

THE SCEPTICS

R. J. Hankinson

THE ARGUMENTS OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

Edited by Ted Honderich



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THE SCEPTICS

The Arguments of the Philosophers

EDITOR: TED HONDERICH

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Preface

It may sound pretentious to say it, but this book has been nearly a decade and a half in the making. I first became interested in Greek scepticism when, as an undergraduate, I took part in a reading party on Sextus organized by Jonathan Barnes at the Chalet des Mélézes in the Summer of 1979. As a graduate student I originally intended to work directly on Sextan and Carneadean scepticism, although I eventually found myself dealing with scepticism by the back door, as it were, *via* the Greek medical tradition, and the work of Galen in particular; the principal focus of my study, Galen's *On Antecedent Causes*, consists in an attempt to defend the notion of causation against sceptical attack.

In the late 1980s, while teaching at McGill, I wrote several papers dealing more or less directly with scepticism and the epistemology of the later Greek medical schools, in particular my 1987a, 1987b, and 1988c; a little later on, in Texas, I wrote 1990a, 1991c and 1994.

So Greek Scepticism has never been very far from my thoughts for more than a decade. But it was not until the Autumn of 1988, when I was invited by Ted Honderich to contribute a volume on the matter to this series, that I began seriously to consider writing anything *in extenso* directly on the subject. Pressure of other, prior commitments forced me to put off any real work until January of 1991; but many of my basic views, in particular on the nature and liveability of the sceptical way of life, had already been formed in the course of a joint seminar on Scepticism, Ancient and Modern, that I gave with Charles Travis at McGill in the Spring of 1988; the class, which was also regularly attended by Harry Bracken, was fertile and stimulating, and I wish to record my gratitude to the seminarians for their intellectual engagement and acuity.

Most recently of all, the first draft of this book was presented, chapter by chapter, to a class on Greek Scepticism at the University of Texas in the Spring of 1991. My students not only displayed an admirable flexibility in adapting to an unorthodox format, as well as a generously forgiving attitude to the frequent lateness and sketchiness of the material—they also threw themselves enthusiastically into the discussion of what was, very obviously, work in progress: and to their acute questioning and not infrequent insight I owe much of what is good about the final product. I was also fortunate in having the scholarly benefit of the presence of Jacques Brunschwig (for several sessions) and Jonathan Barnes (for one). Two of the students who attended the seminar in particular, Mike Einhaus and Mark Gifford, have been extremely helpful in assisting the gestation of this project; in particular the latter read and commented with great acuteness on the entire penultimate draft, and the final result is both philosophically more coherent and literarily more felicitous in innumerable places as a result of his keen and critical eye.

Finally the areas of my greatest indebtedness. Jonathan Barnes is in many ways the Ur-progenitor of this book; and his influence, both in style and substance, will be equally

apparent throughout. He was the first to turn my gaze towards philosophy a decade and a half ago; and he has been a continual source of philosophical stimulation and conbibulous companionship ever since. I have found the example of Michael Frede, both in his published work and in conversation, of incalculable value; my debt to him, and to the others mentioned in this paragraph, will be obvious to all who are familiar with their work. Lastly Myles Burnyeat, as my doctoral supervisor, played a key role in my general philosophical *formation*, both by the power of his example of clear and rigorous thought, and by his unfailingly encouraging, if critical, attitude to my work. His influence too is ubiquitously evident. As a small acknowledgement of this and other debts, with thanks and gratitude, I dedicate this book to him.

Texas, June 1994

Note to the Paperback Edition

For the paperback edition, I have mostly confined my corrections to errors of typography, reference and (occasionally) fact, and the smoothing out of some infelicities of style. I have made additions to the bibliography, but mostly in order to remedy earlier deficiencies—I have made no systematic attempt to bring it up to date. The glossary is considerably fuller, and (I hope) more helpful. In some cases I have altered my views since writing this book, in some cases substantially: but to take account of those changes would have involved wholesale revision and rewriting impractical at this stage; and by and large I still stand by the account of Greek scepticism and its history contained herein.

Texas, November 1997

Book I

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I Introduction

Sources and Transmission

The student of ancient philosophy is in a position at once more fascinating and more frustrating than that of his colleagues who work in less antique disciplines. The exegete of Hume, for instance, has a complete body of text to deal with—and while the writings themselves may prove difficult and opaque, there is little dispute about how the text itself should actually read. Occasionally, a diligent editor may be able to point to differences between various editions of the same text, or between the printed version and the manuscript, in order to restore the precise reading intended by the author which has been obscured by typographical error or *lapsus calami*—and in even fewer cases, such alterations are philosophically significant (although one such case is noted in Chapter II: n. 25). Sometimes, too, investigators may discover among unpublished fragments, notebooks, and letters indications of where the author's thought was tending. But by and large their efforts are directed towards the explication of a well-established text written in a relatively accessible language.

By contrast, the ancient philosopher works with material, often incomplete and fragmentary, written in dead languages. Even Platonists and Aristotelians, although relatively well served by the tradition, still need to take account of *lacunae* and imperfections in the transmitted texts, as well as of the fact that some of their work has been lost to the depredations of time. When we read **Plato**,¹ we do so from a text painstakingly established by scholars over a period of centuries from manuscripts whose reliability varies enormously, and whose relative importance has to be established by comparison and contrast. The editor's job is to produce on the basis of the manuscripts (and, where no manuscript transmits sense, his own conjectures) a text as close as possible to his author's original. All of that presupposes the existence of a healthy manuscript tradition: but even in the best cases what survive are copies of copies of copies, distant descendants of the original autograph. And the process of copying inevitably intrudes error and confusion into the original.

That is bad enough. But frequently the position is worse still, with no complete texts of the authors in question surviving. For the Presocratics we rely exclusively on later reportage. Sometimes, later writers preserve their actual words; more probably we will have to rely on the reports of doctrine later known as 'doxography', often filtered through the prejudices and misunderstandings of hostile reporters, for example Christian fathers such as Hippolytus of Rome whose *Against the Heresies* reports the doctrines (and sometimes the actual words) of the pagan philosophers in order to attack them. His attitude cannot be expected to be evenhandedly impartial: and it is not.²

Even when we are fortunate enough to possess substantial numbers of fragments,³ they

may be impenetrably opaque, sometimes single words only, exhibiting no natural order and whose interrelations remain indistinct. Such is the case with Heraclitus, who was legendarily obscure even to the ancients who possessed the whole of his book and spoke his language: of the more than a hundred fragments that survive of his hugely influential *On Nature*, only a few are more than two or three lines in extent.

Where we have to rely largely on mere doxography (the précis reports as opposed to the *ipsissima verba*), even when we may reasonably acquit the doxographer of gross prejudice and partiality (or at least discount for it), we must often contend with the compiler's lack of intelligence. This is true of one of our most important sources for Greek philosophy, **Diogenes Laertius's** *Lives of the Philosophers* (henceforth '*DL*'). Diogenes, who probably wrote in the third century AD, evinces a gargantuan appetite for gossip and tittle-tattle; but buried among the *National Enquirer-esque* garbage ('Heraclitus smeared himself with dung as a cure for dropsy and was devoured by dogs who failed to recognize him thus': *DL* 9 4) are nuggets of genuine philosophy. Nevertheless, given his *penchant* for reporting virtually without editorial comment any story he finds in his sources (even when it conflicts with others), his testimony is at the very least suspect.⁴

The Transmission of Greek Scepticism

This is the basic situation with regard to the transmission of Greek scepticism. **Pyrrho of Elis** (c. 360–c. 270 BC), the eponymous founder of the sceptical way (Chapter IV), wrote nothing at all; our earliest source for his philosophical outlook is the fragmentary remains of his follower and philosophical amanuensis **Timon of Phlius** (c. 320–230 BC). Timon wrote both prose and verse, but none of his works survive. His most famous piece, the mock-epic *Silli* ('Lampoons'), poked fun at the dogmatic pretensions of every non-sceptical philosopher, as well as outlining his master Pyrrho's stance. But only a handful of fragments from the *Silli* remain, many of which are mere invective.⁵ A brief outline of Timon's philosophical position is preserved in the work of bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. But it is not even Eusebius's own account: rather, he reproduces (apparently faithfully) the summary of **Aristocles of Messene**, a first century AD Peripatetic. Aristocles, as a member of a rival school, has no interest in impartial reportage. Even when the report comes from a favourable source, such as **Sextus Empiricus**, the original positions may become contaminated in other ways; Sextus, for instance, is particularly prone to discern scepticism in the work of his great predecessors even when none exists (see Chapter III).

Sextus is our principal source for Greek scepticism, particularly in its Pyrrhonian form; and we are fortunate to possess two complete works of his, as well as the bulk of a third. But Sextus is a late writer;⁶ and it is doubtful whether much if any of his work is original. Rather he provides a vast compendium of sceptical argument drawn from a variety of earlier sources; and consequently, if it is the sources themselves which are most to engage our interest, once again we shall be involved in a labour of reconstruction.

Indeed, of the four figures who are arguably of the greatest importance in the tradition of Greek scepticism, Pyrrho, **Arcesilaus** (c. 318–c. 243 BC), **Carneades** (c. 219–c. 129 BC), and **Aenesidemus** (*fl.* first century BC), three wrote nothing at all (Arcesilaus and

Carneades aped Pyrrho in this regard: **Clitomachus** was the latter's Timon), and of Aenesidemus's writings we possess only a very brief précis of his *Pyrrhonian Discourses*, preserved in the ninth-century Byzantine scholar Photius's account of the contents of his library (Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212). Aenesidemus's organizing hand is often discerned behind the bulk of Sextus's argumentation—but the attribution of much of it to him is fragile (Chapter VII, 120–1).

For Arcesilaus too we must rely on indirect testimony, again from Sextus, as well as Diogenes, **Cicero** (106–43 BC), and **Plutarch** (c. 40–120 AD): no even remotely contemporary records of his discourse survive. Arcesilaus is important because it was under his guidance that the Academy of Plato took a sceptical turn in direct reaction against the newly-developed and highly optimistic early Stoic epistemology of **Zeno** of Citium (c. 340–264 BC); for two centuries the Academy and the Stoa remained locked in dialectical conflict (Chapters V and VI). Things improve somewhat with Carneades, since much of Cicero's philosophical writing is devoted to the exposition and defence of Carneades' version of Academic scepticism. But even so what we have is at two or three removes from its source (Cicero had studied with **Philo**, a pupil of Clitomachus). And our knowledge of later Academics is equally sketchy (Chapter VIII).

Moreover, there may well be other philosophers whose importance we cannot now even guess at, such is the tradition's capriciousness. One of the most crucial developments in the systematization of Greek scepticism as a methodology of destructive argumentation, the enumeration of the so-called 'Five Modes', is attributed by Diogenes to one **Agrippa** (*DL* 9 88); but Sextus makes no mention of him in the same context—and he is referred to nowhere else (Chapter X).

Sextus Empiricus

As for Sextus, whose presentation of Pyrrhonism will occupy Book II of this work, scholars disagree as to how far if at all he is an original thinker.⁷ In the introduction to his best-known and most influential text *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH*: this conventional abbreviation, puzzling to the non-classicist, derives from the work's Greek title *Purhōneioi Hupotupōseis*), he claims simply to offer an account of 'the Sceptical way', rather than any new form of it. Even so, Sextus was recognized in late antiquity as an important figure and his version of Pyrrhonism became canonical, which accounts for its unique survival. Diogenes considered him a leading Pyrrhon-1st (*DL* 9 116); and St Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330–c. 390 AD) mentions Sextus in the same breath as Pyrrho as a progenitor of the 'vile and malignant disease' of arguing opposing positions which had infected the churches (*Orationes* 21 12; cf. 32 25).

Sextus was by profession a physician, which may be found surprising on two counts. First, some will wonder at the connection between medicine and philosophy—theoretical speculation (except perhaps of the fiscal sort) not apparently being one of the major concerns of the modern medical practitioner, 'medical ethics' notwithstanding. But medicine and philosophy grew hand in hand in the ancient world, and many important sceptical arguments are of medical provenance (Chapter XIII). Yet one might still ask how could a *sceptic* be a doctor? Doctors are in the business (ostensibly) of curing

people—and doing that surely requires knowledge, or at least well-grounded beliefs, which the sceptic refuses to countenance. Nor can the ancients be allowed the Humean defence that sceptical doubt is the province of one's intellectual hours, to be left behind on leaving one's study, or the Cartesian response that scepticism is purely methodological, and not to be used as a guide to practical life. The Greeks took their scepticism more seriously than that. Nevertheless, they have intriguing answers to these objections—and how successful the sceptics are in outlining a way of life (as opposed to merely offering an intellectual *divertissement*) turns to a large extent on how well they can defuse them (Chapters XVII and XVIII).

None of Sextus's medical writings survives. However, in addition to *PH*, we possess either completely or in substantial part two other philosophical works. There is an attack on various alleged branches of knowledge and those who lay claim to them in six books ('book' here in the ancient sense: the whole text occupies no more than about two hundred printed pages), each one devoted to a different alleged 'art' (*technē*: 'skill', 'science', or 'expertise' are sometimes better renderings of this notorious term) and its practitioners: grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, geometry, astrology, and music. The collection, which is clearly intended as a comprehensive attack upon academic pretensions in all disciplines, is known collectively by its Latinized name of *Adversus Mathematicos* (henceforth conventionally '*M*') 1–6, '*mathēmatikos*' here meaning anyone with pretensions to learning (Chapter XV).

Sextus's final extant work consists of five books which in their essentials offer fuller and expanded versions of the material to be found in *PH* 2–3, as well as a reworking of some of the material of the final paragraphs (210–41) of book 1.⁸ Our text is almost certainly incomplete, and is missing at least one book that would have corresponded to the bulk of *PH* 1.⁹ The five surviving books divide into two *Against the Logicians* (*M* 7–8), two *Against the Physicists* (*M* 9–10), and one *Against the Ethicists* (*M* 11).¹⁰ Despite their titles, *M* 7–11 are not directed primarily *ad homines* (although they contain a wealth of *ad hominem* argument), but are rather topically organized.

This division of philosophy into logic (construed broadly to include epistemology), physics, and ethics is a commonplace of post-Aristotelian philosophy, and the Stoics offered a variety of colourful images to illustrate the supposed relationship between the three branches of wisdom. Philosophy is like an orchard: logic is the fencing, physics the trees, ethics the fruit (*DL* 7 40,=26B LS¹¹; cf. *M* 7 17) or like an egg: logic the shell, physics the albumen, ethics the yolk (*M* 7 18).¹² Sextus adopts the division not out of any personal commitment to it (such a commitment would be incompatible with a properly sceptical approach), but rather 'undogmatically' (*adoxastōs*, literally 'without opinions'; the precise force of this will be assessed in Chapters XVII and XVIII). The Dogmatists (a term covering any philosophers who profess positive beliefs)¹³ adopt such a division—Sextus, as a good sceptic, neither accepts nor rejects it, but he is perfectly happy to follow it for conventional reasons as supplying a convenient structure for his refutations. Such a practice is typical of the sceptical procedure.

Scepticism in the Medical Schools and the Medical Tradition

So far we have concentrated upon scepticism in its explicitly philosophical context, noting in passing the existence of two distinct species of Greek philosophical scepticism, Pyrrhonian and Academic. Precisely what the differences between them were, how they arose, and what their significance was, will be dealt with in Chapters IV–VIII. Suffice it to say here that they represent two distinct developments of what came to be seen by the end of the fourth century BC as a more or less common Socratic heritage; the sceptical tendencies of two other schools of ‘Minor Socratics’, the Cyrenaics and the Megarians, will also be discussed in Chapter IV.

Let us briefly turn to a different channel in the stream. By the fall of the Roman Republic in 31 BC, ancient medicine had come to exhibit two clearly distinct faces. On the one hand, we find a variety of different schools (Pneumatics, Erasistrateans, Herophileans, and so on) who differed in the details both of their physiology and their therapeutics, but who were united by the belief that a solid theoretical substructure is essential to sound medical practice. One could not successfully practise medicine in default of a knowledge of the constituents and functioning of the human body, and of what constituted and caused pathological conditions. Common to this otherwise disparate group is a commitment to both physical theory and aetiology, or causal analysis. For this reason they were generally lumped together as Dogmatists (because they espoused *dogmata*, theoretical beliefs), or Rationalists or Logical Doctors (because they allowed a privileged place in their theory for reason and for logical inference to hidden internal conditions).

Contrasted with them we find a rather less heterogeneous group of practitioners known as Empiricists, because they rejected the theoretical pretensions of the Dogmatists and held that experience alone, without need for grand theory, was all that was required for sound medical practice. Empiricism, for all that it lacked the great diversity of the schools ranged under the Dogmatist umbrella, came in a number of forms and a variety of strengths of anti-theoretical standpoint (see Chapter XIII, 226ff.).¹⁴ What matters from our point of view is the extremely close connection between philosophical arguments of the sceptics and the dialectical practices of the Empiricist doctors.¹⁵ The Empiricists were sceptics, of a sort, at least about the nature of scientific explanation. And during the five centuries or so from the beginning of the third century BC onwards in which medical Empiricism flourished, philosophical and medical scepticism developed in tandem.

Consequently an examination of what remains of Empiricist doctrine is Empiricism is the Proem to the medical encyclopaedia *De Medicina (Med.)* essential to forming a comprehensive picture of ancient scepticism—but here once more fate has been unkind. Our earliest major source for medical compiled by the first-century AD Roman author Celsus—and Celsus was not an Empiricist himself (it is doubtful whether he was even a doctor). Only one, relatively uninteresting (at least from a theoretical point of view), treatise by an Empiricist doctor survives, a surgical handbook (in the form of a commentary on Hippocrates’ *On Joints*) written about 70 BC by Apollonius of Citium. For the rest, we must rely on reports to be found in other authors, the most important of them being **Galen**.

Galen (129–c. 210–15 AD) was the most important and influential physician of ancient times after the semi-legendary Hippocrates (fifth century BC). His work is crucial for two distinct reasons. In the first place, more survives of Galen’s writings than of any other

ancient author; and in his voluminous output he reports, sometimes at great length, the views of his predecessors and contemporaries not only on medical issues but also on philosophical subjects. Galen's importance is not however confined to mere reportage: for although he is now principally remembered as a doctor he was also a considerable philosopher, writing on logic, ethics, and scientific method.¹⁶

Although by temperament a Rationalist, committed to the possibility of providing theoretical explanations for things,¹⁷ he did not reject Empirical medicine out of hand (as he did Pyrrhonian scepticism: Chapter VIII, 146ff.).¹⁸ It is immensely fortunate that he wrote a short *Outline of Empiricism (Subf. Emp.)*, in addition to a fictionalized dialogue between an Empirical and a Rationalist physician on methodological issues (*On Medical Experience [Med. Exp.]*, which purports to record a debate between two of Galen's teachers), and a short handbook *On Sects for Beginners* in which the differing views of the major medical schools (Dogmatist, Empiricist, and Methodist) are compared and contrasted (Chapter XIII, 227). All of them survive, although only *On Sects* does so in Greek.¹⁹

At about the beginning of our era (the actual facts of the development and its dates are disputed)²⁰ there arose a third 'sect' known as Methodists. The Methodist doctors reacted against both what they took to be the sterile and irresolvable theoretical debates among the Rationalists and the excessive complexity of the Empiricists' therapeutic categorizations. In their place they offered a medical theory of stunning simplicity. There were only three types of disease: those involving constriction, those involving relaxation, and those involving some mixture of the two. All the doctor needed to do was to identify which of the three the patient was suffering from, and then apply the appropriate therapy (if they're loose they need tightening; and *vice versa*). The Methodists (at least in their earliest, most hard-line phase) reject all causal theorizing—and in so doing contribute to the sceptical side of the debate on the discoverability of causal connections, and on the theory of signs (Chapter XIII, 234–6; cf. Chapters XI and XII).

