.* 739a12,

more derivatives and compounds are introduced.¹⁶ The most probable explanation for the emergence of these derivatives is, it seems to me, that they testify of a process where the word σῶμα is, during the 4th century BCE, given a series of more technical, scientific, and philosophical uses. These uses, then, generate a need for related adjectives, contradictories and verbal forms, which are variously derived from the noun.

From the three features above, illustrated by selective examples from the Platonic corpus, it should be clear that the 4th century BCE uses of σῶμα show much variance. – It is thus tempting to ask what kind conceptual resources Plato and other intellectuals of the 4th century BCE had at their disposal from the earlier tradition. In the next section, I trace the historical genealogy of σῶμα in four stations, starting from the first instances in Homer. As we shall see, an interesting feature characterising this development is that of gradual semantic enrichment, which takes place partly by analogical extensions of the previous usages but is also closely intertwined with the emergence of philosophical and scientific thought in the late 5th century BCE.

3. The pre-platonic uses of ΣΩΜΑ: An Overview in four Stations

Station I. Homeric beginnings

A. ΣΩΜΑ as a corpse or a moribund mortal body. The consensus of etymological scholars is that no convincing pre-homeric etymology for the word σῶμα has been found.¹⁷ The earliest instances of the word are found in the Homeric epics. The

744a17. An active participial form may also occur in Philolaos fragment number 11, the authenticity of which is disputed.

¹⁶ E.g. the substantive σωματώσις ‘thickening, becoming solid’, attested in Theophr. *Caus. Pl.* 6,11,14; the verb σωματοποιέω, ‘give bodily existence, organize as a body’ attested in Polyb. (2,45,6) and Alexander of Aphrodisia (Pr. 1,87); σωματουργέω with its derivatives in later Platonism, e.g. Procl. *In Ti.* 2,71. In Strabo 14,5,2 we also find σωματεμπορέω, designating slave trade, building on the classical use of σῶμα for human individuals or persons. See p. 102–106 and nn. 42–43 below. See also Chantraine (2009, 1046) lemma σῶμα.

¹⁷ See Brill’s 2010 *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (= Beekes – van Beek 2010, 1440), lemma σῶμα; Compare Frisk (1970, Band II, 842), lemma σῶμα, who lists several proposals that he finds either “anfechtbar” or “unsicher”. The Latin “corpus”, with which the Greek “σῶμα” is later translated, stems

difference of the Homeric uses of σῶμα from the later ones was noted already in the antiquity by the Alexandrian philologist Aristarchus. In the 2nd century BCE, he notoriously argued that, in Homer, the word σῶμα refers *exclusively* to dead bodies or corpses, and that Homer uses other expressions, e.g. the term δέμας for living bodies.¹⁸ Indeed, it is beyond doubt that Homer uses σῶμα for both human and animal corpses. A good example of this use is found in *Iliad* 7,76–80 (=W, 546). In the passage, Hector, speaking to both Greek and Trojan armies, expresses his wish that, in the case of his death, his dead body (σῶμα) be treated well:

ὦδε δὲ μυθέομαι, Ζεὺς δ' ἄμμ' ἐπιμάρτυρος ἔστω·
 εἰ μὲν κεν ἐμὲ κείνος ἔλη τανακῆκεί χαλκῳ,
 τεύχεα συλήσας φερέτω κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας,
σῶμα δὲ οἶκαδ' ἐμὸν δόμεναι πάλιν, ὄφρα πυρός με
 Τρῶες καὶ Τρῶων ἄλοχοι λαλάχωσι θανόντα.¹⁹

Thus do I declare

my word. May Zeus be our witness. If that man should beat
 me with his long-edged bronze, may he strip my armor
 and carry it to the hollow ships, but give back my body
 to my home so that the Trojans and the wives of the Trojans
 may give me the allotment of fire in death.

(Text Monro & Allen, Tr. B. Powell 2014.)

In the light of Aristarchus' interpretation, in Homer σῶμα thus neither stands for things and stuffs in general – nor for *living* bodies of animals. It designates only bodies that *were* living, but are not that anymore. This wisdom has found its way to the LSJ-dictionary, too.²⁰ In the 20th century, Aristarchus' interpretation been accepted by many scholars. The most spirited defence is probably that of Bruno Snell, who defends the view in the first chapter of his

from a different indo-European root **kṛp*.

¹⁸ See Lehrs 1882, 86.

¹⁹ The lines 79–80 are repeated in exactly the same form in *Il.* 22,342–343. Compare *Od.* 24,187.

²⁰ S.v. σῶμα: “[I]n Hom., as Aristarch. remarks” [...] “always *dead body, corpse* (whereas the living body is δέμας)”.

Entdeckung des Geistes (1946) in an even more radical form.²¹ Snell's provocative thesis is that the Greeks of Homer's time completely lacked an expression designating *the living human body* as a whole. Rather, they tended to view it as an aggregate of parts: Snell argues that the expressions Homer uses for the living body tend to be in plural: e.g. μέλεα, or γυῖα – the limbs or the members of the body. Snell also points out that this view of the body as an aggregate of parts is also visible in contemporary Greek art.²²

More recently, Aristarchus' and Snell's suggestions have been criticised, and I believe with good reasons.²³ Though the instances of σῶμα in Homer *tend* to refer to dead bodies, the problem is that there are only *eight* instances of the word in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* altogether.²⁴ It is thus unclear, what kind of conclusions concerning the early Greek usage may be made on basis of this evidence.²⁵ In addition, even among these eight passages, there are, depending on interpretation, one to three cases (*Il.* 3,23; 18,161 and *Od.* 12,67) in which it is not clear whether the σώματα are alive or dead. By far the best candidate for a living σῶμα is, in my view, a homeric simile from *Il.* 3,21–29 (=W, 547), concerning lions attacking σώματα of prey animals. In that passage, Alexander, who has stepped forward from the crowd of the Trojan warriors, is seen by Menelaos. Alexander is then compared to a σῶμα of a prey animal like wild stag or goat, which is attacked and devoured by a hungry lion:

Τὸν δ' ὡς οὖν ἐνόησεν ἀρηΐφιλος Μενέλαος
ἐρχόμενον προπάροιθεν ὀμίλου μακρὰ βιβάντα,
ὡς τε λέων ἐχάρη μεγάλῳ ἐπὶ σῶματι κύρσας,

²¹ See Renehan 1979, 269–270, who lists several later scholars sympathetic to Aristarch's (and Snell's) view. The view is repeated in Urmson's (1990, s.v.) dictionary of Greek philosophical terms.

²² Snell 1955, 21–24.

²³ Most recently by Wachsmann 2016, 546–548 and Galhac 2013. An earlier and more detailed criticism of Snell's approach and presuppositions is Renehan 1979. Compare also Herter 1957. From a more philosophical angle, based on an analysis of action in Homer's epics, Bernard Williams (1993, 28–9) argued that Snell's arguments to dissolve the Homeric man into mental or physical parts “are a systematic failure”. Despite these critical voices, the Aristarchian position is still defended e.g. in Krieter-Spiro's notes in the Basel-commentary to *Iliad* III, (Bierl – Latacz [eds.] 2015, 24.)

²⁴ *Il.* 3,23; 7,79; 18,161; 22,342; 23,169; *Od.* 11,53; 12,67; 24,187.

²⁵ Renehan (ibid, 274) correctly observes that Homeric terminology need not be coextensive with the Greek vocabulary of the time, nor with the Greek poetic diction with the time.

εὐρῶν ἢ ἔλαφον κεραὸν ἢ ἄγριον αἶγα
 πεινάων· μάλα γάρ τε κατεσθίει, εἴ περ ἂν αὐτὸν
 σεύωνται ταχέες τε κύνες θαλεροί τ' αἰζηοί·
 ὡς ἐχάρη Μενέλαος Ἀλέξανδρον θεοειδέα
 ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ιδῶν· φάτο γὰρ τείσσεσθαι ἀλείτην.
 αὐτίκα δ' ἐξ ὀχέων σὺν τεύχεσιν ἄλτο χαμᾶζε.