The Rediscovery of Scepticism

We have already mentioned the hostility to Pyrrhonism of Gregory of Nazianzus; and at the end of the fourth century, Academic scepticism was still sufficiently alive philosophically to provoke Augustine's *Against the Academics*. But after the fourth-century episcopal attacks die down, we find little evidence of any interest in scepticism, even in those eastern intellectual centres (Alexandria and Byzantium) that escaped the immediate depredations of the northern invasions. John Stobaeus, a fifth-century Byzantine philosophical compiler, refers to Pyrrho, and was perhaps familiar with Sextus. The sixth-century historian Agathias mentions both Pyrrho and Sextus in sympathetic and comprehending tones (thus confirming that Sextus had become the canonical text for scepticism). Photius possessed and catalogued Aenesidemus's work some three centuries after that (Chapter VII); and later still we find scattered references to Pyrrho and Sextus in the eleventh- and twelfth-century writers John of Sicily, Elias of Crete, Nicholas of Methone, Georgios Tornikes, and Georgios Kedrenos.

The fourteenth century, moreover, affords indirect evidence of a revival of interest in

Pyrrhonism, in the form of a series of Gregorian attacks on Pyrrhonism as a pernicious doctrine, inimical to and destructive of true religion. But the state of the evidence makes it impossible to determine the extent, influence, and importance of this Eastern Pyrrhonist revival.²¹

In the Latin West, when the revival of scholarship in the high Middle Ages began to rekindle interest in ancient learning (first by way of Latin versions of Arabic translations, and later more directly *via* Latin translations from Greek originals rediscovered in the libraries of the East),²² the first wave of classical enthusiasm among the mediaeval scholars did not, apparently, stretch to scepticism. References to sceptical points of view in the philosophers of the period are generally inspired by **Aristotle's** own robustly anti-sceptical arguments in *Metaphysics* 4 4–5 concerning the Principle of Non-Contradiction (PNC: Chapter III, 43ff.): and they are uniformly brief and dismissive. Typical among them is Avicenna's dry remark that anyone prone to doubt PNC should be flogged until they admit that there is a difference between being beaten and not being beaten. Where we do find authentic scepticism, most notably in the fourteenth-century philosopher Nicholas of Autrecourt, it seems to be a home-grown phenomenon, owing nothing to any classical antecedent. The only exceptions to this are the eleventh- and twelfth-century philosophers John of Salisbury and Henry of Ghent, who were apparently acquainted with some of the arguments of Cicero's *Academica* by way of Augustine's counter-blast.

Charles Schmitt, in his elegant and concise study (1983, 226–7) writes:

Owing to a peculiar concatenation of circumstances, the central works of ancient skepticism were practically unknown through the Latin Middle Ages. Some of these were never recovered, and others only came to light in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when they once more became a center of focus and the major impetus from which modern philosophical skepticism developed. Of the three major ancient writings on skepticism still extant—Sextus Empiricus' *Opera*, Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Pyrrho*, and Cicero's *Academica*—the first and third were known to a very few in the west during the Middle Ages, while the second was apparently wholly unknown. The writings of Sextus Empiricus, by far the most important and detailed of the three, exerted no visible influence during the Middle Ages, although we know of three early-fourteenth-century manuscripts of a complete Latin translation of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.²³ Yet, no evidence has thus far appeared to indicate that anyone other than the translator actually read the work. Although Walter Burleigh's *Lives of the Philosophers* is somehow partially based on Diogenes' work,... it does not have a chapter on... Pyrrho of Elis, and I know of no evidence that the *Life of Pyrrho* was known to anyone in the Latin-speaking world before the fifteenth century.

Not until about 1430 was a complete Diogenes available, as a result of which the word 'scepticus' entered the modern intellectual vocabulary. But even then, scepticism's impact on the intellectual community was minimal (Schmitt, 1983, 229–30 offers some tentative reasons for this).

As Richard Popkin has shown,²⁴ it was the appearance in 1562 of a printed edition of a

readable Latin translation of *PH* done by the French scholar Henri Etienne (known by the Latinized name ‘Stephanus’) which set the intellectual world upon its ear. A number of conditions conspired to promote this revolution. First, Europe was still reeling from the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation was under way. Catholic orthodoxy was everywhere under attack, and even where it was still in the ascendant its supporters realized that it had to be fought for: one could no longer simply rely on the comforting weight of tradition. Secondly, and independently, the Aristotelian world-picture was under increasing attack. Copernicus’s *De Revolutionibus*, published only nineteen years earlier, had shaken the comfortable orthodoxy of geocentricity, although its ultimate triumph was at this stage by no means assured (Copernicus actually refers to the heliocentricity of Hicetas of Syracuse, a reference in all probability culled from Cicero’s *Academica* 2 123). Moreover, aspects of Aristotle’s physics had been controversial since the fourteenth century—in particular, his account of projectile motion was increasingly seen to be inadequate.²⁵ Finally, for the first time in human history the combination of printing and a reasonably high level of literacy allowed the relatively rapid dissemination of ideas across Europe (a fact which had been crucial to the early success of the Reformation itself).

Thus Sextan scepticism burst upon a European intellectual scene that was ripe for something challenging and new. It is worth stressing that the scepticism in question was Sextus’s. For, unlike the compressed, sometimes unintelligible, and generally unintelligent summary of Pyrrhonism retailed by Diogenes, and by contrast with Cicero’s elegant but ostensibly parochial presentation of an inter-school debate in the *Academica*, Sextus’s work is clear, for the most part well-organized, and packed with argumentation. Not all of Sextus’s arguments are of great philosophical merit (as he himself realized: Chapter XVIII, 300–1:353);²⁶ but as a whole it presents a way of philosophizing at once comprehensive, challenging, and wholly novel to the intellectual climate of the time. Its impact must have been not unlike that of Carneades’ lectures upon the youth of Rome (Chapter VI, 95).

The ‘crise Pyrrhonienne’ (as Popkin characterizes it) which was thus provoked was to persist in one form or another for at least a century; and transmuted by Descartes into a methodological tool, scepticism was to take its place at the heart of the philosophical enterprise, a position from which it has never strayed far until the present day. With the publication a few years after Stephanus’s Sextus of the longest of Montaigne’s *Essais*, the *Defence of Raimond Sebond*, Pyrrhonian argument was introduced to those who could not read Latin. Montaigne himself adopted a form of scepticism (he had a medal struck bearing the motto ‘Que sais-je?’); and the arguments he employs in his long and characteristically rambling *Defence* are largely lifted from Sextus. Montaigne adapts a little, and certainly selects material appropriate to his particular purposes; but he adds virtually nothing. From Montaigne, Sextus’s illustrations of the relativity of judgement and the fallibility of perception find their way into Descartes (although Descartes of course deploys them ultimately to anti-sceptical ends); and thence they become rooted and canonical in the Western tradition.

I have not, of course, done justice in the past few brief paragraphs to the fascinating story of the rediscovery of Pyrrhonism: for that, the reader is referred to Schmitt (1983) and Popkin (1979). Nor have I the space to discuss the peculiar use to which scepticism

was put by the Fideists (here one may usefully consult Penelhum, 1983) in a long tradition extending at least to Kierkegaard. It is with regret too that I pass over the further twists and turns in the tortuous evolution of philosophical scepticism through Locke, Berkeley, Hume, via Kant to Russell, Wittgenstein and Quine (although I shall have something to say about it in Chapter II).²⁷ I hope at least to have shown both how important the survival of scepticism in general (and Pyrrhonism in particular) was to our intellectual history—and how tenuous and in many ways fortunate that survival was.

II The Nature of Scepticism

The natural result of any search for something is that the searchers either find it, or they deny that it can be found and profess its ungraspability (*akatalēpsia*), or they keep on searching. (1: *PH* 1 1)

What is Scepticism?

‘Scepticism’ is an umbrella-term; and a wide variety of methods and attitudes can be found sheltering under it. In its original Greek sense a *skeptikos* is simply someone who looks, or examines (*skopein, skeptesthai*); and although Sextus does not bother to labour this point in the introductory paragraphs of *PH*, he does insist that the Sceptic,¹ no less than the members of the Dogmatic schools (and indeed the Academics) is a searcher after something. What divides them is their attitudes, expectations, and reactions to the search. So, while the Dogmatists² think that they have found what they’re looking for, and hence abandon the search in complacent contentment, and while the Academics conclude (precipitately in Sextus’s opinion) that nothing can be found (this reading is controversial: Chapter V, 75–8, 85–6), the Sceptics just keep on searching (*PH* 1 1–3). Indeed the verb ‘to search’ (*zēteîn*) gives rise to one of their other names: the Sceptics are, on their own account at least, Zetetics.

This is a surprising claim, and many have suspected Sextus of bad faith on this score. Are we really to believe that the Sceptic, in spite of the fact that he has suspended judgement (*epochē*, the technical term for the suspension of judgement, will become of crucial importance) as a result of the equipollence (*isostheneia*) of the considerations adduced on either side of the issue, and thus has achieved tranquillity or freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*: the universal ethical goal of the Hellenistic schools), nevertheless continues to investigate the matter? This looks like a paradigm of pointlessness. I shall argue later (Chapters XVII and XVIII) that it is not, and an understanding of why it is not is essential to forming an accurate picture of just what Sextus’s Pyrrhonism involves. Still, even given that the Sceptic can theoretically justify this claim to be a perpetual investigator, one may doubt whether as a matter of fact such a commitment was acted upon—for Sextus presents Pyrrhonism as a *practical* philosophy, a way of life. These issues form the core of the discussion in the last two chapters of this book. For now, let us simply accept at face value Sextus’s zetetic protestations. The distinctions drawn in 1, the opening sentence of *PH*, neatly and immediately suggest that one may adopt one of two quite distinct positions, each of which may be described as broadly sceptical.

Suppose I am moved to wonder, as Russell once was by some remarks of Wittgenstein, whether there is a hippopotamus in my room, and begin searching diligently for one. If

careful investigation fails to disclose a lurking pachyderm, I might well infer that there was no hippopotamus in my room (as did Russell). But I might also conclude that, while the search had produced no positive results, that fact in itself could not license a negative conclusion. The best I could truthfully say would be that, while there was no evidence for the hypothetical beast, its existence could not however be ruled out (this, or so Russell alleged, was Wittgenstein's view).³

The hippopotamus stands proxy for the reality or substance of things; and Russell's position is analogous to that ascribed by Sextus to the Academics, in that he positively asserts its non-apprehensibility (cf. *PH* 1 226). By contrast, Wittgenstein would be for Sextus the genuine Sceptic: on the question of whether or not there are hippos in the room he simply suspends judgement—there may be, or there may not. Whether or not Sextus is right to present the Academics as 'negative dogmatists',⁴ negative dogmatism is clearly a viable option. In its strongest version, one cannot know anything for the excellent reason that there is nothing there to be known (I leave the *scope* of the scepticism here deliberately vague: see below, 18ff.).

At this point we may introduce a general distinction which will later do service in a variety of contexts. In the ordinary, common-or-garden sense of the non-technical English word 'sceptical', I am sceptical of something if I am prone to disbelieve in it. To be sceptical about the existence of UFOs or about the claims of astrology is simply a more polite way of asserting that the former are imaginary while the latter is hogwash. Scepticism of this sort is a type of tough-mindedness, a resistance to gullibility and credulousness; but it is also ontologically parsimonious. The sceptic (in this sense) generally does more than merely refuse to concede the existence of things, or the truth of claims about them, for which there is no compelling evidence, an attitude we may label *Ontological Scepticism*, or 'O-scepticism' for short. They actually *deny* that any such claim is true. Thus, for example, most contemporary ethical 'sceptics' not only hold that there are no good reasons for positing objective moral values (a position which allows that such things might after all exist): they also contend that there *are* no such things, and that anyone who posits them is simply making a mistake.⁵ This is not scepticism in the strict Sextan sense—rather it is *Negative Dogmatism*. Hence we may distinguish between O-scepticism (the attitude in which one refuses to affirm, but does not as yet deny, the existence of something or the truth of some proposition), and negative O-dogmatism (the position of most 'sceptics' of this stripe), in which one actually denies the existence of the alleged objects (or holds the related propositions to be positively false). These do not come to the same thing, and relativism is in fact a type of negative dogmatism.

These positions are sometimes labelled respectively epistemological and ontological scepticism, where 'ontological scepticism' refers to the species of negative dogmatism discerned above, 'epistemological scepticism' to the 'genuine' sceptical position. At first sight this distinction may seem to parallel exactly that between Russell and Wittgenstein, between Academic and Pyrrhonist—and in many cases the assumption that it does so will be harmless. But there is one important further refinement. One's 'scepticism' may be epistemological, in this general sense, and yet still be a form of negative dogmatism. This is so just in case one asserts it is impossible to know whether such things are true or not; and one may coherently do so even when one is not also committed to a negative ontological dogmatism, of which the epistemological negative dogmatism is simply a

consequence. Such a view is clearly in our sense dogmatic, since it makes a claim, indeed a necessarily strong one, about our faculties; but it is not Ontological, since it concerns those faculties, and not the truths (if any) which they are unable to discern. Thus I prefer to distinguish the semi-technical terms ‘Epistemological Scepticism’ and ‘Ontological Scepticism’ in an unorthodox manner, such that both negative O-dogmatism and genuine O-scepticism may or may not have epistemological correlates.⁶

Consider an example: Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle shows that some things are in principle unknowable, namely the simultaneous position and velocity of a sub-atomic particle. In itself, the principle tells us nothing about the *actual* status of the (unobserved) particle’s position and velocity; and it is at least possible (for all that has been said so far) that when not being observed the particle has full measure of both. Thus Heisenberg’s principle (if I understand it correctly) is itself an example of negative E-dogmatism—but it has no direct ontological commitments (although the various interpretations of it do; and they have different ones). Contrast that story with Schrödinger’s wave-functions, the source of his famous thought-experiment involving the cat; in this case the leading interpretation of quantum mechanics holds that until they are ‘resolved’ by an observer, there simply *is* no underlying fact of the matter regarding their ‘real’ properties: a species of negative O-dogmatism.

To hold that there are aspects of reality that are not merely unobserved but intrinsically unobservable is to be a realist of sorts: and the connections between scepticism and realism (in its manifold species) are subtle and important. Anyone who adheres to a positivist epistemology will be inclined to find such a position philosophically incoherent (or, as the positivists themselves used to say, simply meaningless). But it seems clear *prima facie* at least that this type of negative E-dogmatism is at least a logical possibility.

Moreover, such a position is compatible not only with genuine ontological scepticism, but with ontological dogmatism as well. According to Sextus the Cyrenaics (see further Chapter IV, 156–8) held that external objects ‘have an essence, but one which is non-apprehensible’ (*PH* 1 215), and hence they apparently manage to combine a negative E-dogmatism with a form of (limited) positive O-dogmatism. The Academics, by contrast, are negative E-dogmatists, but genuine sceptics in ontology. There may or may not be things really there; but we can know nothing about them if there are.

Pyrrhonists are genuine sceptics of both types: they do not know whether there are essences of things, or if there are what they are. But neither do they know that their doubt is chronic and irremediable—for all they know, something might turn out to be apprehensible after all. They hold that nothing is grasped: but that is simply for them a report of what may for all they know turn out to be a temporary and passing condition. They do not assert that nothing is graspable. We can exhibit these distinctions in tabular form: the table has two axes, epistemological and ontological, and the various attitudes are plotted along those axes.

<i>Ontological</i>				
Negative	1	X	X	?Parmenides, Heraclitus
Dogmatism				
Genuine	2	X	Sextus	Academics
Scepticism				

Positive Dogmatism	3	Stoics, Aristotle, etc.	?Xenophanes, ?Pyrrho, Philo	Cyrenaics
		<i>Epistemological</i>		
		A Positive Dogmatism	B Genuine Scepticism	C Negative Dogmatism

That table is intended as no more than a rough indication of the various attitudes; and the justification of the positions it assigns must wait until later chapters. And I should stress that it is not meant to be a general characterization of these individuals' and schools' philosophical position—it must be taken as relativized to particular items, or areas of inquiry. There is nothing to prevent someone from being a negative E-dogmatist about one thing ('we'll never know how many stars there are'), a positive E-dogmatist about another ('I know there's a hippo in my bathroom'), and a genuine E-sceptic about something else ('I don't know whether there's a God or not').

The top left triangle of positions (1A, 1B, 2A) are ruled out for reasons of rational consistency: you cannot make positive dogmatic declarations about things you take not to exist (1A), or even are merely uncertain about (2A); and if you hold that there's no such thing, then it makes no sense at the same time to wonder whether you know whether there is or not: (1B).⁷ Note that the latter only holds for *particular* judgements: different attitudes are rationally possible, perhaps even rationally enjoined, when one considers second-order quantified statements about judgements.⁸ And there is in general nothing inconsistent in holding, for a range of items, that you know many things, but do not know that you know them (3B). Such was, perhaps, Xenophanes' position (Chapter III, 32–5); it may, too, represent an aspect of Pyrrho's view (Chapter IV, 59ff.); and it was certainly at the heart of the epistemology of Philo of Larissa (Chapter VII, 116–20).⁹ Equally, one may have reasons why knowledge of particular instances (of essential properties in this case) is for ever barred to us, and yet still hold on independent grounds that there must be such essential properties—which is how I interpret the Cyrenaics' 3C position (Chapter IV, 56–8).

There are some further subtleties, but they need not detain us here, except to note that the latter reflections immediately raise the issue of the propriety of meta-judgements about judgements. Should one's scepticism be confined to the object-level, that is to the first level of genuine judgements about things (call that 'restricted scepticism')? Or should the sceptic's attitude to his own scepticism be itself sceptical: should it be scepticism all the way down, as it were ('radical scepticism')?¹⁰ There seems no reason why one's scepticism should not be restricted in this sense. If I believe for philosophical reasons that the only things that I can genuinely know about are my own immediate mental contents, then I will be a sceptic as regards any purportedly factual claim that goes beyond my immediate experiences. If you ask me whether or not there really is a hippo in my bathroom I will simply shrug. But if you ask me whether it's true that I don't know one way or the other, or if I know that I don't know, I shall reply in the affirmative, since that is simply to report a directly available cognitive condition of mine. And even if I am prone to say, with Socrates, that I know nothing, it will be understood that the domain of

my ignorance encompasses the first level of judgement only. I may indeed, like Socrates himself, claim to know only one thing, namely that I do not know anything—but that claim is, properly understood, not necessarily self-refuting.

Indeed, it is a commonplace of the post-Cartesian epistemological tradition that one's access to one's own personal states is somehow privileged, perhaps incorrigible. Whatever else one can go wrong about, so the traditional story goes, one cannot mistake one's immediate states, including one's belief states (the latter claim is of course suspect, particularly on a behaviourist account of belief: but even then it looks plausible to say that one cannot be mistaken in *thinking* that one has a certain belief one thinks one has). If, then, incorrigibility is taken to be a necessary condition of knowledge, a restricted scepticism may seem not only coherent but also rationally compelling.

None the less, even though the Pyrrhonists insisted upon replacing statements about how things are with ones about how they appear,¹¹ they tended to eschew the possibility of such a restricted, first-order scepticism. At all events, they happily embraced self-refutation:

while the dogmatizer posits what he dogmatizes about as something which obtains, the sceptic propounds his formulas in such a way that they effectively circumscribe themselves. (2: *PH* 1 15)

Their arguments are like purgative drugs which not only expel noxious matters from the body, but get rid of themselves at the same time (*PH* 1 206; 2 187–8; *M* 8 480; Chapter XVIII, 300–1). In this regard they parallel Metrodorus of Chios's extension of Socratic ignorance: Metrodorus did not even know whether he knew nothing (67: Chapter IV, 53).¹² And, construed not as a piece of doubt concerning the existence of one's immediate impressions, but rather as a meta-sceptical claim about knowledge, such a position has something to recommend it. It is important to realize just how different in scope are Greek and modern scepticism in relation to the question of sense-contents. Descartes taught us to consider the contents of our own consciousness as things properly so called. By contrast, the Greeks were not disposed to think of 'subjective states' as candidates for being real or otherwise, and hence did not make anything very much of subjectivity itself.¹³

The Scope and Seriousness of Scepticism

The distinctions of sceptical type discerned so far have been ones of attitude, of *how* one is to be sceptical. But equally important differences concern the *scope* of scepticism; and these come in two different forms. The first or *objective* set of scope-distinctions concerns the domain that one's doubt ranges over—what sort of claims in what sorts of areas the sceptical arguments assail. But these must be clearly distinguished from the epistemic targets of scepticism, what *subjective* conditions and attitudes the arguments attempt to eradicate or alter.

Nothing of course precludes one from adopting a sceptical attitude towards some issues while remaining firmly dogmatic on others. Rescher (1980, 1–2) writes:

there are as many sorts of scepticism as there are types of knowledge or purported knowledge...as for example:

- (1) Factual knowledge relating to descriptive information regarding the contents of the natural universe and their modes of operation (specifically including man and his works).
- (2) Formal knowledge relating to the structure of the relationship of concepts and the operation of symbolic systems (pure mathematics, formal logic, formal linguistics).
- (3) Normative knowledge relating to such evaluative issues as rightness, goodness, beauty, desirability, etc.
- (4) Theological knowledge relating to the existence and nature of the deity, His relations to the world and to man, cosmic creation, teleology in nature, angelic and demonic spirits, etc.

There is thus not only the all-out, global sceptic who takes *all* knowledge to fall within the scope of his theory, but also a wide variety of specialized or thematic local scepticisms. The religious sceptic questions or denies¹⁴ the veracity of theological doctrines. The ethical sceptic questions or denies the tenability of moral rules. The mathematical sceptic questions the validity of mathematical principles... *cognitive* scepticism of a factual orientation...questions or denies the prospect of man's capacity to attain knowledge or rationally warranted conviction regarding factual matters.

We find scepticism with regard to all of (1)–(4) in Sextus and our ancient sources: in that sense Sextan Scepticism is global. No area of inquiry or investigation can remain immune from the Sceptic's assaults.

The disjunction 'knowledge or rationally warranted conviction' points to an extremely important distinction so far unrecognized. Serious sceptical argument is invoked for some purpose. Unless I simply want to show off or hone my dialectical skills—if, that is, my sceptical arguments are meant seriously—then they will have as their object the elimination (or at the very least the transformation) of certain mental attitudes. Descartes aimed at inducing the most extreme state of doubt possible in order to see what survived the epidemic (*Discourse*, section 1); if anything did, it must be immune from doubt, and hence certain. Descartes, along with many other epistemologists, identifies what is genuinely known with what is certain, taking the domain of the certain to be extensionally equivalent to that of the indubitable (where the impossibility of doubt is a matter of *logical* rather than merely psychological or causal impossibility). This now seems unwarranted: indeed there is no reason to think that knowledge requires even subjective certainty (*pace* e.g. Rescher, 1980, 22–3; Ayer, 1956, 35). One may (at least on an externalist account)¹⁵ know things which one is not certain of knowing. Nor need the objects of one's knowledge be objectively certain (except trivially in so far as what is known must be true—from which it does not follow that what is known is a necessary or certain truth).

But what matters is not the adequacy or otherwise of the analysis, but the scepticism's

epistemic scope. For Descartes explicitly isolates the operation of his dubitative procedure from his ordinary everyday beliefs and practices. Myles Burnyeat (1984, 225) writes:

nowadays, if a philosopher finds he cannot answer the philosophical question ‘What is time?’ or ‘Is time real?’, he applies for a research grant to work on the problem during next year’s sabbatical. He does not suppose that the arrival of next year is actually in doubt. Alternatively, he may agree that any puzzlement about the nature of time, or any argument for doubting the reality of time, is in fact a puzzlement about, or an argument for doubting, the truth of the proposition that next year’s sabbatical will come, but contend that this is of course a strictly theoretical or philosophical worry, not a worry that needs to be reckoned with in the ordinary business of life. Either way he *insulates* his ordinary first order judgements from the effects of his philosophizing.

Equally, David Hume left his scepticism behind when he left his study. By contrast, Descartes’ scepticism was methodological, a way of going about arriving ultimately at a positive epistemology, rather than a self-contained end in itself (in this sense Hume’s scepticism is the more serious—he rejects the crucial steps in Descartes’ reconstruction programme, namely those involving the purely *a priori* proofs of the existence of God, and holds that claims concerning ‘matter of fact and existence’ can never be immunized from legitimate questioning). Philosophical doubts about knowledge need not, and should not, affect one’s immediate pragmatic beliefs.

However, a scepticism that focuses on knowledge-claims is more restricted than that which aims at the eradication of all beliefs. My beliefs, after all, are in at least one sense purely internal affairs. With some special exceptions they will be *directed* towards things and states of affairs outside myself; their intentional objects are propositions or states of affairs or facts which are supposed to be true independently of my psychological dispositions. But *that I have a belief that there’s a hippo in my bathroom* is quite independent of whether or not the world is such as to make the belief true. My belief is no less a belief even if my bathroom is pachyderm-free.

By contrast knowledge relies for its very existence on external constraints being satisfied, since it is a trivial consequence of our concept of knowledge that what is known must be true. Ayer (1956, 31–5) remarks that to claim to know is to claim the right to be certain about something; and while that is too strong, to claim knowledge is clearly to issue a warrant for something’s truth. Moreover, knowledge-claims apparently require justification: knowing *p* is not simply a matter of believing *p* and *p*’s being true; one must also know *why* it is true. That model of the analysis of knowledge goes back to Plato (*Meno* 97a–98a; cf. 85c–d); and while Plato himself later rejected it (*Theaetetus* 201a–210a), and various powerful objections have been raised to modern variants of it (notably by Gettier, 1963), something along those lines still seems required, at least for some of our knowledge-claims.¹⁶

Epistemic Scepticism

Modern sceptical argument has concentrated on knowledge-claims and their justification. The standard way of impugning our epistemic warrant has been to show how, for any alleged knowledge-state, one could be in an internally indistinguishable cognitive condition which none the less fell short of knowledge, usually because the state of affairs supposedly known did not in fact obtain, generally by invoking some version of the celebrated Argument from Illusion.

Descartes' 1st and 2nd *Meditations* are the *locus classicus* for modern formulations of the Argument. Descartes resolves to reject as false any proposition that might conceivably be the product of illusion. The procedure is cumulative: he comes to doubt more and more basic propositions as a result of adopting ever more radical dubitative hypotheses. He discovers that, even though nothing may appear more certain to him than that he is sitting in a room warming his hands before a fire, none the less all of his experience is compatible with this being a dream, or a complex perceptual illusion induced in him by an 'evil demon'. There is nothing in the content of his experiences that logically guarantees their truth; although as he famously discovers nothing can induce him to doubt the fact that he is having experiences.

Modern versions replace evil demons with mad scientists—but nothing much turns on that (except for students of comparative demonology). The point of the argument is devastatingly simple; if it is always logically possible that my experiences may be delusive, then I can never have conclusive grounds for asserting their veridicality. But if I can never have conclusive grounds, then I can never claim knowledge, since I can never be certain that what I claim is true. It is important for general epistemological reasons that these results are couched in terms of warrant for knowledge *claims*, since for all that has been shown so far, I may still as a matter of fact know things, although I may not be aware that I know them.¹⁷ Furthermore, the argument relies upon its generalizability; that is, it demands that I infer from the fact that each of my knowledge-claims taken piecemeal is suspect that all of them taken as a bloc are suspect: and that inference is not obviously sound.

But even so, such arguments are clearly powerful weapons. They rely for their force on the perfectly evident fact that, at least in the case of empirical knowledge (the first of Rescher's family of four), what we claim goes beyond what is immediately entailed by the evidence upon which we base it.¹⁸ The sceptic holds that

- (1) we have no direct access to the alleged objects of our knowledge, and hence that
- (2) our knowledge claims must be conclusions based on evidential premisses, since
- (3) nothing other than the evidential premisses could license such a conclusion (a broadly empiricist constraint); but
- (4) the link between premisses and conclusion is not deductive (they do not *entail* the conclusion, because of the argument from illusion); yet equally
- (5) the link between premisses and conclusion is not inductive (since if induction is justified at all, which can itself be the object of sceptical attack,¹⁹ it is so only as a means of raising the probability that two observable event- or property-types will continue to go together—but by (1), one component of the pair is in principle unobservable, for ever

concealed behind the ‘veil of perception’);

but

(6) there can be no type of connection other than those denied by (4) and (5);

hence

(7) there is no valid indirect access to the alleged objects of knowledge.²⁰

Nevertheless, the Argument from Illusion can only be deployed in its most devastating sceptical form if it is generalizable—if, that is, we can move validly from the admitted occurrence of occasional perceptual illusions to the possibility that we are constantly deluded. Several subtle thinkers have attempted to undermine the validity of that move.

The concept of illusion itself, some (notably Ryle, 1954, 95; cf. Ayer, 1956, 37–41) have urged, is parasitic on that of veridicality, and hence there could be no illusion unless there were truth, just as there can be no fake Monets unless there are genuine ones. These arguments, I think, ultimately fail: at most they show that we could have no *concept* of illusion unless we had antecedently a notion of veridicality—but they do not establish the stronger conclusion that illusions could not occur.

A somewhat different strategy was adopted by G.E. Moore (1915). Moore argued that our grounds for believing any common-sense statement (e.g. that he had two hands) were always stronger and more compelling than any philosophical doubt that could be ranged against them. The argument makes moves analogous to those of Hume’s celebrated attack on miracles (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, section X); but all that Hume’s argument shows (as he himself realizes) is that it is never *rational* to prefer the hypothesis that a miracle has occurred to some more mundane explanation (fraud, hallucination, and so on). It does not show that there are no such things as miracles; and Moore’s argument is in the same case.

Wittgenstein (1969, 43–4), followed by Wright (1985), develops the related notion that doubt can only make sense against a backdrop of further propositions that one takes to be certain, which are necessary to articulate the doubt in the first place. Now, these ‘hinge-propositions’ are not ‘bed-rock’, and can themselves be challenged in other contexts; but then they too must rest on further propositions that function as hinges for them—and so on. But here again the sceptic’s position has not been shown to be false; the most any such argument can establish is that it is not rational to adopt it.

Finally, Hilary Putnam (1983, ch. 1) has attempted to show that the generalized hypothesis that we might all be subject to total global illusion (that we might, in the terms of his particular thought-experiment, all be ‘brains in a vat’) cannot be coherently expressed, given the constraints of a causal theory of reference. The reason, crudely, is that my terms refer to what is causally responsible for their introduction: but a hypothetical vat-brain, when it ‘refers’ to vats, brains, and so on, actually only picks out neural impulses induced by a mad scientist—hence it cannot describe its predicament at all. But that does not show that it couldn’t *be* in such a predicament.

All these arguments, then, cannot dislodge a sufficiently well-entrenched scepticism. They may cast suspicion on the rationality of adopting it: but then almost nobody *does* adopt a sceptical position, at least of this sort.²¹ For the sceptic of knowledge (or Epistemic Sceptic) is, almost invariably, a strawman, an experimental creation designed to test the limits of our cognitive security. It is for this reason that Annas and Barnes (1985, 7–9) claim that modern scepticism lacks seriousness. They do not mean by this

that modern sceptical argument is merely sophistical word-play, but rather that it is, in Burnyeat's sense, insulated from everyday practice. The ancient Pyrrhonian was not so pusillanimous. Far from simply treating scepticism as useful intellectual exercise, he offers Scepticism as a way of life. Moreover, his Scepticism does not merely attack knowledge: rather it goes for the throat, trying to eradicate belief itself. So we should now abandon broad classifications and general remarks, and turn to the characterization, in brief outline, of what is distinctive about Pyrrhonian, or *doxastic* scepticism.

Doxastic Scepticism

The Pyrrhonist, at least on Sextus's account, makes no assertions of fact. He will on occasion appear to do so—but that, like everything else in Pyrrhonism, is a mere appearance. Sceptics do not 'fight about words' (*PH* 1 195); they use expressions catachrestically and 'indifferently', since conflict over terminology (*phōnomachia*) is conduct unbecoming to the Sceptic (*PH* 1 207). They will on occasion utter expressions of the form '*x* is *F*': but this is always to be understood as meaning '*x* appears *F*'.

it is essential to note that here, just as in other cases, we employ the expression 'it is' in place of 'it appears'; so that in effect we are saying 'it appears that all things are relative' (3: *PH* 1 135)

This *caveat* is methodological: whenever you come across what appears to be an expression of dogmatism in the sceptical texts, you need mentally to qualify it in such a way that it loses its dogmatic appearance. Thus when the Sceptic talks about physics, he does so not to offer any theory, but simply to examine the theories of others (*PH* 1 12). This is of great importance, since it is easy unthinkingly to assume that Sextus's arguments are aimed at some negative *conclusion* (e.g. 'number does not exist': *PH* 3 163; cf. Chapter XIV, 250), even though he frequently draws the appropriate Sceptical moral: 'it is impossible to affirm with certainty that anything is the cause of anything else' (*PH* 3 24).

Still, it remains to determine *what* the Sceptic's arguments attack, as well as how they go about doing it; and this is the locus of the controversy. The Sceptic attempts to purge himself and us of *dogmata*. But is a *dogma* absolutely *any* belief, including the belief that I am now sitting at a word-processor? Or does it rather pick out merely a restricted class of beliefs, such as my conviction that my word-processor functions by digitally encoding information in complex silicon circuitry? In other words, is Scepticism absolutely general, targeted at every mental item that might be called a belief, including even the most mundane and quotidian (as Hume thought it was); or is it much more restricted in scope, aimed only at what one might call theoretical beliefs, that is beliefs which purport to describe the real, objective properties of things, their natures?

There are two ways of trying to answer that vital question. First, one can make a semantic study of '*dogma*' in its frequent occurrences in Greek (Barnes, 1982b, offers one); or one can examine Sextus's use of the term. Sextus explicitly says, in the opening programmatic pages of *PH*:

we say that the Sceptic does not dogmatize, not in that more general sense of ‘dogma’ in which people say that something seems right to them (since the Sceptic assents to those affections (*pathē*) which are compelled by impressions (*phantasiai*) so that he would not say e.g. when heated or cooled ‘I do not seem to be heated or cooled’), but we say that he does not dogmatize in the sense of those who say that a dogma is an assent to one of the non-evident objects of scientific inquiry. For the Pyrrhonist assents to nothing that is non-evident (*adēlon*). (4: *PH* 1 14)

Adēlon is a technical term: *ta adēla*, the hidden things, contrast with *ta phainomena*, what is apparent; and the Sceptic is perfectly happy to accept what is apparent. The *phainomena* are described as

things which in accordance with an affective impression (*phantasia*) drag us involuntarily to assent. (5: *PH* 1 19)

People sometimes wrongly accuse the Sceptics of trying to get rid of the appearances as well—but they do so because they misunderstand the nature of sceptical argument:

if we do bring up arguments against the appearances, we do so not wishing to destroy the appearances but to point out the rashness (*propeteia*) of the Dogmatists (6: *PH* 1 20).

In fact

when we doubt whether the underlying object is such as it appears, we grant that it does so appear, while we doubt not about the appearance but about what is said about the appearance.... For instance, honey appears to us to be sweet. We allow this, since we are perceptually sweetened. But we doubt if it is sweet as regards its definition (*logos*);²² this is not the appearance, but something said about the appearance. (7: *PH* 1 19–20)

These passages support the view that Sextus’s real target is beliefs that are in some sense theoretical; what is a matter of doubt is the proper *explanation* for things wearing the phenomenal dress they do (hence the talk about essences and ‘what is said about the appearance’). The *dogmata* that the Sceptic rejects, then, are more specialized than mere beliefs; passage 4 says so specifically, and that suggestion is backed up elsewhere. They concern the things which are non-evident, *ta adēla*, and the objects of ‘dogmatic inquiry’ (*PH* 1 200, 208); indeed a *dogma* is characterized as ‘an assent to something non-evident’ (*PH* 1 16).

But it remains to determine precisely what counts as non-evident in Sextus’s sense. Here we need to guard against some assumptions that might appear natural in the light of post-Cartesian scepticism. First of all, an appearance in this sense is not a private, internal phenomenon. It is not a distant ancestor of the sense-datum. When Sextus does wish to

refer to purely mental phenomena, he employs the language of impression, *phantasia* (see 5); and *phantasiai* are caused by the *phainomena*, which are their intentional objects. An appearance, then, is not something we have of objects: it is something that objects themselves have (as I might compliment you upon your appearance). That is, the Sextan Sceptic does not restrict what can strictly be talked about to purely mental items—he is no phenomenalist. He is, indeed, quite happy with locutions of the form *x* appears to be *F*, which apparently at least entail *x*'s existence. And while on occasion he will prefer the more guarded 'it appears that *x* is *F*' (although in many instances the Greek is compatible with either), he does not insist upon it.²³

The tenor of the passages quoted so far, that it is not assertion about 'external objects' as such which is suspect but only assertion about their natures or essences (for a very relaxed sense of 'essence': the issue is whether things really have the properties—any and every property—they appear to have), is in general confirmed by the rest of the Sextan *œuvre*:

probably no-one disputes whether the underlying object appears thus or so;
rather they inquire whether it really is such as it appears to be. (8: *PH* 1 22)

This needs to be constantly borne in mind. For if ancient scepticism is in one sense more radical²⁴ than most of its modern counterparts, it is (or at least appears to be) in another respect less so. It does not aim at any and every truth-claim that goes beyond what is immediately given in sensation; and in general we find in the ancient world no consistently developed counterparts either to general scepticism about the external world, or 'Other Minds' scepticism.²⁵ It is a scepticism of real properties, or essences,²⁶ not a scepticism of existence—and hence, at risk of further multiplying an already indigestible stock of technical terms, I call it *Essential* as opposed to *Existential* Scepticism.

Jonathan Barnes usefully distinguishes between four classes of proposition:

the fact is that there are several sceptics beneath Sextus's skin. They can best be distinguished with the aid of a fourfold division among types of propositions.... A proposition is of *type (A)* if it contains a term purporting to refer to something 'by nature non-evident'; for example:

(1) The tower is composed of atoms

—where atoms are those non-evident corpuscles hypothesized by some schools of Belief. Propositions of *type (B)* refer to evident objects and describe their evident characteristics; for example:

(2) The tower is square

Propositions of *type (C)* again refer to evident objects, but report on how they seem (how they look, feel, etc.); for example:

(3) The tower looks round

Finally, propositions of *type (D)* make no reference to any objects, but merely state how things seem to be; for example:

(4) It looks as though there's a round tower

(Barnes, 1983, 159)

Sextus sometimes apparently rejects only type (A) propositions—and then his scepticism is limited, and scientific in nature; sometimes on the other hand, Sextus seems to accept only type (D) propositions, in the manner of the most extreme Pyrrhonist. Most frequently, however, his language suggests an epistemological boundary falling between (B) and (C): and this corresponds to the type of Essential Scepticism discerned above.