When Menelaos, whom Ares
 loves, saw him [= Paris / Alexander] coming forth from out of the crowd,
 striding long, even as a lion rejoices when he chances
 on a carcass [*sic.*, σῶματι] when he is hungry, either finding a horned
 stag or a wild goat and greedily the lion devours it,
 although fast dogs and brave young men assail him –
 even so Menelaos rejoiced when he saw Alexandros,
 like a god, with his own eyes. He thought that the criminal
 was caught. On the instant he jumped from his chariot, fully
 armed, to the ground.²⁶
 (Text Monro & Allen, Tr. B. Powell 2014.)

Interestingly, Barry Powell has translated σῶμα in this passage as “carcass” – and the same procedure has been followed in some earlier translations, too.²⁷ But given that Alexander, to whom the σῶμα of the prey animal is compared, is still alive at the moment of the comparison, such translations seem to be an interpretative choice based on Aristarchus’ interpretation rather than merely on the logic of the passage itself.²⁸ It is interesting, however, that in this passage, where Homer’s σῶμα *may* signify a still living animal, the animal, though perhaps still alive, is very much moribund – just about to be killed and devoured by the lion (or by the raging Menelaos). In Homer, then, the word may be used both of prey-animals pursued by lions, and of the Greek and Trojan heroes slain dead on the battlefield. Another instance (*Od.* 12,66–68) refers to ship-wrecked

²⁶ Compare also *Il.* 18,161 for another lion simile; in this case the σῶμα the lion is attacking is compared to the *dead* body of Hector.

²⁷ See e.g. the *Loeb* translation by Murray, revised by Wyatt.

²⁸ In another similar simile in Pseudo-Hesiod *Scutum* 425–428, the σῶματα are undoubtedly alive (Renehan 1979, 273).

sailors, whose bodies are floating on the waves of the sea – whether dead or moribund, is not directly revealed in the text. Does this indicate that σῶμα in Homer might mean ‘a prey’, be it alive or dead, and that the word would thus have connections to hunting?²⁹ – I refrain from taking a definite stand here. But at least the instances point to the fact that ‘σῶμα’ in Homer seems closely associated with death and with the mortality of living beings. This aspect, at least, is something that much of the later tradition shares.

B. Σῶμα and ψυχή: the beginnings of a contrast. As was indicated in Section 1, above, Plato later identified the human being or the person exclusively with the soul, contrasting it with the body. Even though there is a contrast between σῶμα and ψυχή in the Homeric epics, too, the contrast is stressed in a markedly different way. A particularly interesting passage occurs right at the beginning of the *Iliad*. Though the word σῶμα does not occur in it, the passage makes clear that in Homer did *not* identify the person with the soul (*Il.* 1–5 = W, 547):

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
 οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί’ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε’ ἔθηκε,
 πολλὰς δ’ ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
 ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν
 οἴωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή

The rage sing, O goddess, of Achilles, the son of Peleus,
 the destructive anger that brought ten-thousand pains to the
 Achaeans and sent many brave souls of fighting men to the house
 of Hades and made *the men themselves* a feast for dogs
 and all kinds of birds. For such was the will of Zeus.

(Text Monro & Allen, Tr. B. Powell 2014; translation altered at italics.)

The brave *souls* (ψυχαί) of the heroes are sent to Hades, whereas *they themselves* (αὐτοί), are made a feast for the dogs and birds. What is implied is that the warriors *themselves* most definitely are *not* equated with their souls, but

²⁹ Koller 1958, 279–280 speculates, on the basis of the prey-animal similes, that σῶμα might be connected with the verb σίνεσθαι ‘to cause harm, to injure’, as its object. The associations to prey are also noted by Wachsmann 2016, 548 and 550.

rather with the physical remains that are left on earth.³⁰ On the basis of the above remarks concerning the prey-animal similes and the Homeric tendency to use σώμα of dead bodies, it may even be tempting to claim that the αὐτοί here refers to σώματα – the warriors’ dead bodies. Indeed, this is definitely implied by the original wording of Powell’s (2014) translation of αὐτοί on line 4, as he renders the passage as “made their bodies a feast for dogs”.³¹

In my view, the most remarkable trait concerning the Homeric contrast between σώμα and ψυχή is that *both* terms are mainly used either when death has already taken place or when death threatens or is about to happen.³² Unlike in the later tradition, the terms are *not* used in describing a living being, e.g. as a compound of these two, more or less independent elements. Neither is ψυχή the seat of the living being’s psychological attributes. The standard interpretation of ψυχή in Homer is that for him, ψυχή is merely a kind of shadowy image or ghost of the once living being, which leaves or is “breathed out” of the body at the time of death. Of living beings, the term is used mainly when there is a reason to fear death, i.e. that the ψυχή may depart.³³ It is not that the *presence* of psyche makes a human being live, but rather its *departure* which signalises his death. The ψυχή emerging at the moment of death is a feeble thing with a limited range of possible activities. It is not to be equated with the essence of the human being.³⁴ Both the shadowy ψυχή and the decaying σώμα continue their existence after the living individual is dead. Indeed, in *Od.* 11,51 we witness Odysseus encountering

³⁰ One frequent formula that Homer uses to characterize the moment of death is οὐ δ’ αὖθι λύθη ψυχή τε μένος τε (*Il.* 5,296, 8,123 and 8,315, c. Bremmer 1983, 76): since the ψυχή is ‘loosened’ from a dying warrior at the time of death, the warrior surely is *not* to be identified with the ψυχή.

³¹ Compare Patzig 2009, 249–250, Hirzel 1914 and Wachsmann 2016, 548.

³² For a philological overview of ψυχή in Homer, see Darcus 1979.

³³ Darcus 1979, 32–33. Jan Bremmer (1983, 14ff and 2002, 1–2) has suggested that ψυχή in Homer is related to a dualistic conception of souls, which anthropologists have identified in various ‘primitive’ cultures. Homer’s ψυχή may be compared to the “free-soul”, associated with breath and representing the individual personality, and contrasted with various “body-souls”, which are more closely connected with physical aspects of the body and with conscious psychological phenomena; for the latter, Homer uses various terms such as θυμός or νόος. Bremmer suggests that the “free-soul” is normally inactive, but does manifest itself in dreams, swoons or at death.

³⁴ Renehan 1979, 279.

his dead comrade Elpenor's ghost (ψυχή, translated as 'breath-soul' by Powell below), separated from his earthly σῶμα:

πρώτη δὲ ψυχή Ἐλπήνορος ἦλθεν ἑταίρου·
οὐ γάρ πω ἐτέθαπτο ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης·
σῶμα γὰρ ἐν Κίρκης μεγάρῳ κατελείπομεν ἡμεῖς
ἄκλαυτον καὶ ἄθαπτον, ἐπεὶ πόνος ἄλλος ἔπειγε.

First came the breath-soul of my companion Elpenor,
for we did not bury him beneath the earth with its broad
ways but left his corpse in the hall of Kirké unwept
and unburied because another task drove us on.
(Text Allen, tr. B. Powell.)