The Structure of Pyrrhonism

Pyrrhonism is, Sextus says, a *dunamis antithetikē*, a power of opposition (*PH* 1 8). The word ‘*dunamis*’ (power, potentiality, capacity, ability, sometimes function) is carefully chosen. The Sextan Sceptic is concerned to avoid the charge that his attack on dogma is itself dogmatic (*PH* 1 13–15): where he offers arguments, he does so dialectically. If an argument *A* propounded by a Sceptic leads to a conclusion *C*, the Sceptic does not thereby *endorse* *C*, since he does not accept the argument’s probative force; and he will, if necessary, offer countervailing arguments for not-*C*. The word *dunamis* suggests that it is just an ability the Sceptic has, simply something he does (*PH* 1 9): it does not describe a philosophical *position*, or imply that such behaviour is good; and it does not amount to a self-consciously endorsed *methodology*, if that involves a commitment to its being able to establish something. The description is consistently neutral. Sextus was well aware how open Pyrrhonism is to misrepresentation, and was concerned to guard as far as possible against misunderstanding. Even where he talks of the *archē* of the sceptical ‘system’ as being ‘opposing every argument (*logos*) with an equal argument’ (*PH* 1 12), *archē* does not have its usual sense of ‘principle’ or ‘axiom’ (as Bury renders it); rather it is simply a point of departure which the Sceptic chooses for an appropriately sceptical reason: ‘we seem thus to end up ceasing to dogmatize’ (*PH* 1 12).²⁷

When the Sceptic talks of the ‘equipollence’ or *isostheneia* of arguments or appearances, he means their indiscriminability in respect of conviction or the lack of it (*pistis* and *apistia*: *PH* 1 10): ‘none of the conflicting arguments takes precedence over any other as being more credible’ (*PH* 1 10). Their credibility or otherwise is not a matter of objective probabilities. Rather it is simply a subjective state of being inclined one way or another, a report (as Sextus puts it) of one’s own affections (*pathē*: *PH* 1 23). Sextus describes in coherently internalist terms what he takes to happen to someone who has the ability he speaks of. They simply come to see that no one position has anything more to be said for it than its contrary. And the result will be suspension of judgement, where that suspension (*epochē*) is ‘a stasis of thought as a result of which we neither reject nor posit anything’ (*PH* 1 10).

The Sceptic does, Sextus allows, have a *hairesis*, or method of procedure, but he insists that it is not dogmatic, in the sense already established of involving ‘assent to something non-evident’ (*PH* 1 16); rather it consists in acting in conformity with the appearances (*PH* 1 17). Sextus is perfectly willing to allow that the Sceptic has a criterion, in the sense of a touchstone for the ordering of ordinary life (*PH* 1 21):

the criterion of the sceptical way (*agōgē*: another studiously noncommittal term) is the appearance, or rather in effect the impression of it; since this lies in

feeling (*peisis*) and involuntary affection, it is not a matter for inquiry...[text 8 belongs here]. So we live by adhering to the appearances according to the observances of everyday life, undogmatically, since we cannot remain completely inactive. (9: *PH* 1 22–3)

So the Sceptic is not, on Sextus's account, deprived of a means of living—indeed he will organize his life

according to a fourfold observance of everyday life (*tērēsis*): the guidance of nature, the compulsion of the affections (*pathē*), the tradition of laws and customs, and the instruction of the arts (*technai*).²⁸ (10: *PH* 1 23)

Notice that here Sextus implicitly responds to Hume's famous and devastating charge of the practical impossibility of extreme scepticism:

a Stoic or Epicurean displays principles, which may not <only> be durable, but which have an effect on conduct and behaviour. But a Pyrrhonian cannot expect that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind: or if it had, that its influence would be beneficial to society. On the contrary, he must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence. (11: *Enquiry* XII, § 2 128, p. 160)²⁹

Hume is wrong, however. The Sceptic need not be deprived of action by his refusal to assent to dogma and his suspension of judgement on all non-phenomenal matters—for things still affect him. His nature will still prompt him to do things; he will, as 10 asserts, in general, behave in accordance with the prevailing laws and customs; and neither will his scepticism preclude him even from engaging professionally in the arts and sciences—as Sextus himself did.

Finally, the Pyrrhonist hopes to achieve *ataraxia*, freedom from mental disturbance or *tarachē*, as a result of suspension of belief. As Sextus makes perfectly clear (*PH* 1 25–30), this is not *itself* a judgement or conclusion—the relation between suspension and *ataraxia* is, if anything, causal (in a Humean sense): one simply seems to follow the other. Sextus in fact presents this as an empirical discovery: the Sceptics set out, like everyone else, in the hope of finding secure answers to the conundrums which they find responsible for their *tarachē* (1); they are thwarted in this task and are forced (causally) to suspend judgement—and then they discover that tranquillity follows 'like a shadow' (*PH* 1 26, 29). Sextus illustrates his claim with an example that some have found reminiscent of Zen Buddhism:

the Sceptic is in the same case as that which is alleged of Apelles the painter. For they say that while he was painting a horse and wished to represent the horse's foam, he fell so far short of his aim that he gave up and flung at the

picture the sponge on which he wiped the colours from his brush; and its impact produced the impression of the horse's foam. (12: PH 1 28)

The choice of *ataraxia* as the end or goal of Scepticism (PH 1 25) is not unimportant; for the major Hellenistic schools of philosophy, the Stoics and the Epicureans, agreed that tranquillity was the proper aim of philosophizing. Sextus takes that on board, although undogmatically, without strong commitment. That it is the goal of human behaviour is a matter of uncontroversial agreement (at least among the philosophers of the period), and hence need not be argued for by procedures which will, inevitably (or almost inevitably— the Sceptic does not rule out the possibility of ever finding a probative argument), be inconclusive and controversial (see further Chapters XVII–XVIII). Arcesilaus posited *epochē* itself to be the end,³⁰ as, apparently, did Carneades; and Aenesidemus too, revolting against the increasing softness of the by now only barely sceptical Academy, reaffirmed *epochē*'s status as an end.³¹ Sextus, in a move that is possibly original to him, chooses to treat *epochē* merely as a means, and even then in a weak sense. It is simply the originally unintended causal outcome of the Sceptic's frustrated inquiries into the natures of things.

Let us reconsider Sextus's claim to be a perpetual zetetic (1 above). Suppose one has been considering some controversial matter X; as a result of exercising one's *dunamis antithetikē* one has weighed all the apparently relevant considerations on each side of the issue and found none of them compelling. Hence, faced with this disagreement (*diaphōnia*, another key Sceptical term: PH 1 26) among competing considerations, and being driven to recognize their *isostheneia*, one has arrived at a position of *epochē* in regard to X, while *ataraxia* has supervened in the manner described. Is not then the search for X over, and any further inquiry wasted time?

That objection misunderstands the nature of *epochē* and its relation to the considerations that have induced it. Elsewhere, Sextus writes:

when we say that to every argument (*logos*) an equal argument is opposed, by 'every' we mean every one examined by us, and we use the word '*logos*' not without qualification, but as something which establishes something dogmatically (i.e. concerning the non-evident), and establishing it not necessarily by means of premisses and a conclusion, but howsoever it might. We say 'equal' with respect to conviction or the lack of it [cf. PH 1 10]; we mean 'oppose' in its general sense of 'conflict'; and we implicitly supply 'as it seems to me'. So whenever I say 'to every argument an equal argument is opposed' I mean in effect 'it seems to me that to every argument examined by me which attempts to establish something dogmatically there is opposed to it another argument which attempts to establish something dogmatically, and which is equal to the first in respect of conviction and the lack of it'; thus the utterance of the sentence is not dogmatic, but is rather an avowal (*apangelia*) of a human affection (*pathos*), which is what appears to the person affected. (13: PH 1 202–3)

Argumentative strength is something *subjective*—it appears *to me* that they balance: but I

do not positively affirm that they do. I report my state of mind, my *pathos*: but I do so simply by way of an avowal (*apangelia*), to which I attach no dogmatic significance.³² The ‘arguments’ themselves need not even proceed in the standard way by way of premisses to a conclusion; all that matters is that I am induced, one way or another, to estimate the testimony on each side of the issue to be more or less in balance. I have not *judged* the issue to be undecidable: that would be negative E-dogmatism, and as such un-Pyrrhonian. For all I know, a conclusive argument might turn up. But equally, and this too is fundamental to a proper understanding of Pyrrhonism, if it now seems to me that considerations favour one side of a controversial issue, I cannot rule out the possibility that further evidence will turn up on the other side (*PH* 1 33–4). I call this the Sceptic’s ‘Micawber Policy’, and far from being a desperate expedient to preserve an authentically Sceptical stance in the face of overwhelming evidence (as some think), there is actually much to be said for it. After all, until 1543 (and in fact considerably thereafter) the vast preponderance of evidence suggested that the earth was stationary.

Thus *epochē* is not the conclusion of a philosophical argument; rather it is a psychologically-induced mental state. The relation between *isostheneia* and *epochē*, like that between *epochē* and *ataraxia*, is causal not logical in nature. Consequently, it is not necessary to my state of *epochē* that I find the arguments (or other considerations) on each side of a question exactly to balance—rather, in sum, they incline me neither one way nor the other; or if they do, that inclination is gentle and not precipitate, and the inclination may, and for all I know will, swing equally gently back in the other direction. Hence there is nothing Pickwickian about the Sceptic’s continuing search; of course it will not be a neurotic and all-consuming hunt for the ultimate truth—the Sceptic will lose no sleep over it (losing sleep over anything being incompatible with Sceptical calm and detachment). But he will, none the less, potter gently along doing a little mild investigating—and that quiet activity is, I think, properly to be understood as an essential factor in the maintenance, and not merely in the original inducement, of *epochē*.

III Precursors

Pyrrho is the first philosopher the tradition describes as a sceptic (Chapter IV, 58ff.); but he was not the first to sound a note of epistemological caution. That fact, coupled with the general Greek tendency of tracing one's intellectual pedigree to the great men of the past, makes it unsurprising that Sextus, among others, turns to the Presocratics to find the origins of the Sceptical Way. Diogenes Laertius records that some people even saw Homer as the founder of scepticism, because he 'says different things in different places about the same things' (*DL* 9 71, 73; cf. 67),¹ and found sceptical strains in the poets Archilochus and Euripides (*ibid.*); Sextus too discovers epistemology in the same three poets (*M* 7 128).

But if Sextus is on the lookout for intimations of scepticism, he is nevertheless no crude syncretist—and while some of the interpretations he essays of his predecessors are to say the least idiosyncratic, he is by no means motivated by a promiscuous desire to enroll any and every earlier epistemologist into the sceptical camp. In fact, his purpose in *PH* 1 210–35 (one of the two major sources for this chapter) is precisely to underline the differences between his brand of scepticism and the products of the other schools, while in *M* 7 46–140 (the other) he aims to exhibit the variety and distinctness of various philosophers' thoughts on the criterion.

Xenophanean Scepticism

Xenophanes (c. 575–c. 475 BC) was the first Western thinker to question the traditional anthropomorphizing view of the gods, according to which they resembled more powerful, longer-lived, and generally more fortunate human beings,² advocating instead a rationalist theology deducing God's particular properties *via* conceptual analysis (21 B 23–6 DK,=170–2 KRS).³ Having pointed out that

the Ethiopians say that their gods are black and snub-nosed, while the Thracians say that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired, (14: Clement, *Stromateis* 7 22 1,=21 B 16 DK,=168 KRS)

he remarks

if cows, horses, and lions had hands, and were able to draw with their hands and do the work men do, horses would draw images of gods like horses and cattle like cattle. (15: Clement, *Strom.* 5 109 3,=21 B 15 DK,=169 KRS)

Here Xenophanes is sceptical in the common-or-garden sense. He is a negative O-dogmatist, refusing to credit the gods of traditional mythology; and, adumbrating the practice of demythologizers through the ages, he attempts also to give a natural history for belief in them, to explain how people could have come to have held it in spite of its being false,⁴ by showing that the representations of the gods are the products of locally-determined convention, not some universal natural law.

But more important for our purposes are four fragments concerning knowledge. Of these, the most significant is 21 B 34 DK=186 KRS:

The clear truth (*to saphes*) no-one has ever known, nor will know, Concerning the gods and all the things of which I speak; For if he should by chance utter the whole truth, Yet even he does not know: belief reigns over all. (16: *M* 7 49, 110; 8 326; cf. *PH* 2 18; Plutarch, *De Audiendis Poetis* 2 17e)

16 expresses some view on the limitations of human cognition: precisely what was disputed even in ancient times. Sextus himself mentions two distinct interpretations of it. At *M* 7 49, he says that some people took this to be Xenophanes' avowal that everything was inapprehensible (*akatalēpton*):

consequently his statement, simplified, comes to this: 'no-one knows the true and intelligible, at least as far as non-evident matters are concerned, since even if he were to hit upon it by accident, still he doesn't know that he has hit upon it, but he thinks and opines'. (17: *M* 7 51)

and he offers his own illustration:

just as, if we imagine people searching for gold in a darkened room containing many treasures it will turn out that each of them who lays hold of something lying in the room will think that he has the gold, while none will be convinced that they have lighted upon the gold, even if it turns out that they have; equally a whole crowd of philosophers has entered this world as if it were a great house in search of the truth which, even if they have chanced upon it, it seems likely that they will lack the confidence that they have done so. (18: *M* 7 52)

18 makes Xenophanes a negative E-dogmatist: 'there is nothing apprehensible in the nature of the things sought' (*M* 7 52). But there are negative O-dogmatic overtones as well:

Xeniades the Corinthian...⁵ in that he asserts that everything is false [sc. unreal], and every impression and belief false, effectively adopts the same position as Xenophanes. For if there is nothing real, as opposed to unreal, but everything is unreal and hence inapprehensible, there will be no distinguishing criterion. That everything is unreal and hence inapprehensible is shown by slandering the senses. (19: *M* 7 53–4)

Interpretation of this and similar passages is complicated by the fact that the Greek adjective *alēthēs* and its antonym *pseudēs* can have either ontological or semantic force. They can mean either real/unreal or true/false (or even veridical/delusive). How they should be taken here is of great moment in determining what kind of scepticism is at issue. I interpret this passage as claiming that Xenocrates derived negative E-dogmatism from negative O-dogmatism; and that Sextus sees this as simply an extension of the view ascribed to Xenophanes, which depends upon 'slandering the senses'. On this interpretation (which is probably the product of Hellenistic fantasy) Xenophanes delivers a general attack on the reliability of the senses (and perhaps even of reason as well); and concludes either that nothing can be known, or more radically that there is nothing to be known.

The second view has Xenophanes

not apparently abolishing every apprehension (*katalēpsis*), but only that which is cognitive (*epistēmōnikē*) and irreversible, while allowing the opinionative (*doxastē*); this is what 'belief reigns over all' means. Thus the criterion will be according to this opinionative reason, but one which grasps the likely (*eikos*) and not the certain. (20: *M* 7 110)

Certainly it seems absurd to make Xenophanes an out-and-out sceptic of any colour, given his detailed physical and theological theorizing. Sextus acknowledges this:

Xenophanes dogmatized, contrary to other peoples' preconceptions, that the all is one, that God is immanent in everything, is spherical, unaffectible, unchanging, and rational: whence it is easy to point out the difference between Xenophanes and us [i.e. the Sceptics]. (21: *PH* 1 225)

Scientific and metaphysical speculations are intrinsically dodgy (since they are not susceptible of direct verification):⁶ but that patent truth does not imply that such speculations are worthless and ungrounded. Yet Xenophanes does not just say that certainty is hard to come by in these areas (theoretical theology and physics): he suggests it is impossible, at least for mortals (16).

Four further fragments bear on Xenophanes' epistemology:

let these things be believed as similar to the truth; (22: Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 11 7, 746b,=21 B 35 DK,=187 KRS) not from the beginning have gods shown everything to men

But in time by searching they find out better; (23: Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 1 8 2,=21 B 18 DK,=188 KRS)

whatever they have revealed for men to see; (24: 21 B 36 DK)

and finally the relativistic observation that:

if God had not made yellow honey, they would say

That figs were much sweeter [sc. than they are] (25: 21 B 38 DK)

22 suggests, congruently with **16**, that Xenophanes urged an epistemology of belief rather than knowledge, at least in natural science and theology, and he may well have done so because he felt that no argument in such obscure and controverted matters was sufficient to guarantee certainty. That is, Xenophanes accepts

(1) if x knows that p , then p must be (epistemically) certain;
and then, by arguing that

(2) nothing (for the domain in question) is epistemically certain,
he concludes

(3) nobody knows anything about the domain.

(3) is (in one sense) a sceptical conclusion. But Xenophanes did not let matters rest there: ‘they’ in **24** are surely the gods, and the line suggests at least that they do let us know (in a non-technical sense) something. **23** further allows the possibility of progress.

This cautious scientific epistemology is echoed a century later by a prominent medical writer. In the course of criticizing opponents who make medicine rest upon untestable postulates (*hypothesesis*), the author of the irredentist Hippocratic tract *On Ancient Medicine* (*Vet. Med.*) writes:

if one of them should state and declare how things really are, it would be clear neither to the speaker nor to his audience whether they were true or not; for there is nothing by reference to which one can know the clear truth (*to saphes*).

(**26**: *Vet. Med.* 1, 572 Littré)

Perhaps there is no alternative to the ‘hypothetical method’ (whatever that might be)⁷ in the case of meteorology, etc. (*Vet. Med.* 1, 572 L); but medicine has available empirical touchstones against which to test claims to efficacy. The language here recalls **16**; and the sentiment seems closely related as well.⁸ Thus Xenophanes advanced a cautious scientific and speculative epistemology (cf. **20**). Nothing (in this domain at least) could be known for certain (i.e. with justification?)—and hence, strictly speaking, nothing could be known.

Indeed, **16** (as glossed by Sextus’s **18**, and as hinted by **26**) suggests that we actually *will* have many true beliefs. But as we cannot tell which from among our stock of beliefs they are, we cannot be said to know the items in question. **26** makes the point in terms of criteria: we have nothing to appeal to with which to winnow out the cognitive wheat from the delusive chaff. This moderately sophisticated scepticism offers no account of *how* belief may be converted into knowledge—in fact it suggests it cannot be.

Finally **25** asserts that some of my judgements, which purport to be absolute (‘figs are really sweet’), are in fact the product of relative circumstances; **14** and **15** show that humans obtrude theologically irrelevant features of their own immediate surroundings into their view of the gods. Strictly speaking, the fig-judgement and the religious beliefs are relative in different ways: in the case of figs, my discovery of honey has no tendency to show that I was actually wrong about whether or not figs were sweet—I simply overestimated their sweetness. In the case of the gods, on the other hand, everything seems to have gone wrong; my belief that gods are in general a fraction over six feet tall, blue-eyed, balding, English-speaking, and slightly overweight has been demonstrated to be without foundation, since my conception of the divine nature is shown to be simply a

projection of my own. This points to a truth about knowledge:

(4) if x knows that p , then the fact that p itself must form part of the causal origin of x 's belief that p ;

whether Xenophanes himself saw that, however, we do not know.

Anacharsis

Immediately following his first treatment of Xenophanes, Sextus attributes to one Anacharsis the Scythian⁹ a sceptical argument against the possibility of recognizing expertise (*M* 7 55–9). Who, Anacharsis asks (if the attribution is secure: the argument is Sophistic in tone), is to be the judge of skill? Presumably either the expert or the non-expert. Surely not the non-expert, since he doesn't know what constitutes skill: if he did, he would be an expert (*M* 7 55). But nor can it be the expert, since the expert is either an expert in the same field as that which he judges or a different one (*M* 7 56). If different, the same argument applies; but if the same, then he will be a party to the dispute, a judge in his own case, and hence untrustworthy (*M* 7 56–7).

The argument is naïve, and as it stands unlikely to command much respect (why need the expert judging and the expert judged be the same?). The first horn of the dilemma fails; it is simply false to hold that one must possess excellence in order to recognize it. I can appreciate the midfield wizardry of Paul Gascoigne without being remotely able to reproduce it myself—knowing-that does not, unfortunately, entail knowing-how. For all that, such arguments are curiously frequent—and one still hears their informal counterparts at football matches (cf. 192: Chapter VIII, 151).

Parmenides, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras: the Criterion of the Senses

Parmenides (c. 520–c.450 BC), in what is perhaps the most famous argument in all metaphysics, argued that the world as 'revealed' by the senses was pure delusion (28 B 1.30, B 6, B 7 DK), and the only thing for our language to refer to was a single, unchanging, eternal Object (28 B 8). Sextus in his doxography unsurprisingly concentrates on what he takes to be Parmenides' attack on the senses (*M* 7 111–14), and contrasts him with Xenophanes, who at least allowed some role to the 'opinionative reason' associated with perception. Parmenides is not a sceptic but an extreme rationalist; but his arguments (and those of his successor, the paradoxographer Zeno: cf. Chapter IV, 73) proved a rich vein for later sceptics to mine to their own ends.

Both **Empedocles** (c. 495–c. 435 BC) and **Anaxagoras** (c. 500–c. 428 BC) were sometimes (mistakenly, as Sextus realized) treated as sceptics by later writers. Empedocles advances a circumspect epistemological caution, as well as a standard deprecation of most people's cognitive abilities: but that is not scepticism. Here is Sextus:

as regards the fact that the judgement of truth does not lie in the senses he speaks thus:

‘narrow are the powers that spread through the limbs, and many are the miseries that afflict, blunting thought. Short is the share of a life that is no life they see, swift their doom as they are carried off and dissipate like smoke, each one persuaded only of the one thing they have chanced upon as they are driven in all directions, yet each boasts that they have discovered everything. Not so can these things be seen or heard by men, or grasped (*perilēpta*) by the mind’ [31 B 2 DK (part),=342 KRS].

And as regards the fact that truth is not totally unattainable, but is attainable as far as human reason extends, he makes this clear in adding to the preceding lines the following:

‘but since you have turned aside thus, you will learn no more than that which human wit can see’ [31 B 2 DK (conclusion),=342 KRS].

And in what follows, after assailing those who claim to know more, he establishes that what is grasped by each sense is trustworthy as long as reason is in control of them, even though he had previously denigrated their evidence:

‘...come now, observe with all your powers every manifest thing...and grasp each thing in the way in which it is clear [31 B 3 DK,=343 KRS].

Such then is Empedocles’ position. (27: *M* 7 122–5)

I leave that without further comment.

Anaxagoras characterized the role of the appearances (*phainomena*) as

‘a glimpse of things hidden’ (*ta adēla*), (28: 59 B 21a DK,=510 KRS)

a view endorsed, among others, by the writer of the sophistic Hippocratic treatise *On the Art* (chs 9–11). Again, this is not scepticism, but rather a moderate empiricism. Some Anaxagorean doctrines were made use of by the Sceptics (‘snow is frozen water and water is black; therefore snow is black’: *PH* 1 33); but they were not originally intended sceptically.¹⁰ Anaxagoras (Sextus writes) disparages the senses:

‘by their feebleness we cannot judge the truth’ [59 B 21 DK,= 509 KRS]

and as evidence of their unreliability he brings up the gradual change in colours: for if we were to take two colours, black and white, and pour some of the one into the other drop by drop, our sight will not be able to discriminate the gradual changes even though they subsist in nature. (29: *M* 7 90)

Sextus concludes that Anaxagoras made reason the criterion; and in so far as 29 is sceptical at all, it is so only of a naïve trust in untutored perception. Anaxagoras’ argument has, however, interesting soritical implications.¹¹

Finally, two further pieces of evidence: ‘Cicero idiotically enrolls Anaxagoras among those who say that “nothing can be apprehended, nothing perceived, nothing known” (Cicero, *Acad.* 1 44,=106; cf. 2 73).’ That abrasive but justified judgement is

Barnes' (1979 2, 238; Cicero also enlists Democritus and Empedocles under the same banner, in the latter case equally idiotically).

Aristotle writes that Anaxagoras held that

existent things will be for them such as they take them to be. (30: *Metaph.* 4 5, 1009b26)

The quotation comes in the context of a discussion of the view, later popularized by Epicurus, that all perceptions are true because perception is a form of physical alteration (see further below, 48; and Chapter IV, 56). 30 then expresses the far from sceptical claim that whenever anyone perceives a property there is some real physical basis for that perception: perceptual properties are real properties; and that view accords well with Anaxagoras's physics of indefinite admixture.

Heraclitus: Obscurity and Empiricism

Sextus ascribes to **Heraclitus** (c. 540–c. 480 BC: I have departed from chronological order for organizational reasons) a 'scepticism with regard to the senses':

Heraclitus, who also thought that men were endowed with two organs with respect to knowledge of the truth, namely perception and reason, considered that of these perception...was untrustworthy (*apistos*), and lays down reason as the criterion. He attacks (*elenchei*) perception in these very words: 'bad witnesses for men are the eyes and ears of those who have barbarous souls' [22 B 107 DK], which is equivalent to saying 'to give credit to the unreasoning senses is the mark of barbarous souls'. He asserts that the judge of truth is reason, not however just any kind, but that which is common and divine. (31: *M* 7 126–7)

Sextus perhaps takes Heraclitus to mean that 'men with barbarous souls' (i.e. untutored reasoning capacities) will rely on the senses when in fact no-one should.¹² More probably Heraclitus merely says that *if* you have a barbarous soul, then you will misinterpret the evidence of your senses; but if your soul is civilized you will draw the right conclusions from them. Untutored sense-data require proper interpretation—and this can only be done by reason. Heraclitus does not, then, abolish perception altogether—rather perception *on its own* cannot supply a criterion. This squares well with other fragments which suggest not so much a general scepticism of the senses, but rather the familiar truth that knowledge is hard to come by: 'nature loves to hide' (22 B 123 DK,=208 KRS); truth-seekers are like gold-diggers who 'turn over much earth but find little' (22 B 22 DK). Most people are too stupid and gullible to come by it ('they are persuaded by singers, and use the mob as a teacher': 22 B 104 DK); and that it must be arrived at by personal search, and not on the basis of hearsay (cf. 22 B 101a), as Heraclitus himself claimed to have done (22 B 101 DK,=246 KRS; cf. *DL* 9 5).

Heraclitus was proud of being an auto-didact. In two famous fragments (22 B 17–18 DK), he castigates Xenophanes and Pythagoras for what he calls 'polymathy', much-

learning; and his objection is not to the scope of their knowledge (since elsewhere he holds that philosophers must ‘be knowers of very many things’: 22 B 35 DK), but rather to its mode of acquisition (cf. Barnes, 1979 1, 146). What I glean from others cannot constitute knowledge, presumably because I can give no proper account of it (cf. 32 below). This involves strengthening of proposition (4) to

(4a) if x knows that p , then the fact that p is directly causally involved in x ’s belief that p .

The *mediate* causal involvement of p , as occurs in most (i.e. all nonaccidental) transmissions of true belief (which will satisfy (4)), will not suffice. Contrapositively, if the consequent of (4a) fails to be satisfied, then x does not know the proposition in question. It is because the majority do not take the trouble to investigate for themselves that they do not know.

As a general principle, (4a) seems too strong. It effectively rules out the possibility of historical knowledge; and there are surely cases in which (4a) is not satisfied which qualify for knowledge if anything does. There seem to be plenty of instances, consistent with (4), in which the fact that p plays an appropriate causal role in the generation of my belief that p , and yet it does so at one or more removes. Causal remoteness is not necessarily causal inefficacy. But there is a core of truth in what Heraclitus says. Hearsay is notoriously unreliable, and it would be a rash and optimistic epistemologist who bet his all upon it.

While Xenophanes perhaps felt that no-one could ever progress beyond mere belief, Heraclitus apparently still entertains the possibility of knowledge:

the most estimable (*dokimōtatos*) man discerns mere appearances (*ta dokeonta*) and wards them off; and justice will apprehend the architects and disseminators of lies. (32: Clement, *Strom.* 5 9,=22 B 28 DK)

32 strongly suggests that knowledge is attainable, if only for the estimable few; and while he also held that

human nature has no insights (*gnōmai*), but the divine does, (33: Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6 12,=22 B 78 DK,=205 KRS)

and ‘the wisest of men appears a monkey in wisdom, beauty and everything else in comparison with God’ (22 B 83 DK), these texts do not deny the possibility of human knowledge: for, as Sextus attests in the last sentence of 31, Heraclitus allows humans a share of divine reason, adding:

Heraclitus then asserts that this common and divine reason, by participation in which we become rational, is the criterion of truth. Hence that which appears to all in common is credible (since it is grasped by the common and divine reason), but that which affects one person alone is untrustworthy, for the contrary reason. (34: *M* 7 131,=22 A 16 DK)

Heraclitus probably intended to stress that the divine intelligence spreads uniformly throughout everything, rather than to assert that it is common human property:

although reason is comprehensive, the majority live as though they have a private understanding (**35**: *M* 7 133,=22 B 2 DK)

Nevertheless, Sextus is extremely confident in his interpretation, since he reiterates that Heraclitus means that

things which appear in common are trustworthy since they are judged by the common reason, while those which appear to each person privately are false (**36** [= **168**]: *M* 7 134).

That is, Sextus has Heraclitus subscribe to

(P1) $(\forall p) (p \text{ is trustworthy if and only if } p \text{ appears true to everyone})$.

Even if (P1) is not genuinely Heraclitean, it is to be of great importance for Greek Scepticism, since the Sceptics (in particular Aenesidemus: Chapter VII, 129) argue that

(5) $(\exists p)(p \text{ appears true to everyone})$

and hence

(6) $(\exists p)(p \text{ is trustworthy})$.

The road to understanding, for Heraclitus, is full of pitfalls:

the majority do not understand the things they come across, nor do they come to know by learning—although they think they do. (**37**: Clement, *Strom.* 2 8,=22 B 17 DK; cf 56)

Some things, such as the nature of the soul, are beyond human ken:

you would not find...the limits of the soul, even if you travelled the whole road, so deep is its account (*logos*). (**38**: 22 B 45 DK)

But if the powers of the soul are limitlessly unfathomable, we may actually be capable cognitively of more than we can ever realize.

I append one fragment from Heraclitus's contemporary **Alcmaeon of Croton** for comparison:

about the hidden things the gods have clear knowledge, but men must judge by signs. (**39**: *DL* 8 83,=24 B 1 DK,=439 KRS)

Alcmaeon is an important if obscure figure; he was connected (how closely is disputed) with Pythagoreanism;¹³ and later Pythagoreans echo some of his concerns. Here is a fragment of the fifth-century Pythagorean **Philolaus**:

the being of objects, being eternal, and nature itself admit of divine, and not human, knowledge—except that it was not possible for any of the things that exist and are known by us to have come into being, without there existing the being of those things from which the universe was composed, namely the limiters and the unlimited. (40: Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1 21 7d,=44 B 6 DK,=429 KRS)

This is not scepticism by a long chalk; but it displays the fruits of meditation on sceptically-suggested problems.

Relativism: Heraclitus and Protagoras, Plato and Aristotle

One further aspect of Heraclitus's philosophy demands attention. Among the best-known features of Heraclitus's metaphysics are the doctrine of the Unity of Opposites and the theory of Flux. No matter that the details of the first are controversial, while some doubt that Heraclitus ever subscribed to the latter: since later thinkers who called themselves Heracliteans certainly espoused a very strong version of it, we can bypass that controversy. Sextus devotes *PH* 1 210–12 to refuting the view that Scepticism and Heracliteanism come to the same thing, or rather that the one follows from the other (on the grounds that Heraclitean ontological indeterminacy underwrites sceptical epistemological indeterminacy: this view is associated with Aenesidemus: see Chapter VII, 129ff.: 171; and cf. Chapter IV, 58ff., in connection with Pyrrho).

Several fragments illustrate various aspects of the Heraclitean thesis that

the road up and down is one and the same; (41: Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 9 10 4,=22 B 60 DK,=200 KRS)

seawater is the most pure and the most polluted, drinkable and life-preserving for fish, undrinkable and destructive for men; (42: Hippolytus, *Ref.* 9 10 5,=22 B 61 DK,=199 KRS)

God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger; (43: Hippolytus, *Ref.* 9 10 8,=22 B 67 DK,=204 KRS)

the same thing lives in us living and dead, awake and asleep, young and old; these things having given place to those, and those to these; (44: ps. Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonian* 10 106e,=22 B 88 DK, =202 KRS)

and a number of other fragments suggest variations on the theme. Clearly, they do not all imply the mutual co-existence of contrary properties: 44 seems rather to envisage their serial replacement, a thesis without direct meta-physical implications. But 42 suggests the co-existence of opposing relational properties; while 43 appears stronger still. Heraclitus perhaps had no single clear conception of what the Unity of Opposites was supposed to be—and that lack of clarity is reflected in the widely divergent interpretations the theory has generated. Nor are relations between the doctrine and flux-theory entirely lucid, although it is tempting to speculate that Heraclitus took the multiplicity of phenomenal appearance to indicate that the apparently stable objects of our ordinary experience are

constantly undergoing alterations (this sort of argument from epistemology to metaphysics recurs throughout the sceptical tradition: Chapter IV, 60–1; VII, 129).

Sextus ascribes the flux-theory to **Protagoras** (c. 490–c. 420 BC):

he says that matter is in flux, and as it flows additions continuously occur in place of what has been given off.... He says too that the accounts (*logoi*) of all the appearances subsist in the matter, so that matter is capable in and of itself of being all the things it appears to be to everybody. So according to him man becomes in himself the criterion of real things, since all the things which appear to men also are, while those that appear to nobody are not. (45: *PH* 1 217–18)

Nothing we know about Protagoras’s ‘criterion’ from other sources suggests any metaphysical speculations; his most famous dictum is the ‘man-measure’ (MM):

man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, of things that are not that they are not. (46: *PH* 1 216,=*DL* 9 51,=Plato, *Theaetetus* 152a)

Both 46, and Sextus’s gloss upon it at the end of 45, express Protagoras’s dictum by way of the neutral verb *einai*, to be. *Einai* in Greek is even more Protean than its English counterpart—in addition to the copulative sense (‘is’ in ‘*x* is *F*’: call that ‘C-is’), the existential sense (‘*x* is’=‘*x* exists’: ‘E-is’), and the ‘is of identity’ (‘*a* is [the same as, identical with] *b*’: ‘I-is’), Greek allows the ‘veridical sense’ (‘*x esti*’ can mean ‘*x* is true’: ‘V-is’), and the ‘predicative sense’ (‘*x esti*’ can mean ‘*x* is *F*’ for some unspecified value of *F*: ‘P-is’).¹⁴

The chief candidates in Protagoras’s case are E-is, V-is, and P-is; E-is seems intrinsically the least likely option, although 45 suggests that Sextus took it that way. Plato, in the course of his extended discussion of Protagorean epistemology and its relation to Heraclitean metaphysics in the *Theaetetus*, invokes the classical example of the same wind feeling cold to one person and not cold to another (*Theaet.* 152b)—and that strongly indicates that Plato at any rate took Protagoras to be talking about P-is. Thus

- (7) the wind is cold
turns out to be elliptical for
- (8) the wind is cold to *O*,
where ‘*O*’ names some observer:

are we going to say the wind itself, by itself, is cold or not cold? Or shall we listen to Protagoras, and say it is cold for the one who feels cold, and for the other not cold? (47: *Theaet.* 152b)

The disjunction is clearly meant to be exclusive—and hence Plato implies that Protagoras denies that there is any sense to the question

- (9) is the wind really cold or not?

All we can hope for are relativized answers of the form of (8).

That interpretation makes Protagoras either an O-sceptic or a negative O-dogmatist, more probably the latter: there simply is no fact of the matter in the case of (9). On the

other hand, he is an E-dogmatist, both negative and positive: corresponding to the lack of any fact in respect of which (9) might be answered, there *can* be no knowledge of intrinsic properties since there are no such properties for there to be knowledge of; but in the case of the relativized properties, there is no problem with knowledge at all—everyone is their own criterion. Protagorean relativism, then, is quite distinct from any genuine scepticism. None the less, the claim that propositions like (8) are the only ones that are epistemically hygienic need not entail relativism of that type—they are perfectly compatible with genuine scepticism, and indeed the Sceptic makes use of them (Chapter VII, 121ff.; IX, 156).

On the other hand, we might plausibly take (9) to entail that there is one and only one genuine answer to the question ‘is x F ?’, one which implicitly rules out the possibility of x being both F and not- F . At this point, the issue of the Principle of Non-Contradiction (PNC) pushes itself to the fore. Plato certainly held that in some sense Protagoras (or rather ‘the Protagoreans’) upheld the view that

(10) it is not possible to contradict:

and Plato took this to assert that the PNC was false, a claim which he held to be self-refuting:

it seems to overturn both other theses and itself. (48: *Euthydemus* 286b–c).

Plato probably takes (10) to mean that

(11) x is F

is compatible with

(12) x is not- F ,

and hence that there is nothing logically insalubrious about asserting

(13) x is both F and not- F ,

which is pretty clearly an instance of the denial of (one version of) PNC. This presumably derives from some case illustrating the thesis of 47, wherein two differing judgements are made by different observers:

(14) x appears F to a ,

and

(15) x appears not- F to b ;

then, given the MM of 46, interpreted as

(16) $(x)(F)(y)(\text{if } x \text{ appears } F \text{ to } y, \text{ then } x \text{ is } F \text{ for } y)$,

we can easily infer

(17) x is F for a and x is not- F for b .

But crucially (17) is not equivalent to (13); and it only (clearly) yields a contradiction if the qualifiers ‘for a ’ and ‘for b ’ are dropped. That is, if Protagoreanism is to generate a contradiction, it must appeal to some principle of the form

(18) if x is F for a , then x is F ;

However, Plato in the *Theaetetus* (151e) only has Protagoras assert (16); and that is the most we can ascribe to Protagoras with any confidence. It is relatively easy to construct an argument for (18), however; this, effectively, is what 45 gestures towards. This argument is Heraclitean, both in its inspiration and direction. If something seems F to me, then something must be causing its F -appearance. Equally if it seems not- F to you,

something must cause that as well. Relying on a version of the ubiquitous synonymy principle of causation

(19) if x brings it about that y is F , then x must itself be F , and do so in virtue of its being F ,

it is easy to conclude that F -ness and not- F -ness are real properties of the object. That argument is not valid as it stands (even if (19) is true, it need not be the case that x is responsible for x 's F -appearance); nor is (19) a principle that should commend itself unrestrictedly. But it is quite clear that Sextus ascribes some version of that argument to Protagoras in **45**; and maybe Plato does too. At all events, he has Socrates argue that Theaetetus's original attempt at defining knowledge as perception entails a Protagorean epistemology and a Heraclitean metaphysics (indeed that the entailment is mutual):¹⁵

we find that the various theories coincide: that of Homer and Heraclitus that all things flow like streams; of Protagoras...that man is the measure of all things; and of Theaetetus that...knowledge proves to be perception. (**49**: *Theaet.* 160d–e)

Aristotle, in his discussion of PNC in *Metaphysics* 4 3–5, also apparently considers Heraclitus (or at the very least his followers and interpreters) and Protagoras two of a kind:

it is impossible to suppose that the same thing both is and is not, as some think Heraclitus said. (**50**: Aristotle, *Metaph.* 4 3, 1005b23 ff.)

the same thing will be a trireme, a wall, and a man if it is possible both to affirm and deny anything of anything; which follows for those who hold the theory of Protagoras. (**51**: *Metaph.* 4 4, 1007b21 ff.)