Thus at death, the psyche is separated from the living being, and only σῶμα, the lifeless corpse, remains. Though very differently stressed, this correlation provides the starting point for the later developments of body-soul dualism. Since, in this article, I am interested mainly in points where some conceptual novelties, e.g. new contrastive terms, are introduced, I shall not trace the complex history of the soul-body -opposition further in this article.³⁵

Station II: ΣΩΜΑ as a living mortal body or the human individual

The first step in extending the meaning of σῶμα is that the word, reserved for dead or immediately moribund human or animal bodies at Station I, comes

³⁵ Here only some signposts: The binary opposition of the soul and the body, and related views on afterlife, seem to have constituted an important set of beliefs in the Orphic circles: an Olbian bone tablet C (early 5th century BCE) has σῶμα and ψυχή juxtaposed in a list of binary opposites (the reading was suggested by Vinogradov [1991, 79], and is repeated in Graf – Johnston [2007, 187] and Chrysanthou [2017, 178]: the text of σῶμα, however, is hardly legible in the photos I have seen [in West 1982, 24]). Pindar, in Fr. 131b, contrasted the mortal human σῶμα with the εἶδωλον, which remains living at death and which alone is from the gods; later, Plato, in *Meno* 81b1, named Pindar as an author who believed in the immortality of the soul. Ideas of transmigration of the soul were entertained in Pythagorean circles (see Xenophanes' testimony in DK 21B8 = Most-Laks *Xen* D64); see also Herodotus' report of such doctrines in Egypt in *Hist.* 2,123. For a recent overview of related views, see Svavarsson (2020, 595 ff.), who discusses the early ideas of the soul from the perspective of retributive justice. Such ideas probably entered the Athenian circles through the Eleusinian Mysteries.

to signify bodies of living animals in general. Instances of this usage are found already in Hesiod and in archaic poetry,³⁶ and this particular use indeed becomes a commonplace by the classical period. The earliest instance from Hesiod (c. 700 BCE) stems from the description of winter in the *Works and Days* (536–540 = W, 549):

Καὶ τότε ἔσασσθαι ἔρυμα χροός· ὡς σε κελεύω,
 χλαῖνάν τε μαλακὴν καὶ θερμιόεντα χιτῶνα·
 στήμονι δ' ἐν παύρῳ πολλὴν κρόκα μηρύσασσθαι·
 τὴν περιέσασσθαι, ἵνα τοι τρίχες ἀτρεμέωσι
 μηδ' ὀρθαὶ φρίσσωσιν ἀειρόμεναι κατὰ σῶμα.

And that is when you should put on a defense for your
 skin, as I bid you: a soft cloak and a tunic that reaches your feet.
 Wind plenty of woof on a puny warp: put this around you, so that
 your hairs do not tremble nor stand up straight shivering along your
 body.

(Text M. West, tr. G. Most [Loeb 57, 2006])

In another example, taken from Pindar's *Olympia* 6 for Hagesias of Syracuse (472/468 BCE), we find the word σῶμα signifying the body of a newborn Iamos, which is hidden in the bushes. He is being searched for by Aipytos, whose wife had secretly given birth to this baby-boy, originally conceived by the god Apollo (*Ol.* 6, 53–56 = W, 552):

ἀλλ' ἐν
 κέκρυπτο γὰρ σχοίνῳ βατιᾶ τ' ἐν ἀπειρίτῳ,
 ἴων ξανθαῖσι καὶ παμπορφύροις ἀκτίσι βεβρεγμένος ἄβρόν
 σῶμα.

³⁶ The temporal order of Hesiod and Homer has been a much-debated topic, which is also relevant for the question concerning the exact order of the semantic development of σῶμα. Martin West defended the view that the Hesiodic poems are earlier than the Homeric ones. Even without taking a definite stand on the issue, Renehan (1979, 276) asks rhetorically whether it is, given that Hesiod uses the word of a living body, “really reasonable to deny the knowledge of such a use to the roughly contemporaneous composer of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*”.

But in fact,

he [= Iamos] had been hidden in a bed of reeds within a vast thicket,
while his tender body was bathed by the golden and purple rays.
(Text Snell & Mahler; tr. Race.)

In these two passages, σῶμα clearly signifies a living human being – but, as it seems, still essentially a mortal, if not quite moribund, human being.³⁷ Both instances retain a close association of σῶμα with mortality. As depicted by Hesiod, σῶμα is something *to be protected* by woollen garments from the biting and threatening cold of winter. And the passage from Pindar relates well to the Homeric idea of a σῶμα as a prey of kind – for Iamos is pursued by Aipytos, who, however, fails to find him.³⁸ This association with mortality connects well with another Pindaric passage from *Partheneion* 1, 14–15 (= W, 553), which beautifully stresses the ephemeral nature of the body:

ἀθάναται δὲ βροτοῖς
ἀμέραι, σῶμα δ' ἔστι θνατόν.

Men are given immortal
days, their body, however, is mortal.³⁹
(Text Snell & Mahler, tr. Lassi Jakola.)

It seems, however, that in the 5th century BCE, the term gradually loses its connotations with the immediate threat of death, which still surface in the above quotations. In Aeschylus' *PV*. 462–466 it is used simply of yoked bodies of animals, and in the dramas of the classical period the term is frequently applied to living human beings or, even more markedly, to human individuals

³⁷ See also Aesch. *Sept.* 896.

³⁸ Such allusions to hunting also apply to the earlier (mid- 7th century) instance in Archilochus' 'Cologne Epode' (Loeb 259, fr. 196a, 51–53 = Merkelbach-West, *ZPE* 14 [1974] 34–35 = W, 549–50) where the word designates a living body of a young woman as an object of sexual desire. As Wachsmann (2016, 550) notes, Archilochus makes use of the Homeric "Bedeutungshorizont" as the woman is depicted as a sexual prey ("Beute") of a kind.

³⁹ Compare also Pindar's *Fr.* 131b, 1–3 and note 35, above.

as *persons*.⁴⁰ The following exchange between Menelaos and Helen in Euripides' *Helen* is noteworthy (*Hel.* 587–588 = W, 561):

MENEΛΑΟΣ πῶς οὖν; ἄμ' ἐνθάδ' ἦσθ' <ἄρ'> ἐν Τροίᾳ θ' ἄμα;
 ΕΛΕΝΗ τοῦνομα γένοιτ' ἄν πολλαχοῦ, τὸ σῶμα δ' οὔ.

Menelaus What? Were you at the same time both here and at Troy?

Helen A name may be in many places, though a body in only one.

(Text Diggle, tr. David Kovacs [Loeb 11].)

Here, it seems, σῶμα is clearly the living human person, which, as a physical being, can only be at *one* place at the time. Interestingly, this bodily concreteness is contrasted with ὀνόματα – names or rumours – which can represent the person as being in many places at a same time. This contrast, which appears in *Helen* in three separate passages, thus clearly alludes to a parallel antithesis of reality vs. appearance: ὄνομα standing for appearance, σῶμα for reality.⁴¹ Furthermore, whereas it was still unclear whether Homer identifies living individual humans with their σῶματα, it seems that such identification was often made in the classical period. This background makes the platonic proposal – discussed above – that the human being is to be identified with the soul, not with the body nor with the union of the two, especially noteworthy.

The same development is also attested in the prose works of Herodotus⁴² and Thucydides. In the latter's work, the term is especially frequently used of the human person as a whole, or used in referring to human life and its

⁴⁰ E.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 199 & 835, *Soph. Ant.* 676, *El.* 1233; Eur. *Hec.* 301, *Med.* 1111 and *Ar. Nub.* 1413, *Lys.* 80, *Thesm.* 154 & 895.

⁴¹ On *Hel.* 66–67 and *Hel.* 1100. Especially in the former, Helen's ὄνομα refers to her bad reputation all over Greece. On the contrast, see e.g. Burian's (2007) commentary to 66–67.

⁴² According to a TLG search, there are 46 instances of the noun σῶμα in Herodotus. Most typically, the word designates a living human being, sometimes stressing the concrete bodily aspects (e.g. 1,31,6; 3,134,12 and 7,61.3) and sometimes the human person as a whole (e.g. 1,32,41 and 2,120,6). In line with the Homeric usage, it is used of dead or dying humans (e.g. 2,123,6–9; 2,86,23 and 2,121). The word is used of both living (e.g. 5,9,7 and 2,68,12) and dead (e.g. 2,39,6; 2,40,9 and 7,167,7) animal bodies. Sometimes the word is used to designate the main trunk of the body in contrast to its other parts (e.g. 5,33,12: σῶμα vs. head; 2,40,9: σῶμα vs. various parts detached from the animal). In one instance it is used of the grotesque bodies of puppets used in Egyptian festivals to Dionysos (2,48,8–10).

preservation.⁴³ In many such passages, translating σώμα simply with the modern English 'body' would actually result in a forced and unnatural translation. Such is, e.g. the following passage from Pericles' funeral speech, where making the "σῶμα 'self-sufficient' (αὐταρκες)" definitely refers to a result of a complex process of personal growth through the Athenian education (2,41,1):

Ευελών τε λέγω τήν τε πᾶσαν πόλιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος παίδευσιν εἶναι καὶ
καθ' ἕκαστον δοκεῖν ἄν μοι τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνδρα παρ' ἡμῶν ἐπὶ πλεῖστ'
 ἄν εἶδη καὶ μετὰ χαρίτων μάλιστα' ἄν **εὐτραπέλωσ τὸ σῶμα αὐταρκες**
παρέχεσθαι.