Aristotle, for subtle reasons of his own, holds that no-one can as a matter of fact be a sceptic of PNC: doubts about the principle cannot be coherently expressed (and hence cannot coherently be entertained), since in order to question PNC one has to entertain the possibility that it is false; but its falsity is only expressible on the condition that PNC is true, since any declaration, positive or negative, can only be meaningful on the condition that it excludes the possibility of its contradictory also being true. This is the point of **51**: my assertion that Socrates is a man only makes sense if it is taken as explicitly ruling out the possibility of his not being a man. PNC is thus a regulative principle on semantics,¹⁶ and its negation cannot be coherently expressed. Now, this is a species of self-refutation, or *peritropē*; and it may be what Plato meant in **48** (he certainly seems to glance at it in *Theaet.* 181b–83c).¹⁷ But the evidence for taking Protagoras as committed to (18) is relatively weak; and I incline to the view that he had no real interest in either ontology or explanation.

However, Plato further claims in *Theaetetus* that relativism as an epistemological position is self-refuting. Having restated **46**, Socrates says:

suppose you come to a decision in your own mind and then express a judgement about it to me. Let us assume with Protagoras that your judgement is true for

you. But cannot the rest of us criticize your verdict? Do we always agree that your judgement is true? Or does a huge army of people who think the opposite arise who take your decisions and thoughts to be false?... Do you want us to say that you then judge what is true for yourself, but false for tens of thousands?... And what of Protagoras himself? Must he not say this, that if he were not to believe that man is the measure, any more than the majority of people (who in fact don't believe it), then this *Truth* of his is true for noone? Conversely, if he believed it himself, but the majority disagree with him: then you see, first, that the greater the preponderance of those to whom it does not seem true over those to whom it does, so much the more it isn't than it is?... But secondly it has this most exquisite feature: Protagoras admits, I suppose, that the opposite opinion about his own opinion (namely that it is false) must be true, since he agrees that all men judge what is.... And by conceding the truth of the opinion of those who think him wrong, he really admits the falsity of his own opinion. (52: *Theaet.* 170d–71b)

That whole passage construes Protagoras's thesis as being about judgemental as opposed to phenomenal appearance. In Greek, no less than in English, sentences of the form

(20) x seems F to me

can express judgements; (20) can mean that I hold that x is F (call that 'J-seeming'). And that is quite distinct from merely saying that x is presenting an F -type appearance to me ('P-seeming'), since I can say the latter without having the slightest tendency to assume that it *is* F (as Aristotle clearly saw: *De Anima* 3 3, 428b2 ff.: see further Chapter IX, 157ff.). Furthermore, J-seeming is broader in range—all kinds of things can appear to be the case, but only sensible objects can present phenomenal appearances.¹⁸ And it is only by construing Protagoras's thesis as being about J-seeming rather than P-seeming that the alleged self-refutation can get off the ground: the MM doctrine, not being an object, cannot P-seem to be anything at all.

Plato's argument is essentially simple. Consider again the strong interpretation of 46, namely (18), reinterpreted as a thesis about J-seeming:

(18a) if a judges that x is F , then x is F ,

and allow judgements to cover cases not merely of the ascription of properties to objects, but semantic ascriptions of truth and falsity to propositions (thus ' x ' can stand for ' p ', and ' F ' stand for 'true'); then (18a), in concert with

(21) somebody judges MM to be false

will yield

(22) MM is false.

But this is too quick. Protagoras can resist the move to J-seeming; but if he does not, he can still reject the second-order interpretation of (18a) which allows it to be about propositions and semantic properties (that is, he can resist the extension of the 'is' from C-is and P-is to V-is); finally, he can deny that (18) is the proper interpretation of MM, preferring formulations along the lines of (16), which yield no *peritropē*.

Relativism, like scepticism, can be radical or restricted (see Chapter II, 18–20). It is restricted if it holds that only ordinary first-order judgements are to be treated as implicitly relativized, along the lines of (7) and (8). That allows that second-order

judgements about those judgements may be absolute and non-relative, hence while
 (23) the wind is cold
 is true for you, it is non-relatively and absolutely true that
 (24) the wind is cold for you.

By contrast, a relativism is radical if it refuses to allow the unrestricted truth of such meta-level judgements; i.e. if it claims that (24) is only true relative to some further observer: thus I may judge that you judge that the wind is cold, but then (24) is true for me—and it may well not be for anyone else. We cannot tell whether Protagoras's relativism was radical or restricted; but what we know of his doctrine is compatible with his being a radical relativist—and radical relativism is not susceptible of the *peritropē*.¹⁹

Aristotle offers a sketch of radical Heracliteanism:

seeing that everything is by nature changeable, and that nothing can truly be said of what is altering, then certainly it will not be possible to say anything truly of that which is changing in every way. For it was from this supposition there arose the most extreme opinion of those mentioned, that of those who are said to 'Heraclitize', such as Cratylus, who finally thought that nothing should be said but only moved his finger, and who took Heraclitus to task for saying that one cannot step into the same river twice [22 B 91 DK], since he thought it could not be done even once. (53: *Metaph.* 4 5, 1010a7 ff.)

Cratylus's aphasia flows from a very strong construe of the Heraclitean doctrine that everything is in a state of flux—if nothing is stable, then there can be nothing for our language to refer to. But in that case our language is meaningless, and hence a waste of time. Plato develops this line of thought in *Theaet.* 179d–183b: if everything is in a constant state of change, then nothing is any more *F* than not-*F*. This commits one to a Protagorean relativism:

since not even this stays constant...but it changes, so that there is a flux of that very thing, whiteness, and change to another colour,... since that's so, can it ever be possible to refer to any colour in such a way as to be speaking of it rightly? (54: *Theaet.* 182d1–5)

Finally in this context we should mention Aristotle's account of the arguments deployed by those who:

infer the truth of appearances from the sensible world, for they think that the truth should not be determined on the grounds of the number, large or small, of those who believe it, and [say] that the same thing is judged sweet by some..., bitter by others, so that if everyone was ill or insane, and only two or three healthy and sane, the latter would be considered ill and insane, not the former. Moreover, many other animals receive impressions opposite to ours, and even to each individual's senses, things do not always seem the same. It is not clear, then, which of these impressions are true and which false, since the one class is no more true than the other, but each is alike. (55: Aristotle, *Metaph.* 4 5,

1009b1–10)

Aristotle does not say who these people are, although the context suggests that they are Protagoreans; but they are already invoking (to relativist rather than sceptical ends) the examples that will form the core of the Ten Modes of Scepticism (Chapter IX).

Democritus

Democritus (c. 460–c. 380 BC), the best-known of the Classical atomists, is said to have criticized Protagoras's epistemology (68 B 156 DK); and if Protagoras was indeed a genuine O-sceptic, that is hardly surprising. For Democritus is committed to a scientific account of the physical world, in terms of atoms and the void. Furthermore, Democritus is said (M 7 389–90) to have been, along with Plato, one of the originators of the *peritropē* of MM. Yet there are clear strands of scepticism in Democritus. Although he endorsed Anaxagoras's famous empiricist slogan

the *phainomena* are a glimpse of the *adēla*, (28:59 B 21a DK)

he also

sometimes abolishes the things which appear to the senses, and says that none of them appears in reality but only in opinion, the reality in things being the existence of atoms and the void: 'by convention sweet, by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention colour: in reality atoms and the void' [68 B 9 DK,=549 KRS; cf. 125 DK]. (56: M 7 135; cf. *DL* 9 72)

This is confirmed by a number of fragments that assert that in reality we do not know how things are (68 B 6–11 DK,=549–50, 553 KRS). The senses furnish us with perceptual qualities—but these are merely 'conventional', answering directly to nothing in reality.

The distinction between convention and nature was a standard Sophistical *topos*, one usually deployed in moral and political matters. But Democritus presumably does not mean to suggest that sense-impressions are purely arbitrary decisions, made by *fiat*. Rather, he apparently adopts the Lockean view that perceptual qualities are secondary, that they are not really in the objects. The actual atomic configuration of objects is partially causally responsible for how things appear to us (along with our own constitutions, and so on), but those appearances are not matched directly by the objects' internal properties:

in the *Confirmations*, although he promised to assign the power of confirmation to the senses, he is none the less found condemning them, for he says: 'we know nothing genuine (*atrekes*)²⁰ about what there is, but what shifts in accordance with the condition of the body, and what enters it and presses upon it' [68 B 9 DK=553 KRS]. (57: M 7 136)

This is a scepticism—but not of the Pyrrhonian kind.

Even so, Democritus's physics raised severe epistemological problems, which at times seemed insuperable:

in reality we know nothing—for truth is in an abyss. (58: *DL* 7 72,= 68 B 117DK)

The problem is how to reconcile a kind of empiricism with the view that reasoning ultimately shows the senses to be completely unreliable and the naïve realist picture of a direct correspondence between perception and the properties of things to be false. Galen put it classically:

everyone knows the greatest charge against any argument is that it conflicts with what is evident. For arguments cannot even start without self-evidence: for how can they be credible if they attack that from which they took their beginnings? Democritus too was aware of this; for when he had brought charges against the senses, saying...[68 B 9,=56 above], he has the senses reply to the intellect as follows: 'wretched mind, do you take your evidence from us and then try to overthrow us? Our overthrow is your downfall' [68 B 125 DK,=552 KRS]. So one should condemn the unreliability of an argument which is so bad that its most persuasive part conflicts with the evident propositions from which it took its start. (59: Galen, *On Medical Experience* XV 7–8, 114 Walzer)

Reason needs some prior material upon which to work, furnished by the senses; and yet, in Democritus's view, reason shows that the reports of the senses are false (since if true, they are false, and hence they are false); but if they are false, then the superstructure reason builds has no foundation—for it was only on the *assumption* that the sense-reports were true on the first place that reason builds its account—but that assumption has now been shown to be false. Galen apparently thinks (wrongly) that this *peritropē* of sense-impression shows that the argument itself is flawed. It does not—'if if p then not- p , then not- p ' is a theorem of propositional logic. But there is perhaps something to the idea that if an argument shows that the premisses on which it is based must be false, then we can have no confidence in anything else that allegedly follows from those premisses. And in that case Democritean atomism is in deep trouble.

Democritus couches his inquiry in the form of a dialogue between senses and the mind; and we do not know how the mind replied to the attack of the senses. KRS (412–13) offer a possible reconstruction of it: sense-perception does not tell us how things are, since it gives rise to atomism, and atomism shows naïve realism to be false. However, sense-impressions *confirm* atomism (they are consistent with it, plus the relativized theory of perception that goes along with it: 57), since atomism allows us to give a causal account of why things appear the way they do. It is worth adding one more text:

and again he says: 'in reality we do not understand how each thing is or is not' [68 B 10 DK,=550 KRS] (60: *M* 7 136)

If we emphasize ‘each thing’, then we may construe Democritus as saying that *individual* natures will be inapprehensible, and yet we can still make general claims about the basic structure of things. That is, he combines a genuine O-scepticism at the level of particulars with an O-dogmatism about the general structure of reality.

Ou Mallon

Sextus begins his account of the ‘sceptical expressions’ (*PH* 1 187–209) with the phrase ‘*ou mallon*’: ‘no more’; this, he says, is elliptical for ‘no more this than that’ (*PH* 1 188), which he glosses as meaning ‘I know not which of these things I should assent to and which not’ (*PH* 1 191). Sextus is careful, as always, not to let this connote a dogmatism of any kind. He is not committed to the claim that as a matter of fact things are really no more thus than so, but rather simply enunciates what appears to him to be the case. Furthermore, the saying applies to itself (*PH* 1 14):

so also the formula ‘no more’ says of itself like the others that it is ‘no more’ [i.e., no more so than not so], and hence its circumscribes itself along with the others. (61: *PH* 1 14)

Democritus too used the expression. Sextus mentions the fact at *PH* 1 213, in the course of his comparison of Scepticism with Democriteanism:

from the fact that honey appears sweet to some and bitter to others, Democritus...infers that it really is neither sweet nor bitter, and pronounces in consequence the formula *ou mallon*.... The Sceptics however and the Democriteans use the expression *ou mallon* differently; for while they use it to express the unreality of either alternative, we express by it our ignorance as to whether both or neither of the appearances is real. (62: *PH* 1 213)

Sextus rightly points out that the Democritean *ou mallon* is not genuinely sceptical at all—rather it points to a (negative) fact about objective states of affairs. Regarding the real existence of perceptual properties in objects, Democritus is a consistent Lockean negative O-dogmatist, which makes him a negative E-dogmatist on the issue as well. If this is right, Democritus differs from Protagoras (on the *Theaetetus* view) and Heraclitus in denying that perceptual properties are real. For Heraclitus, things are no more *F* than not-*F* (for some perceptual value of *F*) because they are both; for Democritus they are no more *F* than not because they are neither.

There are other occurrences of the *ou mallon* principle in Democritus; but they threaten no scepticism; with one possible exception:

which of them [i.e. conflicting sense-reports] is true or false is unclear; for the ones are no more true than the others but to a similar degree; that is why Democritus says either (a) none is true or (b) it is unclear to us. (63: Aristotle, *Metaph.* 4 5, 1009b9 ff.,=68 A 12 DK)

(b) embodies a type of scepticism; but Aristotle does not say that Democritus endorsed it over the non-sceptical (a) (for the Sceptics and *ou mallon*, see Chapter VII, 124).

The Sophists

The Sophists, that disparate collection of teachers of wisdom so bitterly attacked by Plato, of whom Protagoras was one, were certainly relativists, conventionalists even, in ethics. They held, dogmatically, that there are no such things as objective moral values. They were, consequently, not sceptics—although for reasons which we shall explore in Chapter XVI, some of their argument found a later home in scepticism. Moreover, they were fond of arguing both sides of an issue (see the *Tetralogies* of Antiphon, and the text known as *Dissoi Logoi*), a practice taken over (to their rather different ends) by both Academics and Pyrrhonists (see Chapters V, VI, IX).

One sophistic argument is, however, worthy of brief attention. **Gorgias of Leontini** (fl. late fifth century BC) held in his *On Nature* (or *On Non-Being*: it is reported at *M* 7 65–87)²¹ that nothing existed; or if it did, it was inapprehensible; or even if it was apprehensible, it was uncommunicable. The arguments involved are for the most part unimpressive; but some features merit consideration. Firstly, their concessive form (not-A; but even if A, not-B; but even if B, not-C) is characteristic of later scepticism. Secondly within each part of the argument, Gorgias employs disjunctive modus tollens, a pattern much beloved of the Sceptics. Thus he argues that if anything exists then either (a) the existent exists, or (b) the non-existent exists, or (c) both existent and non-existent exist. Then he refutes (a), (b), and (c), and since (a), (b), and (c) exhaust all the available possibilities, he can infer (by modus tollens) that nothing exists.²²

Gorgias holds that truths are incommunicable because they must concern objects; but the medium of communication (speech) is not an object (or perhaps not the same as the objects it purports to communicate; *M* 7 84), hence it cannot communicate them; furthermore, speech is produced by (and hence explained by) objects; and so objects cannot be explained by speech (*M* 7 85); and finally even if speech does subsist in some way, it does not do so in the same way as the objects it attempts to convey, nor is it appreciated by the same sense-modalities (*M* 7 86). I shall not comment further on these arguments and their import.

IV

Pyrrho and the Socratic Tradition

Pyrrho (c. 360–c. 270 BC), like Socrates, wrote nothing. But whereas we may reconstruct Socrates' views with a fair degree of security from the portraits of Plato, Xenophon, and others, for Pyrrho we must rely on the remains of Timon supplemented by later reports, many of highly dubious reliability. Seventy-one fragments of Timon's poetic output survive, sixty-five of them from his *Silli*, or Satires.¹ The great majority concern philosophers other than Pyrrho, whom Timon assails with wit and abandon; the only partial exceptions to the universal assault are Xenophanes (Fr. 60 Ds), the Eleatics (Frs 44–5 Ds), Democritus (Fr. 46 Ds), and Protagoras (Frs 5, 47 Ds), who are spared on account of what Timon at any rate sees as their sceptical tendencies (cf. Chapter III). The longest cover no more than eight lines; most are shorter than that; some are mere testimonia.

Timon's purpose is hagiographical:

verily, no other mortal could rival Pyrrho. (64: Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14 18 17; Fr. 8 Ds,=2A LS,=57 *Decleva Caizzi*)²

such was the man I saw, unproud (*atuphos*)³ and unsubdued by everything which has subdued both unknown and known alike, volatile crowds of people, weighed down this way and that with passions, opinion, and vain lawmaking. (65: Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 19; Fr. 9 Ds,=2B LS,=58 DC)

Old man, how and whence did you find escape from the bondage of opinions and the empty wisdom of the Sophists? How did you break the chains of all deception and persuasion? You did not concern yourself with discovering what winds pass over Greece, and from and to what each thing passes. (66: *DL* 9 65; Fr. 48 Ds,=2C LS,=60 DC)

It is not easy to disentangle from the hagiography a coherent account of Pyrrho's actual views; but we need not rely entirely on Timon. Diogenes gives us a detailed 'Life', which although fanciful and apocryphal in some details, is partly based on a relatively early source, Antigonus of Carystus's *On Pyrrho* (*DL* 9 62); Antigonus was an associate of Timon, writing probably in the latter half of the third century BC. And we have the invaluable, if brief and hostile, report of Aristocles of Messene, now dated not later than the end of the first century AD,⁴ reported in Eusebius's (c. 260–340 AD) *Preparation for the Gospel*.

The Democritean Heritage

Pyrrho apparently read Democritus with approval (*DL* 67, =1C LS, =20 DC), although we do not know what it was about Democritus he approved: it is at least as probable that he was impressed by Democritus's ethical doctrine of *athambia*, or freedom from wonderment,⁵ as he was by any epistemologically sceptical tendencies (Chapter III, 47ff.).

Metrodorus of Chios we have already met briefly, saying

we know nothing, not even that we know nothing. (67: *M* 7 88, *DL* 9 58: apparently the opening sentence of his *On Nature*: Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 9)

Metrodorus was an atomist, perhaps a direct associate of Democritus; and it seems plausible that the object of his attack is our grip on *individual* items of knowledge (*à la* Democritus: Chapter III, 49). If this is right, the position is consistent with, perhaps even a version of, Xenophanes' in 16. We can never be sure that our opinions are justified by the facts in such a way as to make them candidates for knowledge; but equally for all we know it may in fact be the case, in a particular instance, that our beliefs are both true and justified by their standing in the appropriate causal relations to the facts. If this is right, the connections between Metrodorus's externalist epistemology and Pyrrhonian Scepticism may be weaker than at first sight they appear (although it foreshadows Philo of Larissa's weak Academic scepticism: Chapter VII, 116–20).