In a word, then, I say that our city as a whole is the school of Hellas, and that, as it seems to me, each individual amongst us could in his own person, with the utmost grace and versatility, prove himself [σῶμα] self-sufficient in the most varied forms of activity.

(Text: Jones & Powell, transl. C. F. Smith [Loeb 108].)

Before moving on, be it noted that although at Station II, the word σώμα is extended from its earlier and narrower Homeric use to signify animate bodies and persons, the term continues to be used of dead bodies, too.⁴⁴

Station III: ΣΩΜΑ in contrast to its (physical) parts

Even though I present Stations III and IV as separate developments, they are contemporary phenomena which are, as we shall see, intrinsically related to one another. They are both connected with the emergence of Greek scientific and philosophical thought and of specialized scientific terminology in the 5th century BCE. Let us take Station III first, because its relation to the earlier developments is more straightforward.

⁴³ According to a TLG search, there are 38 instances of the noun σώμα in Thucydides. Interestingly, all the instances seem to refer to human bodies. Σῶμα is often equated with the human person as a whole (e.g. 1,17,1; 2,41,2; 2,102,6 and 6,31,5) or with human life in general (e.g. 1,143,5; 2,42,2 and 6,9,2). It is often contrasted with χρήμα "life vs. property", (e.g. 1,85,1; 1,141,5; 8,45,4 and 8,66,1). In only one case the word clearly indicates a human corpse (1,134,4).

⁴⁴ For exemplary instances in Pindar, see *Nem.* 3,47 and 9,23; in Sophocles, *Aj.* 1063, *El.* 758; in Euripides, *Supp.* 534, *Tro.* 91. For Herodotus and Thucydides, see nn. 42–43 above.

By station III, I refer to a development in the 5th century, in which the bodies of living beings (i.e. σώματα of Station II) are being systematically contrasted with their constituents – the stuffs and elements out of which the bodies are made of and which causally affect the complex bodies. Here writings from the early medical texts, especially the Hippocratic corpus, are illuminating. Brooke Holmes has, in her book *The Symptom and the Subject* (2010) examined the invention of the hidden inner secrets of the human body in detail. In her view, the early medical texts contribute to a new understanding of health: the condition of the living body is to be accounted solely by what takes place *within* the body, by reference to what she calls the “physical body”. This way of articulating the human σῶμα in contrast to its parts, which are simultaneously explanatory primary in relation to the states of the body, is clearly expressed in the following passage from the Hippocratic treatise *On the nature of Man*,⁴⁵ which is typically dated to late 5th century BCE⁴⁶ (*Nat. Hom.* 4,1–10 = W, 556):

Τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔχει ἐν ἑωυτῷ αἷμα καὶ φλέγμα καὶ χολὴν
 ξανθὴν καὶ μέλαιναν, καὶ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ἡ φύσις τοῦ σώματος, καὶ
 διὰ ταῦτα ἀλγεί καὶ ὑγιαίνει. ὑγιαίνει μὲν οὖν μάλιστα, ὅταν μετρίως
 ἔχη ταῦτα τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα κρήσιος καὶ δυνάμιος καὶ τοῦ πλήθεος,
 καὶ μάλιστα μεμιγμένα ἤ· ἀλγεί δὲ ὅταν τούτων τι ἔλασσον ἢ πλεόν ἢ ἡ
 χωρισθῇ ἐν τῷ σώματι καὶ μὴ κεκρημένον ἢ τοῖσι σύμπασιν.

The body of man has in itself blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile; these make up the nature of his body, and through these he feels pain or enjoys health. Now he enjoys the most perfect health when these elements are duly proportioned to one another in respect of compounding, power and bulk, and when they are perfectly mingled. Pain is felt when one of

⁴⁵ On the basis of a quotation in Aristotle's *Hist. An.* 512b13ff, this treatise is often attributed to Hippocrates' son-in-law Polybus, active at the turn of the century (see Jouanna 1969 and 2002, 55); however, in his commentary to *Nat. Hom.*, Galen suggested that the treatise was at least partly authored by Hippocrates himself (*CMG V* 9,1, 9 ff.).

⁴⁶ On the date, see Jouanna (2002, 59ff), who proposes 410–400 as the most probable date. The date means that this passage is most probably later than some of the passages in Station IV, quoted below. It has been suggested that the author of *On the nature of Man* is reacting to doctrines of Melissus (Holmes [2010, 107n98], following Jouanna 1965), discussed below.

these elements is in defect or excess, or is isolated in the body without being compounded with all the others.

(Loeb 150, tr. W. H. S. Jones.)

Note the contrast: the σῶμα is the composite living body of a human being, whereas the stuffs that constitute it are hidden but explanatory of the states of health and illness of the composite body. Furthermore, these stuffs constitute the nature, φύσις, of this very body. Health is explained in reference to these stuffs being moderately related to each other in respect to three factors: compounding (or mixture, κρήσις), power (δύναμις) and bulk (or quantity, πλήθος). Furthermore, the elements should be properly mixed with one another.

On the basis of another passage from the same treatise, it is also clear that the constituents of the bodies are viewed as something out of which the living body is originally made and something into which it disintegrates into after the death. According *Nat. Hom* 3,20–29 (= W, 556):

καὶ πάλιν γε ἀνάγκη ἀναχωρεῖν ἐς τὴν ἑωυτοῦ φύσιν ἕκαστον, τελευτῶντος τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τό τε ὑγρὸν πρὸς τὸ ὑγρὸν καὶ τὸ ξηρὸν πρὸς τὸ ξηρὸν καὶ τὸ θερμὸν πρὸς τὸ θερμὸν καὶ τὸ ψυχρὸν πρὸς τὸ ψυχρὸν. τοιαύτη δὲ καὶ τῶν ζώων ἐστὶν ἡ φύσις, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων· γίνεται τε ὁμοίως πάντα καὶ τελευτᾷ ὁμοίως πάντα· συνίσταται τε γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡ φύσις ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν προειρημένων πάντων, καὶ τελευτᾷ κατὰ τὰ εἰρημένα ἐς τὸ αὐτὸ ὅθεν περ συνέστη ἕκαστον.

Again, each component must return to its own nature when the body of a man dies,⁴⁷ moist to moist, dry to dry, hot to hot and cold to cold. Such too is the nature of animals, and of all other things. All things are born in a like way, and all things die in a like way. For the nature of them

⁴⁷ An anonymous reviewer of this article suggested that the genitive formulation τελευτῶντος τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is significant as it implies that “that the body is one part of a human being, which is the subject of dying (τελευτῶντος). In this respect, the passage contrasts with passages in which σῶμα seems to refer to the human being as a whole.” It seems to me, however, that the genitive ἀνθρώπου is here a simple attributive genitive, which used to highlight that the author speaks of *human*, and not e.g. *animal*, bodies. The formulation does not imply anything substantial about the body forming *one* part of the human beings in contrast to some other parts, e.g. the soul.

is composed of all those things I have mentioned above, and each thing, according to what has been said, ends in that from which it was composed. (Loeb 150, tr. W. H. S. Jones.)

It is highly interesting that the author of this treatise does *not* call the constituents of the bodies themselves σώματα – in fact he does not seem to have a definite term for them at all. Rather, they are something the body *has* in itself (*Nat. Hom.* 7,49: ἔχει [...] ταῦτα τὸ σῶμα), or something that are ‘thrown together’ to bring about a living body (*Nat. Hom.* 3,14: συμβαλλομένα). Let me elaborate a bit why I find this interesting.

The Hippocratic conception is related to the emerging naturalistic attempts at explaining the phenomena of health and disease. This development has close connections to contemporary trends in natural philosophy. Indeed, the way the author of *The Nature of Man* saw the living body as being constituted by elementary fluids, thinkers such as Empedocles – who was also a doctor – and early atomists such as Democritus, generalised to *all kinds of beings*.⁴⁸ For Empedocles, *all* beings are constituted by a delicate mixture of the four ‘roots’ (ρίζαι): water, air, earth and fire. And for Democritus, *everything* consists, in the final analysis, of constellations of atoms. In their analysis, the σώματα of living beings are thus only a special case of this comprehensive physical analysis. In fact, this kind of comprehensive physical analysis seems implied in the second passage quoted from *The Nature of Man*, above: “such too is the nature (φύσις) of [...] all other things. All things are born [or better: come to exist] in a like way, and all things die [or better: cease to be] in a like way.” This view is reflected also in the Platonic passages from *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, discussed in Section 2 above.

But what is, then, the status of the constituents of bodies and beings? – Are they σώματα, too? And if not, why so? – Against calling them σώματα, one could argue as follows: in the earlier tradition, as we have seen, the σῶμα was always a composite organic whole, which is perishable and something which has a definite origin in time: in a word, a *birth* and *death*. The basic elements of such σώματα, be they the fluids of the Hippocratics, the roots of Empedocles, or the atoms of Democritus, are, in contrast, either eternal, or, at least, not subject to

⁴⁸ If we follow the Aristotelian tradition of interpretation, the origins of this approach can be traced back to the early Ionian tradition of natural philosophy, conceptualized as a quest for the material ἀρχή of all being.

temporal generation and destruction in the same way as the composite bodies. They are the original stuffs out of which the corruptible bodies are composed, and they explain some features of the composite bodies. In their relation to temporal existence, the σῶματα and their original parts are thus radically different. This may well be the reason why the author of *The Nature of Man* refrains from calling the bodily fluids σῶματα. For him, the *perishable* and *composite* living body is still the paradigm of what it is to be a body or to have a bodily existence. The novelty is to view the living bodies (and their states) in contrast to the (explanatory) stuffs and fluids that constitute them.

This mereological distinction was, however, not something that was always appreciated by the Greeks of the late 5th Century BCE. While both the Hippocratics and Empedocles⁴⁹ seem to maintain the distinction between the body and its parts on terminological level, it gets gradually blurred in the thought of some other thinkers of the period. A conflicting articulation is spelled out in a fragment from Diogenes of Apollonia, active in the mid 5th century BCE (DK 64 B7 = Laks-Most *Diog.* D4 = W, 565):

καὶ αὐτὸ μὲν τοῦτο καὶ αἰδῖον καὶ ἀθάνατον σῶμα, τῷ δὲ τὰ μὲν γίνεται,
τὰ δὲ ἀπολείπει.

And this [i.e. his basic principle, air] is itself a body both eternal and deathless, but it is by means of it that some things come to be and others cease to exist.

(Loeb 529, tr. Most.)

In this passage, the word σῶμα, which was earlier used exclusively of mortal and perishable bodies, is used of things “eternal” and “deathless”, too. In other words, σῶμα is now used in reference to the original stuffs that, in the terminology of some contemporary intellectuals, were rather used to explain the ephemeral nature of the bodies. By confusing the contrast between σῶμα and its parts, this instance testifies of a fairly radical break with the earlier tradition.

But may the passage also be viewed as testifying of σῶμα being used of a *non-living* stuff? – The word ἀθάνατον raises some questions. The adjective is originally used in Homer of the (anthropomorphic) gods in order to mark

⁴⁹ DK 31 B20 = Laks-Most *Emp.* D73,303–306 = W, 564.

their difference to mortal (θνητοί) human beings; the adjective also has a generalized use “perpetual”, “ever-lasting” from early on. Besides this word, some other fragments show that Diogenes tended to view air as a divine principle,⁵⁰ which has psychological properties: possessing cognitive activity (ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ ... ἐστι νόησις πολλή)⁵¹, he argued, air actively “arranges all things” (δοκεῖ ... πάντα διατίθεναι).⁵² He did not view air as a microscopic element, but rather as something “big and powerful” (μέγα καὶ ἰσχυρόν),⁵³ presenting it as an all-encompassing neutral stuff, from which all things come forth by means of becoming condensed or rarefied.⁵⁴ He may thus have conceptualized the principle as a living being by analogy: even though eternal and immortal, his air still has an important set of qualities that are primarily said of living beings only. In this sense, Diogenes’ use may still be informed by the old paradigm of σῶμα as a living body. Thus, it is not completely clear whether the passage may be read as an instance where σῶμα clearly designates a *non-living* stuff. But it clearly prepares ground for such uses.⁵⁵

Station IV: ΣΩΜΑ in abstraction

By station IV, σῶμα in abstraction, I understand the development, as a result of which σῶμα may be used of *any* spatially extended thing, be it of composite or non-composite nature. The abstract use has two interrelated aspects. For one, the idea of *body* becomes closely associated with the feature of size – μέγεθος – and of having some definite spatial boundaries. And second, the term is simultaneously abstracted from living beings and may now freely (and non-

⁵⁰ θέος δοκεῖ εἶναι: Laks-Most D10 = DK 64 B5; compare Laks-Most D13 = DK 64 A19.

⁵¹ Laks-Most D5 and D6 = DK 64 B3.

⁵² Laks-Most D10 = DK 64 B5.

⁵³ Laks-Most D6 = DK 64 B8.

⁵⁴ Laks-Most D14 – D15.

⁵⁵ In Wachsmann’s (2016, 550) collection, another early candidate for σῶμα being used of a non-living thing is ‘ὑπὸ σώματι γᾶς’ in Aesch. *Th.* 947–50: in this passage, the term designates a body of soil or earth. But given that Γᾶία was often personified in Greek poetry, this instance is probably best understood as a poetic analogical extension of the term from living bodies to the ‘metaphorically living’ body of the Mother Earth. This use, too, then, seems to have a connection to the paradigm of σῶμα as a body of a living being. See also Buchheim – Meißner 2016, 15n17.

analogically) be applied to anything which is extended in space, be it how small or large, simple or complex. Thus, the abstract use may also be called an extended use of σῶμα.

When was this abstract use first introduced? – In previous section, I suggested that B4 of Diogenes of Apollonia may either testify of the second aspect of the abstract use or, at least, anticipate it. And similarly, the contrast between the human σῶμα and its constitutive elements, attested in the Hippocratic treatises, must have prepared ground for the term being applied to non-living (physical) bodies. The next possible candidates for the abstract uses are found in philosophical texts, namely, in the preserved testimonia and fragments of some Eleatic and Atomist thinkers. But before proceeding to the relevant passages, a word of warning is due. In recent scholarly debates, the authenticity, or the testimonial strength, of almost all the Eleatic and Atomist passages that I am going to discuss, has been questioned. Thus today, many scholars seem to tend to think that the abstract use may have been coined as late as in the 4th century – perhaps even by Plato himself.⁵⁶ My approach in the below overview is to present all the Eleatic and Atomist passages that, in my opinion, are either themselves possible candidates for pre-Platonic abstract uses, or give indirect evidence for the existence of such uses. While pointing out why other scholars have found each of the passages problematic, I shall myself favour a date at the turn of the 5th and 4th century – a date which, almost certainly, predates (most of) Plato's work.

Eleatic candidates. In *Metaphysics* 1001b7–13, Aristotle reports an argument concerning the nature of being, which he attributes to Zeno (DK 29A 21 = Laks-Most *Zen. D* 8 = W, 563):

⁵⁶ Earlier in the 20th century, dates going back as far as in the 6th century BCE were proposed: most notably Gompertz (1932, 160) proposed that the use of the adjective ἀσώματος, 'incorporeal', may go back to Anaximenes. Gompertz' suggestions concerning ἀσώματος were sharply criticized by Renehan (1980), who suggests that the term was coined by Plato. In Renehan's (ibid., 118) wake, some more recent scholars such as Palmer (2003) and Harriman (2018) have suggested that, in the 5th century BCE, the noun σῶμα still signified primarily living bodies, and that the most likely candidates for the early abstract uses are, in fact, instances of this earlier use. An anonymous reviewer of this article suggested that Plato may even have coined the abstract use; based on Gorgias' testimony, discussed below, I disagree with this proposal.