On the other hand, we might read 67 as saying that nothing can positively satisfy the conditions (whatever Metrodorus took them to be) on being known; and further that the proposition expressing this distressing fact is itself not of such a type (perhaps because it is of the wrong logical form—it does not assert something *of* something) to be a candidate for knowledge (thus Metrodorus rather anticipates Aenesidemus: Chapter VII, 121ff.). Metrodorus's Democritean scepticism was attacked by **Epicurus** (340–270 BC), the founder of the Epicurean school (which combined atomistic physics with a sophisticated ethical hedonism and an epistemology based upon a causal theory of perception: cf. Chapter V, n. 39), arguing precisely that such a position was self-refuting, and that anybody attempting to subscribe to it would *ipso facto* debar themselves from understanding the meanings of such concepts as 'knowing', 'not knowing', 'true', 'false', 'doubtful', and 'certain' (Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 4 469–71).⁶

Better documented is Pyrrho's association with **Anaxarchus**,⁷ (c. 380–c. 320 BC), an Abderite like Democritus (*DL* 9 58). Diogenes' 'Life' is more than usually anecdotal and worthless; nevertheless, it alleges that Anaxarchus accompanied Alexander the Great on his eastern campaigns as far as India, as did Pyrrho (*DL* 9 61: see further below, 58); according to *DL* 9 63, he was upbraided by an Indian philosopher for 'fawning on kings', a rebuke which caused Pyrrho to withdraw from worldly affairs. Anaxarchus is also credited with the virtues of impassivity (*apatheia*: contrast Timon, 65) and contentment, for which he was known as 'the Happiness man' (*ho eudaimonikos*: *DL* 9 60; *M* 7 48). His *apatheia* was said to be such that even while being pummelled to death in a mortar by an outraged tyrant

he paid no attention to the torment, saying 'pound the envelope that contains

Anaxarchus: you do not pound Anaxarchus himself'. (68: *DL* 9 59)

Such stories, designed to illustrate the philosopher's heroic detachment are common (cf. *DL* 9 26–8 on Zeno of Elea), and of course apocryphal—but they do serve to illustrate a philosophical ideal.

Of Anaxarchus's epistemology, we have Sextus's report that

some people have said that both Metrodorus and his followers, and Anaxarchus and Monimus abolished the criterion, Metrodorus because he said...[67], Anaxarchus and Monimus because they likened real things to painted scenery, and supposed them to resemble the things that occur in sleep and madness. (69: *M* 7 87–8)

Monimus was a Cynic of sceptical leanings: a fragment of Menander has him say that 'everything supposed [i.e. by humans] is vain (*tuphon*)',⁸ and he is here associated with Anaxarchus in the use of a striking image. The painted scenery is designed to produce *trompe l'œil* effects; and Anaxarchus and Monimus apparently considered real objects, or perhaps rather our impressions of them, to be in the same case, being essentially two-dimensional constructions giving the impression of a three-dimensional world. Perhaps they argued as follows:

(1) our senses convey the impression of a three-dimensional world;

but

(2) so too do evidently two-dimensional surfaces, such as painted scenery;

hence

(3) since the delusive impression given by the objects of (2) is indistinguishable from that given by the objects of (1), we cannot trust the evidence of our senses.

That is not the only possible reconstruction.⁹ But it gives a point to the comparison with dreams and madness—there too we receive 'three-dimensional' impressions, whose content, after the fact at any rate, we evidently distrust (that is, we do not consider any actual three-dimensional object to be responsible for them); but the existence of *trompe l'œil* scene-painting shows that we may never trust the deliverances of our senses; and hence our ordinary sense reports are in precisely the same case as those of dreams and hallucination. If that is right, then Pyrrho had, in his associate Anaxarchus, a model for a certain genuine scepticism of the senses;¹⁰ although whether he ever followed that model is an altogether different question.

Minor Socratics

(a) *The Cynics*

In the years following Socrates' death in 399 BC, a variety of schools of philosophy arose claiming the right to his intellectual inheritance, most important among which were the Cynics and the Cyrenaics.

Antisthenes the Cynic (c. 446–c. 366 BC) came into contact with Socrates after

consorting with Gorgias (*DL* 6 1–2):

every day he would travel the five miles to listen to Socrates, from whom he acquired fortitude, and emulating his impassivity he founded the Cynic school. (70: *DL* 6 2)

Socrates' legendary independence from the passions forms the basis of Cynic philosophy. Antisthenes evinced some interest in logico-linguistic matters;¹¹ but Cynicism was essentially an ethical philosophy in the Greek sense: it purported to prescribe a way of life in which one could achieve happiness; and that concern with good life and disregard for questions of natural science is part of a genuinely Socratic inheritance (cf. Plato, *Apology* 19b–c; *Phaedo* 96a–c, 97b–98d). Antisthenes adopted Socrates' thesis that virtue was sufficient for happiness, but he also held the un-Socratic position that 'virtue is a matter of actions, and does not require many words and much learning' (*DL* 6 11), although it could be taught (*ibid.* 10). He also held that the wise man was self-sufficient (*ibid.* 11), which was to become a commonplace of later Greek philosophy.

Cynicism taught that a happy life was relatively easily achievable¹² by disregarding and devaluing the worth of what were generally taken to be human goods (money, reputation, beauty, and so on), as well as established moral and social convention, and by adopting a studied indifference to wealth, fame, and power. Diogenes Laertius records an abundance of apocryphal, although doctrinally pointed, stories about the unconventional behaviour of Antisthenes' famous successor, Diogenes the Cynic (*DL* 6 20–81); and history has immortalized Crates and Hipparchia for copulating in public. Their importance to scepticism is, however, limited to their status as examples of the diversity of moral conventions—although Crates is supposed to have been the teacher of Zeno the Stoic, and hence the conduit whereby the Socratic current fed into the Stoic stream (which will be of some importance in Chapter V).

Finally, it is worth recording that both Antisthenes and Diogenes are supposed to have accused Plato of vanity, or conceit: the word used in each case is *tuphos* (*DL* 6 7, 26; cf. Timon, Fr. 60 Ds, 65, n. 3).

(b) The Cyrenaics

The Cyrenaics, so called because their alleged founder **Aristippus** (c. 435– c. 350 BC) came from Cyrene in Libya, are more directly important to the sceptical tradition.¹³ Aristippus too was a friend of Socrates (*DL* 2 65; *M* 7 190): although he is said to have charged fees for instruction in a most un-Socratic manner (*DL* 2 65). Diogenes paints him as a voluptuary, known and excoriated for his legendary luxuriousness and extravagance. The Cyrenaics were indeed hedonists, holding that pleasure was the end; but hedonists even of the most sophisticated and ascetic sort invariably get tarred with the brush of excess and vice.¹⁴

But that Cyrenaic hedonism was concerned primarily, perhaps exclusively, with what Mill would call the 'bestial pleasures' there cannot be much doubt—Cicero describes it as such in the disapproving tones of a Roman moralist in *De Finibus* 2 39–41. Cyrenaic hedonism was not anti-sensualist; but that does not make the Cyrenaics unbridled

voluptuaries. The view that active sensual pleasure is the only good is perfectly compatible with restraint in the pursuit of it. Our other major source, *M* 7 199–200, simply offers a philosophical analysis of pleasure as a criterion, confirming that the Cyrenaics espoused an active notion of what pleasure consisted in; but Sextus does not venture any opinions as to what as a matter of fact satisfies that criterion.

Cyrenaic ethics are of less import for us than their epistemology. Sextus writes:

some say that the Cyrenaic way is the same as Scepticism, since it too holds that only the affections (*pathē*) are apprehended (*katalam-banesthai*). But it differs from it in that it says that pleasure and the smooth motion of the flesh is the end, while we say that it is unperturbedness (*ataraxia*), to which their end is completely opposed, since whether or not pleasure is present the man who affirms that pleasure is the end undergoes perturbations (*tarachai*), as I have argued in my *On the End*.¹⁵ Furthermore, while we suspend judgement in regard to the essence (*logos*) of external objects, the Cyrenaics assert that they have a nature which is inapprehensible (*akatalēpton*). (71: *PH* 1 215)

It is the final sentence which is crucial, since it apparently has the Cyrenaics combine a general dogmatic ontological claim ('objects have essences') with negative E-dogmatism about them taken as particulars ('we can never know what those essences are').

This picture can be fleshed out from Sextus's longer discussion of Cyrenaic epistemology in *M* 7 190–200:

The Cyrenaics, then, say that the affections are the criteria, and only they are grasped (*katalambanesthai*) and infallible (*adiapseusta*), while of the things that produced the affections none are apprehensible (*katalēpton*) or infallible. Hence, they say, we can say infallibly and irrefutably that we are whitened and sweetened, but we are unable to affirm that whatever is productive of the affection is white or sweet, since it is probable that someone might be disposed in a whitening way by something non-white and sweetened by something non-sweet. (72: *M* 7 191–2)

The language Sextus uses in the first sentence echoes the technical vocabulary of the Stoic-Academic debate (*katalambanesthai*, *adiapseusta*), and these terms may be Cyrenaic in origin. The peculiar affective vocabulary ('being whitened') is indubitably Cyrenaic: in his *Against Colotes*, Plutarch upbraids Colotes, an Epicurean, for his mock-Cyrenaic coinages:

'they do not say that there is a man or a horse or a wall, but that it is themselves who are "walled", "horsed", and "manned".' But he misuses the terms.... He ought to have presented the facts as they do themselves. For they [i.e. the Cyrenaics] say that they are sweetened, embittered, chilled, warmed, illumined, and darkened, each of these affections having its own intrinsic and irreversible¹⁶ clarity (*enargeia*). (73: Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem* 1120d–e)

Thus only our immediate sensations are transparent to us:

when our judgement sticks to the affections it maintains itself free from error, but when it goes beyond them and meddles with judgement and assertion about externals, it stirs up itself, and conflicts with others which derive opposing affections and differing impressions from the same things. (74: Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1120f)

The fallibility of any judgement that goes beyond the immediate content of experience they attempted to establish by means of various versions of the argument from illusion (*M* 7 192–3, 197–8; Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1120e); and from the claim that differences in individual constitutions cause differences in the way things are perceived (‘jaundice sufferers see everything yellow’: *M* 7 192; for this notorious sceptical example, see Chapter IX).

The barbarous new language of affection satirized by Colotes (cf. *PH* 1 20, =7) is an attempt to signal the fact that all perceptual claims must be interpreted as referring only to their immediate affective contents and not, as the ordinary language of perception implicitly suggests, to anything external which is responsible for them:

thus it is most reasonable to hold that we are able to grasp nothing over and above our immediate affections. Hence we must either posit as apparent the affections, or whatever is productive of them....¹⁷ The affection which occurs in us reveals nothing more than itself. Hence... only our affection is apparent, while the external object productive of it perhaps exists, but is not apparent to us. (75: *M* 7 193–4)

The final sentence of 75 goes beyond 71; 72 is neutral between them. I am inclined to think that the genuine scepticism of 75 is a Sextan intrusion, and that the Cyrenaics held, more robustly, that the natures of external objects would be for ever hidden from us.

The Cyrenaics, then, do not doubt that our impressions *are* (externally) caused, while for a sceptic even that is dubitable (the Sceptics are quite happy to *use* arguments that apparently rely on a causal theory of perception—but they are not *committed* to them: Chapter IX). No evidence survives as to why the Cyrenaics held this view, or how they argued for it (if indeed they did so)—but it is tempting to suppose that they did so for Berkeleyan reasons. Berkeley noted that the sequence of our perceptions, unlike that of our imaginings, was not up to us or directly under our control; and concluded they must be produced by something distinct from us (*Principles* §§ 28–33, 56, 64, 90). We can know, then, that they have a cause, but not what that cause is really like. At this point the Cyrenaics and Berkeley part company; Berkeley makes it part of his general argument for the existence of God, consistent with his idealism and rejection of matter. The Cyrenaics have no such idealist axes to grind. Rather they simply rest content with the view that there are causes for our perceptions distinct from the perceptions themselves: but more than that we cannot say.

Pyrrho and India

Pyrrho was (at least according to *DL* 9 61) a student of ‘Bryson or Stilpo’.¹⁸ Bryson may be ‘Bryson the Achaean’ elsewhere said to have been the teacher of Crates (*DL* 6 85); Stilpo is presumably Stilpo of Megara, a minor dialectician (*DL* 2 113). The attribution is probably the fantasy of a succession-writer (in this case one Alexander). (The succession-writers were authors of lists of philosophers and their supposed institutional and pedagogical relations to one another, upon whom Diogenes was heavily (and uncritically) reliant.) On the other hand, the association with Anaxarchus is better documented; and there seems no reason to doubt the tradition of his Indian travels. Scholars have, however, tended to play down the idea that Pyrrho’s Indian experience had much to do with his philosophy.¹⁹

Yet Diogenes attributes Pyrrho’s scepticism to his Indian contacts; and in spite of the fact that stories of such influence in Greek philosophy were legion (and hence intrinsically suspect), we should not reject them out of hand.²⁰ Here is Diogenes’ account in full:

afterwards he accompanied Anaxarchus everywhere, coming into contact with the Gymnosophists and Magi in India, as a result of which he seems to have philosophized in a most noble manner, introducing the form of inapprehension (*akatalēpsia*) and suspension of judgement (*epochē*), as Ascanius of Abdera²¹ says. For he said that nothing was either fine or disgraceful, just or unjust. And similarly in all matters he said that nothing existed in reality, but that men did all things as a result of law and convention; for no particular thing is any more this rather than that. (76: *DL* 9 61,=1A DC)

While it is unlikely that Pyrrho introduced the terms ‘*epochē*’ and ‘*akatalēpsia*’, the ascription to him of such attitudes (which may be no more than is meant) seems reasonable enough.²² The ‘Gymnosophists’, or naked philosophers, were ascetics; and it has generally been assumed that what influence they had upon Pyrrho must have been confined to matters of general attitude.

Pyrrho, so this story runs, will have emulated the general detachment, withdrawal, and indifference of the Indian ascetic—but that in itself is no evidence for any closer ties of doctrine²³ or method (so Bevan, 1913, 123).²⁴ But Flintoff (1980) makes an interesting case for the claim that Pyrrhonian philosophy was directly influenced by Buddhism. He notes that the exposition of insoluble antinomies was an integral part of the Buddhist route to enlightenment, which may have suggested the Pyrrhonian insistence upon the *isostheneia* of all arguments pro and contra, resulting in suspension of judgement, leading (although not directly) to unperturbedness (*ataraxia*): and there is no doubt that both the process and its *modus operandi* have strong Buddhist analogues (cf. the story of Apelles: *PH* 1 28,=12).

On the other hand, while later Pyrrhonism certainly took this form, there is no direct evidence that Pyrrho argued thus, and only one piece of testimony suggests that Pyrrho

himself, as distinct from later Pyrrhonists, adopted a mode of argument that Flintoff finds characteristically Buddhist, namely the so-called quadrilemma; it occurs in Aristocles' summary of Pyrrhonian doctrine:

(1) it is supremely important to investigate our own capacity for knowledge, since if we are so constituted that we know nothing, there is no need to continue enquiry into other things. Among the ancients too there have been people who made this pronouncement.... (2) Pyrrho of Elis was also a powerful spokesman of such a position. He himself has left nothing in writing, but his pupil Timon says that whoever wants to be happy must consider these three questions: (i) how are things (*pragmata*) by nature? (ii) What attitude should we adopt towards them? (iii) What will be the outcome for those who have this attitude? (3) According to Timon, Pyrrho declared that things (*pragmata*) are equally indifferent (*adiaphora*: perhaps 'undifferentiable'), unmeasurable (*astathmēta*), and undecidable (*anepikritos*); (4) [for this reason]²⁵ <since> neither our sensations nor our judgements tell us truths or falsehoods. Consequently we should not put our trust in them but should be unopinionated (*adoxastoi*), uncommitted (*aklineis*) and unwavering (*akradantoi*), saying concerning each thing that it no more is than is not, or <than> it both is and is not, or <than> it neither is nor is not. (5) For those disposed thus the consequence will be first non-assertion (*aphasia*) then unperturbedness, says Timon; Aenesidemus says pleasure. (77: Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 1–5, =1F LS, =53 DC)

77 represents our best evidence for Pyrrho's actual doctrines, as opposed to his way of life: and the passage repays close attention. First of all, it confirms the suggestion of 76 that Pyrrho adopted the *ou mallon* formula.²⁶ But that is part of the Democritean-Protagorean background (even if we ultimately decide that Pyrrho deploys it in an originally sceptical way), and needs no explanation in terms of exotic oriental influence. If the three privative terms in 77(3) are authentic, then Pyrrho invoked undecidability, a notion that was to become of great importance in later Scepticism (it is because the disagreement, *diaphōnia*, proves to be undecidable, *anepikritos*, that *epochē* becomes the only rationally acceptable posture: *PH* 1 98, 112). And this connects with the claim that 'neither sensation nor opinion is true or false'. Long and Sedley (1987 1, 16–17) write:

notice that Pyrrho is not credited with saying that sensations or opinions, though they may be true, cannot be known as such. He does not alert us, as later Sceptics do, to the unavailability of an agreed criterion of truth. That strategy is quite compatible with, and regularly associated with, the assumption that some of our experience, if we did but know it, has a hold on objective reality.²⁷ Pyrrho's inference from the world's indeterminability is much stronger, denying truth or falsehood to *any* sensations or opinions. We are to take it that indeterminability really is the nature of things, and that this proposition, unlike every other judgement we may make about the world, falls outside the exclusion of truth and falsehood.

This raises important issues.

First, Long and Sedley adopt the traditional reading of 77(4) (the words printed in square brackets), which has the indeterminacy of the world entail the failure of truth-value for views and opinions. However, the Greek is difficult—and Zeller proposed an emendation²⁸ which would effectively reverse the order of logical dependence (yielding the ‘since’ of the angle brackets). Thus Pyrrho argues from the indeterminacy of judgements to the indeterminacy of the world, rather than the other way around. But however the dependence goes (Pyrrho may have thought it ran both ways, logical in one direction, epistemic in the other), Pyrrho’s scepticism is restricted, allowing a meta-level of true judgements about judgements: it is not scepticism all the way down. Furthermore (again regardless of the direction of the connection), Pyrrho seems to connect the indeterminability of judgement with an actual indeterminacy of the world—he moves between Protagorean epistemology and Heraclitean metaphysics in the fashion of *Theaetetus* (compare the final sentence of 76).

Moreover, how should we take the three privative adjectives of 77(3)? To say that the *pragmata* are indifferent implies (if they are states of affairs in the world) that they are *in themselves* actually no more this than that (i.e. the world itself is Heraclitean, metaphysically indeterminate). On the other hand, *adiaphora* may be subjective in sense (‘undifferentiable’): Pyrrho would then be pointing to our own epistemic shortcomings.²⁹ And things may be unmeasurable either for epistemic or for ontological reasons: either because we are incapable of measuring (since we lack a criterion), or because there is nothing determinate there to be measured. Clearly this distinction between negative E-dogmatism on the one hand and negative O-dogmatism on the other is not trivial. Moreover the same goes for ‘undecidable’, although perhaps the epistemological interpretation seems preferable (to say that something is undecidable seems conversationally to imply that there is a real dispute about it—and hence a real, although unavailable, answer).

Still, the Long-Sedley interpretation yields a consistent sense. Pyrrho holds

(4) there are no real (qualitative) differences in things
hence

(5) there are no measurable differences in them
hence

(6) hence there are no decidable differences in them.

(4) expresses a negative dogmatic claim about the world—it is indeterminate;

(5) draws an interim ontological conclusion from (4): if there are no differences, then *a fortiori* there are no measurable differences; finally (6) teases out a further result *a fortiori*, ontological in that it still refers to the properties of objects, but with obvious epistemological import.

The answer to question (ii) is then given by 77(4), by way of a claim about perception and judgement:

(7) neither perceptions nor judgements are true or false.