ἔτι εἰ ἀδιαίρετον αὐτὸ τὸ ἕν, κατὰ μὲν τὸ Ζήνωνος ἀξίωμα οὐθέν ἂν εἴη (ὁ γὰρ μήτε προστιθέμενον μήτε ἀφαιρούμενον ποιεῖ μείζον μηδὲ ἕλαττον, οὐ φησιν εἶναι τοῦτο τῶν ὄντων, **ὡς δηλονότι ὄντος μεγέθους τοῦ ὄντος· καὶ εἰ μέγεθος, σωματικόν· τοῦτο γὰρ πάντη ὄν·** τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πῶς μὲν προστιθέμενα ποιήσει μείζον, πῶς δ' οὐθέν, οἷον ἐπίπεδον καὶ γραμμὴ, στιγμὴ δὲ καὶ μονὰς οὐδαμῶς).

Furthermore, if the one itself is indivisible, according to Zeno's axiom, it would be nothing: for that which, if added or removed, makes neither larger nor smaller, he says that this does not belong to the things that exist, as he evidently supposes that what exists is a magnitude, and if it is a magnitude it is corporeal. For this is what exists absolutely; while the other things, if they are added, will make it larger in a certain way, but in another way not at all, like the surface and line; but the point and the unit, not at all.

(Tr. Most.)

The passage attributes to Zeno a doctrine that being (τὸ ὄν) must be something that has a size, and that having size, in turn, means that being has a bodily character. Since this passage is not a quotation but a paraphrase of Zeno's position in Aristotle's own words, it is uncertain to what extent it captures Zeno's terminology.⁵⁷ But as far as Aristotle approximates Zeno's usage, then Zeno associated the bodily character abstractly with the property of having a size. This view implies a crucial change in the *criteria* of use of σώμα. Having a size is now viewed as a criterion for something to be a body, allowing an inference from a spatial extension of a given thing to its bodily character: *if* something has a size, *then* it is a body (is bodily), too – εἰ μέγεθος, σωματικόν. This characterisation may, I suppose, be taken to express a grammatical rule (in Wittgenstein's sense)⁵⁸ for the use of the word σώμα.

⁵⁷ Most importantly, Aristotle does not here use the noun σώμα but the adjective σωματικός, which is otherwise not attested in literature before Aristotle, see p. 94–95 above.

⁵⁸ See Wittgenstein 1953 (§§251–3) where examples “Jeder Stab hat eine Länge” and “Dieser Körper hat eine Ausdehnung” are discussed. Grammatical propositions express forms of linguistic representation by expressing a rule for the use of a given word, here “Stab” and “Körper” – or σώμα in the above passage attributed to Zeno.

Similar terminology, associating spatial extension and bodily existence, surfaces in Melissus' fragment DK 30 B9 (= Laks-Most *Mel.* D8 = W, 564). Interestingly, Melissus draws exactly the opposite consequence than Zeno, arguing rather for non-corporeal character of the ultimate being:

ὅτι γὰρ ἀσώματον εἶναι βούλεται τὸ ὄν, ἐδήλωσεν εἰπών; **εἰ μὲν ὄν εἴη, δεῖ αὐτὸ ἔν εἶναι· ἔν δὲ ὄν δεῖ αὐτὸ σῶμα μὴ ἔχειν. εἰ δὲ ἔχοι πάχος, ἔχοι ἄν μέρη, καὶ οὐκέτι ἔν εἴη.**

That he took being to be non-bodily, he explained by saying “if it should be something that is, it itself must be one. But if it is one, it may not have a body. If it had an extension, it would also have parts and would, therefore, not be one.”

(Text from Wachsmann 2015, 564, tr. Lassi Jakola. Loeb 528 only has the underlined passage.)

This fragment has been a topic of a fairly complex scholarly discussion, and there have been various suggestions concerning its correct interpretation.⁵⁹ I follow Harriman (2018) and take the citation from Melissus to consist of the section printed in bold. Melissus' argument is that having a body implies being extended (or thick, πάχος), which in turn implies having parts (μέρη), which, finally, implies being not-one: hence, being is not bodily / does not have a body.⁶⁰ What interests us is that a close association is established between having a body (σῶμα) and having a thickness/extension (πάχος).⁶¹ Unfortunately, the exact

⁵⁹ The main issue is how to reconcile the thesis of B9 of being's incorporeal character with the view, formulated in B2 and B3 that that being is infinite in μέγεθος. This implies that there must be a relative difference between the being having a μέγεθος and πάχος. See the overviews in Palmer 2003 and in Harriman 2018, 117f. There have also been various suggestions concerning where Melissus' fragment ends and where the paraphrase begins: whereas the beginning of the quotation is clearly designated to begin after ἐδήλωσεν εἰπών, Palmer (2003, 6–9) observed that the authenticity of the final sentence εἰ δὲ ἔχοι ... οὐκέτι ἔν εἴη may be disputed on text-critical grounds.

⁶⁰ This wording comes already quite close to Plato's and Aristotle's βαθύς / βάθος as abstract criterion of the bodily, see Section 2 and n. 8 above.

⁶¹ There has been discussion on the correct reading of πάχος (see e.g. Gompertz 1932, 158–159, Palmer 2003, 4) and on the nature of the exact logical relation between having a πάχος and a σῶμα, again see Palmer (2003, 4ff.) and Harriman (2018, 126ff.).

nature of this association is left open in the text: in fact, that having a *σῶμα* *implies* having a *πάχος*, is not stated explicitly, but seems to be presupposed in the argument. And unlike Aristotle's paraphrase of Zeno, discussed above, the passage does not reveal whether the inference is also meant to be valid in the other direction: i.e., whether having a *πάχος* *implies* having a bodily character. Such an inferential possibility would spell out the possibility of applying the word *σῶμα* to *any* spatially extended thing. But as the text stands, it leaves open the possibility that *σῶμα* in the passage may not signify corporeality in the extended sense, but only 'traditional' organic bodies.⁶²

Even though the evidence provided by Zeno's and Melissus' passages is open to various interpretations, both suggest that the abstract use of *σῶμα* emerged in the Eleatic tradition. Personally, I would not be surprised if this were indeed the case: the Eleatic tradition, after all, more than any other early 'school' of philosophy, was devoted to analysing being in abstract fashion.⁶³

Atomist candidates. A similar development may be detected in the fragments and testimonia of the early atomists. According to some fragments of Democritus, he seems to have followed the Eleatic terminology – even though he notoriously *defended*, against Parmenides and his followers, the reality of non-being, (τὸ μὴ ὄν / τὸ μηδέν), equating it with the void (τὸ κενόν). Plutarch, in *Adv. Col.* 4, ascribes the following terminology to Democritus (DK 68 B 156 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D33; not in W):

μὴ μᾶλλον τὸ δὲν ἢ τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι, 'δὲν' μὲν ὀνομάζων τὸ σῶμα, 'μηδὲν'
δὲ τὸ κενόν, ὡς καὶ τούτου φύσιν τινὰ καὶ ὑπόστασιν ἰδίαν ἔχοντος.

⁶² See Sedley (1999, 129) and Palmer (2003, 4), who argue that Melissus' claim was directed against an anthropomorphic conception of what is.

⁶³ Havelock (1984, 31–32) interprets the fragment as Melissus' attempt at creating an abstract concept for material stuff, which Parmenides still tried to capture in his semi-Homeric diction by other means. Havelock argues that that the word is "stretched, like so many other abstractions [...], out of the specificity of a human being to the dimensions of cosmic reality". It is perhaps interesting to add that unlike the Hippocratics, Empedocles and Atomists, Melissus has little to say about the ultimate composition of bodies: in line with the abstract Eleatic dialectics, his passage rather implies that *anything* which admits extension may be divided in parts.

The something does not exist more than the nothing. He calls the body ‘something’, the void ‘nothing’, on the idea that this too possesses certain nature and its own existence.

(Loeb 528, tr. Most slightly modified.)

From the perspective of conceptual history, this passage is highly interesting: it testifies that Democritus introduced the ‘technical’ term δέν as a contrastive negative term to the ordinary Greek expression μηδέν, nothing, by removing the negative μή from the expression (compare DK 68 A37 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D29). And Plutarch explains that Democritus equated this term with σώμα – with body, with bodily existence. In Democritus view, then, the reality consists ultimately of corporeal bodies (something) and the void (nothing). Furthermore, according to some other testimonies, Democritus also tended to call his indivisible and compact (ναστός) atoms (see DK 68 A38 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D32) – the basic items of his ontological scheme – σώματα. In fragment DK 68 B168 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D36, Simplicius explains that people such as Democritus,

διὰ τὸ κενὸν καὶ οὗτοι τὴν κατὰ τόπον κίνησιν κινεῖσθαι λέγουσι τὴν φύσιν, **τουτέστι τὰ φυσικὰ καὶ πρῶτα καὶ ἄτομα σώματα.**

say that nature, i.e. the natural, first and invisible bodies, are moved through the void by a locomotion.

(Lob 528, tr. Most slightly modified.)

Similar reference to ‘simple’ or ‘first bodies’ are attested in other fragments and testimonies, too.⁶⁴ If this account of terminology is correct, then Democritus did use the word σώμα to designate his *indivisible* atoms.⁶⁵ And if the only formal characters of atoms are, in his view, shape (σχῆμα) and size (μέγεθος)⁶⁶ (and

⁶⁴ τὸ ἐλάχιστον σώμα in DK 68 B141 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D34b; τὰ πρῶτα σώματα in DK 68 A47 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D37, DK 68 A49 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D43 and DK 68 A120 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D40.

⁶⁵ Compare the notes on Melissus, above: Democritus’ terminology is at odds with Melissus’ characterisation of bodies as something that can *always* be divided.

⁶⁶ See DK 68 A47 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D51, compare DK 68 A37 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D29 and DK 68

possibly weight [βάρος]⁶⁷) – then these features may also be taken as the formal characters of bodies, similar to Zeno’s μέγεθος and Melissus’ πάχος.

The atomists’ innovations imply indirectly another radical shift in the way the nature of bodies is understood. Whereas in the earlier tradition, σῶμα was paradigmatically the *complex* body of a living being, which we can hear, touch, and see, the atomists seem to imply just the opposite: only the ‘first’ and ‘simple’ atomic bodies exist in their own right, whereas perceptible composites made out of them – such as living bodies – are, in the last resort, just appearances. Thus, the earlier idea of the body being essentially that which one was composed out of – and is to be decomposed into – the elements is practically turned upside down. Indeed, Galen (DK 68 A49 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D63) reports that the atoms do not, in themselves, have any perceptible qualities at all, citing a passage from Democritus:

νόμῳ γὰρ χροίῃ, νόμῳ γλυκύ, νόμῳ πικρόν, ἐτεῆ δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν

By convention color, by convention sweet, by convention bitter – but in reality atoms and void.

(Loeb 528, tr. Most, modified. Compare the almost identical DK 68 B9 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D14 from Sextus Empiricus.)

This passage implies that the early atomists introduced a distinction between two kinds of σώματα: the ephemeral ‘complex’ bodies, which are also the objects of our sensations, and the everlasting ‘simple’ bodies, which explain the nature and behavior of the former.

Even though this is clearly what the above passages suggest, some scholars have recently questioned that the Democritean passages, discussed above, capture his *own* use of terms. Thomas Buchheim and David Meißner (2016, 14n14), for example, suggest that in Democritus’ fragments, the complex bodies are called σώματα,⁶⁸ while the atoms are *not* called so by Democritus, but only by people

A6 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D31.

⁶⁷ For: DK 68 A60 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D48 and DK 68 A61 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D49, against: DK 68 A47 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D50).

⁶⁸ There is clear evidence that Democritus did use σῶμα for the complex living bodies: see DK 68 B and B 159 = W, 567–8. DK 68 B 159 is highly interesting as it introduces the contrast between ψυχή

reporting his doctrines.⁶⁹ While Buchheim and Meißner do not go into detail, the reasoning behind their claim must be the following: DK 68 B 156 = Laks-Most *Atom.* D33 (above), rather than *capturing* Democritus' equation of δέν and σῶμα, is rather Plutarch's retrospective *attempt at explaining* Democritus' somewhat idiosyncratic term δέν for the audience of his own time.⁷⁰ The same argument may be, *mutatis mutandis*, applied also to the other testimonies: as it was *later* a commonplace to use the word σῶμα of the atomic elements, it seemed natural to project this terminology on Democritus, too. Viewed from this perspective, it may even be tempting to pose the question why Democritus even bothered to introduce *new* terms – such as τὸ δέν – if he simply could have used the word σῶμα instead. While this line of reasoning is possible, it seems to me that the philological evidence is too limited to decide the matter conclusively. The above testimonies do suggest, *pace* Buchheim – Meißner, that he did extend the terminology to the atomic bodies, too.

Symptomatic passages in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*. The abstract use of σῶμα, of which we have found traces in the Eleatic and in the atomist traditions, made it possible – and increasingly natural – to apply the noun (i) to the constituents of complex bodies and (ii) to non-living objects. The crucial change was that spatial extension was gradually introduced as the central criterion of what it is to be a body, a σῶμα, or to possess a bodily character. This abstract use – the association of bodies and size – is something we find later regularly both in Plato's work and in Aristotle, along with the older idea that the bodies of living (and dead) animals are σώματα. As we saw (at Station III, above), both the Hippocratic and Empedocles mostly refrained from adopting it. But others did. In the early 4th century BCE, this extended use seems to become more and more popular among the intellectuals of the time. One important early witness is the sophist

and σῶμα, familiar from Plato, but does it in distinctively different manner: Democritus argues that, in a fictional court case between the soul and the body, the soul could well be sentenced for having neglected the body in many ways. Such passages may have prompted Plato to argue for opposite views in his work, as he is known to have been critical of Democritus' philosophy.

⁶⁹ This reasoning is accepted and followed by Wachsmann (2016, 568), who has *not* included DK 68 B 141 and B 156 in her *Stellensammlung*, which list 3 instances in Democritus. This, I believe, makes her otherwise useful collection somewhat biased.

⁷⁰ Read in this manner, only “μὴ μᾶλλον τὸ δέν ἢ τὸ μηδέν εἶναι” is to be considered the fragment, whereas what follows is Plutarch's paraphrase.

Gorgias of Leontinoi, who, incidentally, allegedly had connections both to the Eleatic and to the Empedoclean traditions.⁷¹ Indeed, Gorgias' uses of *σῶμα* seem to bring together many of the developments I have articulated above. Three passages from his speech *Encomium of Helen* will show, I believe, that Gorgias could naturally and effortlessly use the term in the new extended sense alongside with its traditional meaning. The first passage runs as follows (DK 82 B 11[18] = Laks–Most D24[18] = W, 565):

ἀλλὰ μὴν οἱ γραφεῖς ὅταν ἐκ πολλῶν χρωμάτων καὶ σωμάτων ἐν σῶμα
καὶ σχῆμα τελείως ἀπεργάζωνται, τέρπουσι τὴν ὄψιν.

Moreover, whenever painters perfectly depict a single body and form on the basis of many colors and bodies, they cause pleasure for sight.
(Loeb 531, tr. Most.)

This passage shows that, for Gorgias, both composite wholes *and* their constituents are *σώματα*: *one* body is presented as having been made/painted from many bodies.⁷² For Gorgias, bodies are thus not confined to organic bodies of living beings, and the noun is applicable to parts as well as wholes. This is in line with the main tendencies of the abstract use. But the adaptation of such a use did not hinder Gorgias from using *σῶμα* of living human beings and individuals, as is clear from another passage from the very same speech (DK 82 B 11[4] = Laks–Most D24 [4]):

[...] πλείστας δὲ πλείστοις ἐπιθυμίας ἔρωτος ἐνεργάσατο, ἐνὶ δὲ σώματι
πολλὰ σώματα συνήγαγεν ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ μεγάλοις μεγάλα φρονούντων
[...]

And she instilled in very many people very many longings for love, and by means of one body she brought together many bodies of men who had great ambitions on great matters.
(Loeb 531, tr. Most, slightly altered by L.J.)

⁷¹ See DK 82 A2, 3 and 10 and B3. For a discussion of the Empedoclean aspects of Gorgias, see Buchheim 1985.

⁷² Note also that *σχῆμα* was an abstract feature of the atoms by Democritus.

Both passages connect neatly with the Hippocratic tradition. As I pointed out earlier, in Brooke Holmes' analysis, the Hippocratics ascribed causal powers to physical bodies. For Gorgias, the bodies, be they simple or complex, are indeed *dynamic bodies* with causal powers. In the second passage, the noun σώμα is used as instrumental dative: the beautiful body of Helen is the *moving cause* of the suitors' bodies moving to gather together in "great ambitions on great matters". And in the first passage, a complex perceptible body of painting affects us causally, bringing forth emotional reactions.⁷³ Even more emphatically, this dynamic aspect is present in the third passage (DK 82 B11 [8] = Laks-Most D24 [8]):

[...] λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς **σικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ** θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτέλει.

Speech is a great potentate that by means of a tiniest and most invisible body performs the most divine deeds.

(Loeb 531, tr. Most, altered by L.J.)

For Gorgias, then, a speech's/language's (λόγος) capability of bringing about "divine deeds" is here, via the instrumental dative, connected with the speech/language having (being?) itself a σώμα, which, in turn, is characterized as being both "tiniest" and "most invisible". While many interpretations may be given to what exactly this Gorgianic "body of speech" is,⁷⁴ alone these linguistic formulations would not be possible, had Gorgias not already operated with a fairly abstract notion of σώματα. In the old paradigm of σώμα-as-a-living-body,

⁷³ Allusions to medicine are present also Section 14 of the speech, as the power of speech on the soul is compared with the power of some *farmaka* on the body.

⁷⁴ I find Immisch's (1927, 23) old suggestion that this σώμα would be the *tongue* – the organ of speech – unlikely: a tongue, though small, surely is not an invisible body. (Even if true, Immisch's interpretation would attribute to Gorgias a semi-abstract use of σώμα, as the word here refers to parts of a living human body.) MacDowell (1982, 36) warns that the association of σώμα with λόγος may be just a "figure of speech" with no implication that Gorgias took λόγος to be a "material substance". Despite this warning, it seems to me quite promising to take the passage as a suggestion that speech *itself* as a body of a kind: a dynamic body with an elaborate structure, it may not be seen, but it affects human beings in various ways. ἀφανής may be here interpreted quite literally: language does not operate in the visual medium, but rather through our ears and comprehension.

characterizing *σῶμα* as *σμικρότατον* and *ἀφανεστότατον* would come close to committing a *contradictio in adiecto*.⁷⁵

If these observations on Gorgias' usage are correct, his *Encomium of Helen* gives us a definite *terminus-ante-quem* for the abstract and extended use of *σῶμα*. The speech is typically dated to late 5th century BCE, even though a slightly later date in the early 4th century BCE may not be excluded.⁷⁶ Thus, Gorgias' testimony is either slightly later or contemporary with the other fragments discussed in Stations III and IV, above. Almost certainly, the speech is older than any of Plato's dialogues. While Gorgias himself – as a public speaker – probably helped to propagate the extended use, he was most likely building on semantic resources that had been created in the philosophical, cosmological and medical discussions of his immediate predecessors.

4. Concluding observations

In a seminal article, Robert Renehan (1980, 118) observed that in the 5th century BCE, “*σῶμα* still meant primarily what it had always meant, namely, the body of an organic being, living or dead. By the fourth century, it appears to have been capable of much the same transferred meanings as the English ‘body’”. He adds, however, that this semantic development had “doubtless” already begun in the previous century. With the above observations, I hope to have sketched the main lines of this earlier semantic development. In the late 5th century – in the wake of the emerging ancient medicine and of the physiological speculations on the origin of all things – the word *σῶμα* acquired a series of new conceptual articulations. On the one hand, there is the new contrast between the perceptible, generated and perishable bodies and their (everlasting) constituents, evident especially in the medical texts (Station III). Some passages testify of the noun *σῶμα* being applied, on the one hand, to lifeless objects, and, on the other, to the ultimate constituents of the complex

⁷⁵ I say “come close”, because one could, arguably, think of the body of speech in analogy to body of a *very small*, but still living animal, e.g. a ladybug or a louse. In this case, the superlatives are not absolute, and the ‘invisibility’ is only relative invisibility.

⁷⁶ See Buchheim 2012, IX and 160: he proposes a date between 427 and 415 BCE. Because Gorgias lived a long life extending well into the 4th century BCE, an exact date is difficult to give.

bodies. While such uses may initially have been either metaphorical or analogical extensions of the old uses, eventually, the idea of σῶμα becomes closely associated with having some kind of size or a spatial extension. (Station IV). But still, in line with Stations I and II, the living and dead bodies also remain σῶματα – for they, too, surely are things that have a spatial size; the old σῶματα of Homer, Hesiod, Pindar and Hippocrates all satisfy the new criterion of what it is to be a body.

Viewed in terms of subjects of predication (extension), the development in the semantics of σῶμα from Homer to Plato is that of gradual extension: *first* only dead or moribund animals are designated as σῶματα (Station I), after which the term is gradually extended to living beings and persons (Station II), then to other compounded and perishable things (Station III) and, finally, to all spatially extended stuffs (Station IV). As far as I see, in this process of semantic enrichment, *none* of the previous uses become obsolete or abandoned. But evaluated from the perspective of *criteria of use*, the break with the past is more radical: in the late 5th Century BCE, σῶμα seems to have gradually broken loose of its earlier connections with mortality and ephemerality and became associated closely with the idea of having a μέγεθος – an extension in space. This, at any rate, is the philosophical abstract concept of σῶμα, which, I have suggested, emerges in the Eleatic and Atomistic traditions. Indeed, this is precisely the abstract characterisation of the εἶδος of σῶμα which we encountered in Plato's *Timaeus*, quoted and discussed in Section 2, above.

I hope that the reader will pardon me for ending this overview with a somewhat speculative suggestion concerning the conceptual situation in the 4th century BCE. On the basis of the above overview, it should be clear that the earlier tradition and the various articulations given to the term σῶμα gave the intellectuals of the time surprisingly rich conceptual resources, which, in fact, contained seeds for developments in various directions. When Plato and, a generation later, Aristotle, entered the scene, the concept of σῶμα, originally a term of ordinary Greek, had been in flux and moulded by the preceding generations of intellectuals. Plato and Aristotle take this process further. As was pointed out in Section 2, many of the term's derivatives appear first in their works, and their systematic employment of the term in the abstract fashion probably essentially helped to propagate the abstract use.⁷⁷ In their relation to

⁷⁷ It would be interesting to examine in detail, to what extent and when the new abstract criterion for

previous developments, it seems, Plato and Aristotle took slightly different paths. For Aristotle, the *bodies of living beings*, be they constituted however complexly from various kinds of elementary stuffs, came to enjoy a special status. The living beings, or more exactly: the *forms* of living beings, are Aristotelian substances in the primary sense. Given Aristotle's background and interest in medicine, this is probably no great surprise. In his approach, Aristotle picks up the semantic tradition of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ emerging in Hesiod and developed further in the Hippocratic tradition. Even though he does accept the abstract sense of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as something being spatially extended in his logical and metaphysical works, in his natural philosophy the contrast between complex $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ and their constituents remains pivotal. Plato, in turn, who rather tends to articulate (and *de-value*) bodies in contrast to soul, does not seem to be that willing to accept the special *ontological* status of complex bodies. Where the Platonic contrast and the associated 'real' distinction between the soul and the body dominate, the fine-grained distinctions between various kinds of bodies are not crucial. Here, it seems, he was more a follower of the 'abstract' Eleatic tradition than Aristotle was.

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the use of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ influenced the ordinary use of the term. Most likely, for a long time the newly shaped specialized concept was something that co-existed with the older regular uses.

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