(7) is apparently a dogmatic assertion that no perception or judgement is either true or false. It is easy enough to see why such judgements, assuming they take the form

(8) x is F ,

cannot be true: the world is indeterminate, and no such predicate can attach absolutely

and uncontroversially to any object in it. But why should it also not be false? And why should

(9) x is not- F

not, conversely, be true? Perhaps because (9) is taken as determinately and absolutely *denying* that x has any F -ness, something equally false in a Heraclitean world. Thus negation is interpreted as predicate-negation; and no assertoric sentence which either makes a predication or denies one can turn out true. But why cannot they both be false? Perhaps because Pyrrho takes falseness to mean absolute falseness: thus (8) would be false just in case no trace of F -ness attached to x (and similarly with (9)); but in a Heraclitean world that fails to be the case as well. (7) is thus vindicated. But is (7) then itself true, and hence self-refutational? There is no evidence that Pyrrho was even aware of this difficulty, much less that he confronted it: but it is worth pointing out that there are two Sceptical routes of reply to it.

First, Pyrrho might say that (7), since it is not in subject-predicate form, is not in fact itself a judgement in the appropriate (i.e. first-order) sense—thus Pyrrho would allow himself a meta-level of true quasi-judgement (and his Scepticism would be, in the jargon of Chapter II, restricted). Alternatively he might hold that the judgement embodied in (7) was itself neither true nor false, and that (7) was effectively recursive (and hence his Scepticism would implicitly be radical).

But whatever the correct interpretation of (7), Pyrrho invites us to conclude from it, in answer to question (ii) of 77(2), that

(10) we ought not to trust perceptions and judgements
and hence

(11) we should be unopinionated and uncommitted.

The Greek ('we ought not trust them': *mēde pisteuein autais dein*) allows a variety of interpretations of the modal force of (10), but it is relatively clear that it should be glossed as

(10a) it is necessary for us not to trust perceptions and judgements, i.e., in the light of (7) we should not accept any proposition of the form of (8) as being (unrestrictedly) true. We are being cautioned against credulity; and this is the reason why, in response to question (ii), our attitude should be one of lack of belief (where failing to believe propositions such as (8) does not entail any corresponding belief in those of the form of (9)). And thereafter, in answer to question (iii), *ataraxia* supervenes.

Before returning to the alleged Indian influence, we need to deal with one more interpretative crux in 78, concerning the scope of the *ou mallon* in 78(4) (on the sense given by Pyrrho to *ou mallon*, see 92 below). The problem is indicated by the two 'than's in pointed brackets in my translation. Long and Sedley omit them, and hence implicitly take *ou mallon* narrowly to cover only the first opposition; however, the Greek is consistent with its governing not only the first 'is' and 'is not' but the subsequent conjunction and negative disjunction as well. The narrow-scope reading has Pyrrho treat the conjunction and disjunction as *alternatives* to the *ou mallon*: you can hold *either* (a) that they no more are than are not, *or* (b) that they both are (the Protagorean position), *or* (c) that neither of them is (the Democritean view). By contrast the broad-scope reading makes Pyrrho suspend judgement about both the conjunction and disjunction as well.³⁰ Formally the distinction is as follows; the broad-scope reading translates as

(BS) No more (p , not- p , both p and not- p ; neither p nor not- p),

while the narrow-scope interpretation reads

(NS) Either (a)(no more p than not- p) or (b)(both p and not- p) or (c)(neither p nor not- p).

Now Pyrrho cannot *assert* (b) (since on the interpretation canvassed that would amount to saying that x was both exclusively F and completely non- F): call that the ‘strong interpretation’ of predication. On the other hand, given a weak interpretation of predication (such that ‘ x is F ’ is satisfied just in case x has some F -ness about it), (c) is ruled out, since it is not the case either that x completely lacks or completely fails to lack F . On the other hand, by (7) neither (8) nor (9) is true. Thus for a weak reading of (8) and (9) (b) turns out true, while conversely (c) does so on the strong interpretation.

I am inclined to think that the following is Pyrrho’s position. He does hold, *à la* Long-Sedley, a first-order thesis of indeterminacy in the objects. However, that thesis can be interpreted in either a Protagorean or a Democritean fashion: one can hold either (b) that objects really have the contradictory properties, or (c) that they do not; (b) and (c) then become different ways of interpreting (a), rather than genuine alternatives to it; hence they are not subsumed under the scope of general *ou mallon*. When asked to choose between (b) and (c), Pyrrho will make no determination—but in a sense both are true and both are false; and in a sense they both represent (a). This view is consistent with the type of second-order dogmatism that Long and Sedley discern in Pyrrho. Pyrrho’s scepticism, then, was not radical, and the *ou mallon* of 77 has narrow scope.

However, Flintoff’s detection of Indian influence rests precisely on interpreting *ou mallon* broadly: he cites by way of comparison a variety of ‘quadrilemmatic’ Buddhist questions (‘whether the world is eternal or not, or both or neither’, etc.), which the Buddha declared to be insoluble (Flintoff, 1980, 93). But the content of these alleged parallels seems to be exclusively metaphysical or cosmological; and the obvious interpretation of 66 is that Pyrrho, like Socrates (*Apol.* 18b–c, 19b–c), had no concern at all for such matters. His main, perhaps exclusive, interests were, again like Socrates, ethical: in 76 the scope of his scepticism is the fine and the disgraceful, the just and unjust. That, of course, does not entail that he could not have derived from the Indians a form of argument, and then applied it to his own concerns; and it is certainly true that quadrilemmatic arguments occur in Sextus.³¹

Yet even if we interpret 77(4) quadrilemmatically, there is no need to suppose that it is of eastern provenance. In the course of his anti-sceptical arguments of *Metaph.* 4 4–5, arguments certainly developed before Alexander’s Asian expedition, Aristotle writes:

at the same time it is clear that investigation with this person is pointless, since he says nothing. For he says neither yes nor no, but both yes and no; and then he denies these, saying neither yes nor no. (78: *Metaph.* 4 4 1008a30 ff.; cf. Plato, *Republic* 5, 479c)

Aristotle visibly finds scepticism exasperating—and it is not always clear how he thinks his own arguments are supposed to go (at one point he realizes he is begging the question against scepticism). Nor do we know, since Aristotle does not tell us, whom he is arguing against (he refers vaguely to ‘Heracliteans’ and ‘Protagoreans’). Some scholars have posited a Pyrrhonian target; and some of Aristotle’s remarks recall what was said of Pyrrho:

he avoided nothing and took no precautions, but withstood everything as it occurred, carts, precipices, dogs, etc., placing no trust in the senses; (79: *DL* 9 62, =1A LS, =6 DC)

(the fact that he lived to be ninety was due, supposedly, to the watchfulness of his friends). Aristotle writes of his sceptical butt:

why does he not fall into a well or a gully if he comes upon it, instead of guarding against doing it, thus showing that he does not think that it is equally good and not good to fall in? (80: *Metaph.* 4 4, 1008a15 ff.; cf. *ibid.* 4 5 1010b4–11)

Aristotle draws the behaviourist conclusion that everyone willy-nilly has beliefs, makes value-judgements to the effect that one course of action is better than another. And while Aristotle never mentions Pyrrho (who was in any case a generation younger) by name, his argument that a life without belief or evaluation would be disastrous may lie behind the stories of Pyrrho’s fecklessness.³² At any event, Aenesidemus thought it necessary to counter the slander:

Aenesidemus says that it was only his philosophy that was based on suspension of judgement, and that he did not act carelessly. (81: *DL* 9 62, =1A LS, =7 DC)

Where does this leave the Indian hypothesis? 78 may be interpreted as a quadrilemma (although it need not be), and wherever it came from, it predates any contact Pyrrho might have had in India. Aristotle’s beef is that his sceptics trample on PNC: and they do that by simultaneously *asserting* contradictory positions, not by suspending judgement as to which of two contradictories, their conjunction and their negative disjunction, may be true. Moreover, Aristotle’s text shows quite clearly that a variety of fairly extreme scepticism was already available on the Greek market of ideas in the second half of the fourth century BC—one did not need to travel to the exotic bazaars of the Orient to find it.

Buddhism does advocate suspension of judgement of a kind—but it is far from clear whether its scope is the same as Pyrrho’s. The Buddhists deployed arguments to produce their antinomic effects, as did the later Pyrrhonists; but the evidence for Pyrrho’s use of argument is scant:

in inquiries he was despised by no-one, for he could both speak discursively and in answer to questioning, so that even Nausiphanes³³ as a young man fell under

his spell. (82: DL 9 64,=1B LS,=28 DC)

The best evidence for Pyrrho exercising a *dunamis antithetikē* (Chapter II, 27) again comes from Aenesidemus:

Aenesidemus says in the first book of his *Pyrrhonian Arguments* that Pyrrho determined nothing dogmatically because of the opposition of arguments (*antilogia*), but adhered to the appearances. (83: DL 9 106,=71ALS,=8 DC)

Pyrrho perhaps employed arguments of a sort from time to time (even if only to himself: DL 9 63); but he was a man of few words (Galen, *Subf. Emp.* 11, Fr. 10b 82–3 Dr). The hypothesis of a direct Indian influence on Pyrrho is unproven; Annas and Barnes (1985, 12) put it well: ‘it is by no means impossible that Pyrrhonism has an Indian godfather. But its natural parents were surely Greek’.

The Pyrrhonian Way of Life

Pyrrho’s way of life is celebrated in a set of amusingly pointed anecdotes. He was a solitary, always maintaining an attitude of equipoise (DL 9 63). He was prone to leave home without warning to go walkabout with whomever he happened to meet (*ibid.*); and when Anaxarchus fell into a midden

he passed him by without giving him any assistance; and while others blamed him, Anaxarchus praised his indifference and sang-froid. (84: DL 9 63,=10 DC)

This sang-froid was evidently his most memorable characteristic. He would continue talking as though to an audience even when no-one was listening (DL 9 63, 64), while 65 and 66 point to a detachment from ordinary affairs verging on solipsism. He demonstrated his indifference by preparing poultry and washing pigs (DL 9 66); and underwent surgery ‘without so much as a frown’ (DL 9 67: another example of the *topos* of philosophical fortitude: cf. 68). Two stories aim to undermine Pyrrho’s reputation for indifference (although not the fact of his general pursuit of it):

once he got enraged in his sister’s defence...and said to someone reproaching him for it that it was not in the case of women that one should make a show of indifference. And when a dog rushed at him and terrified him, he replied to someone accusing him that it was not easy entirely to divest oneself of one’s humanity,³⁴ but that one should strive against affairs (*pragmata*) with deeds as far as possible, and if that failed with words. (85: DL 9 66,=1C LS [part],=15a DC)³⁵

Difficult as that may prove to be, the proper sceptical attitude can only be reached as a result of abandoning normal human concerns and reactions. This is supported by Posidonius (Fr. 287 Edelstein and Kidd):

when his shipmates were terrified by a storm, he maintained his calm and strength of mind, pointing to a piglet in the ship that was eating, saying that the wise man should keep himself in that sort of unperturbedness (*ataraxia*). (86: DL 9 68,=17a DC)³⁶

Pyrrho's eschewal of strong evaluations, and the powerful emotions and desires associated with them, is the central thread linking these stories. *Apatheia* is, after all, freedom from *pathē*—and one sense of *pathos* is emotion. The key emotions are fear, and to a lesser extent anger and pity. It is only human to be afflicted by them, but that very humanity stands in the way of genuine tranquillity. Pyrrho's fundamental goal is ethical, having to do with the correct evaluation of goods and evils prior to choosing the appropriate course of life. His scepticism amounts to saying that no such evaluation is correct, because nothing in the objects justifies such evaluations (76, 77(3)).

This suggests that a generalized scepticism of the senses formed no part of Pyrrho's original programme. What, then, are we to make of 77(4), which seems to condemn perceptions as untrustworthy? The Greek concept of perception is broad enough to include under its umbrella certain types of evaluation ('that cake looks good to eat'; 'the bed looks comfortable'); and Pyrrho may simply be talking about such perceptions here, the sort that are directly related to choice and avoidance, and hence to action. The Pyrrhonian, undisposed as he is to take such perceptions as being absolutely true, will be less likely to be moved by them; and the Pyrrhonian ideal is to be *aklinēs*, unmoved by the way things seem to be (77(4)).

The Ciceronian Picture

Cicero treats Pyrrho as an ethicist (albeit a conclusively refuted one: *On Duties* 1 6, *Fin.* 2 35), and usually associates him with Ariston of Chios, Zeno's hardline Stoic pupil who

established in practice what Zeno had proved in theory that nothing is good except virtue, nothing bad except what is contrary to virtue. On his estimation, the intermediates contained none of those differences of value that Zeno wanted.³⁷ For Ariston the highest good is not to be moved to either side in these things, which he calls *adiaphoria* (indifference). Pyrrho on the other hand held that the wise man is not even aware of them, which is called *apatheia*. (87: Cicero, *Acad.* 2 130, =69a DC; cf. 69b–m DC)

Cicero has both Pyrrho and Ariston say (absurdly in his view) that

there is no difference between the best of health and the gravest illness...the effect of their wish to make virtue on its own so all-embracing was to rob it of its capacity to select things. (88: Cicero, *Fin.* 2 43, =69b DC)

Pyrrho's 'virtue' is, however, unconventional, even by comparison with the Stoic's:

the most mistaken in my view is Pyrrho, because his conception of virtue leaves nothing whatever as an object of desire. (89: Cicero, *Fin.* 4 43,=69c DC)

Pyrrho wishes to destroy the selective capacity altogether, rather than merely to modify it: as Timon puts it, the Pyrrhonist

will be unavailing and unpursuing. (90: *M* 11 164,=72 Ds,=2J LS, =66 DC)

Pyrrho's denial that anything is intrinsically valuable is not only more radical than Ariston's Stoicism: it differs from it in structure as well. The Aristonian Stoic, according to 87, will come to the view that many apparent goods have no 'selective value' (n. 37), and will hence restrain his desires for them. Pyrrho, lacking any strong beliefs, won't even have the desires. This is consistent with living more or less an ordinary life, Aenesidemus claimed (81), since it does not make it impossible to 'adhere to the appearances' (83).³⁸ Pyrrho may (in a limited sense) have beliefs—but he will not have any commitments, nor any of the emotional baggage that comes along with them; and that will also define the extent of his *aphasia* (77(5)). He will refuse to make assertions about questions of intrinsic value. On the other hand, if he does accept indeterminacy in the objects (76), rather than simply refusing to commit himself one way or the other, the scope of his scepticism is more restricted than that of his followers, and his *aphasia* less all-embracing (cf. Chapter XVII: 338).

Two further pieces of evidence point in the same direction. First of all, Diogenes reports one Numenius as explicitly saying that Pyrrho dogmatized (*DL* 9 68,=42 DC). This Numenius is usually supposed³⁹ to be the same as the Pyrrhonist mentioned by Diogenes (*DL* 9 102).⁴⁰ Finally, in his other philosophical poem the *Images*,⁴¹ Timon has Pyrrho undertake to speak

the story of the truth which has a correct rule, namely the nature of the divine and the good, from which derives the most equable life for man. (91: *M* 11 20,=Fr. 68 Ds,=62 DC)

The interpretation of the fragment is disputed;⁴² but read thus it is at least consistent with the second-order dogmatism which later Pyrrhonists were at immense pains to purge from the Sceptical way.

The Pyrrhonian Legacy

But if there are such discrepancies in content between Pyrrho's own views and those of later post-Aenesidemean Scepticism, it is something of a puzzle why he was universally taken to be the originator of Scepticism. Sextus indeed makes remarkably little of Pyrrho, mentioning him a mere handful of times, and in only two of his books: *M* 1 and *PH* 1. Moreover, these passages make no mention of any Pyrrhonian doctrine. In one of them (*PH* 1 7,=40 DC) Sextus indeed makes Pyrrho the father of the Sceptical Way—but no

matters of substance are touched on. Elsewhere, the connections are even more adventitious: *PH* 1 234 (=35 DC) mentions Pyrrho only in quoting a famous Aristonian *bon mot*, whose subject is in fact Arcesilaus (see Chapter V, 75, n. 4:100). Sextus mentions Pyrrho's name four times at *M* 1 305–6 (=61d DC), but in the course of discussing the compatibility of Timon's comparison of Pyrrho with the sun (Fr. 67 Ds) with the sceptical position. The inescapable conclusion is that either Sextus knew nothing of Pyrrho's actual positions or that if he did he suspected they did not as a matter of fact embody scepticism in the manner he wished to present it.⁴³

No doubt the semi-legendary example of Pyrrho's life, drawn from the stories already quoted, served to make him a paragon of detachment and the undisturbed life, and hence a suitable patron-saint of the later Scepticism that adopted his name in the same way, and for some of the same reasons, as the figure of Socrates came to represent a philosophical ideal. Moreover, Aenesidemus held that Pyrrho 'determined nothing' by the exercise of argumentative opposition, and that he lived 'according to the appearances' (83: *DL* 9 106). The language of non-determination, which becomes part of the semi-technical vocabulary of the 'sceptical expressions',⁴⁴ probably originated with Pyrrho (cf. 92), even if its scope is narrower than that of his successors.

Timon

Apart from the *Silli* and the *Images*, **Timon** (c. 320–230 BC) is said to have written in many other forms (epic, comic, tragic, even obscene verse: *DL* 9 110); and he also composed some prose works, including a *Pytho* (in which he described a meeting with Pyrrho,⁴⁵ and from which 77 derives) of which a few fragments survive, notably an elucidation of *ou mallon* as meaning

not determining anything, but withholding assent. (92: *DL* 9 76,=Fr. 80 Ds,=1GLS,=54 DC)

But the vast preponderance of the not in any case very extensive remains of Timon's work deal with other philosophers. One fragment promotes ethical conventionalism (cf. 76):

there does not exist anything good or bad by nature, 'but these things are judged by men by custom', (93: *M* 11 140,=Fr. 70 Ds,=11 LS,= 64 DC)⁴⁶

while another, from Diogenes' account of later Pyrrhonism, is illuminating:

we perceive that fire burns—but we suspend judgement as to whether it has an inflammable nature. Our resistance...is confined to the non-evident accompaniment of appearances. For when we say the picture has depth, we are indicating the appearance. When we say it has not got depth we no longer state what appears but something else. That is why Timon too says in his *Pytho* that he 'has not departed from normal practice (*sunētheia*)' [Fr. 81 Ds]. In his

Images too he makes a similar point: ‘the appearance prevails everywhere, wherever it comes from’⁴⁷ [Fr. 69 Ds,=63a DC]. And in his *On Sensations*⁴⁸ he says ‘that honey is sweet I do not affirm, but I agree it appears so’ [Fr. 74 Ds]. (94: DL 9 104–5,=1H LS)

The point about the picture recalls Anaxarchus (69): the picture ‘appears’ three-dimensional; hence to state that it is not ‘really’ so is to go beyond the appearances and to stray into dogmatism. A little later, Diogenes reports that Timon replied to those who claimed authority for the senses supported by reason by quoting a line of verse to the effect that ‘birds of a feather flock together’⁴⁹—i.e., presumably, the concurrence of two worthless witnesses is itself worthless.⁵⁰

This refusal to move from the language of appearance to that of reality is characteristic of Greek Scepticism. If it is objected that the claim that the picture is really flat too rests on a sensory appearance, namely that of touch (run your finger along it and it feels perfectly smooth), the Sceptic will say there is no warrant for preferring one of two conflicting sense-reports over the other (this is perhaps Cyrenaic in inspiration: 74). This explains Fr. 69 Ds (94), which is also quoted by Galen (*de Dignoscendis Pulsibus* VIII 781 Kühn), who takes it to mean that the sceptic will allow only the appearances, and will eschew all ‘additional opinion’.⁵¹

It is not clear why Timon says that this refusal to make assertions about the real nature of things accords with ‘normal practice’—although sceptics frequently contend that their philosophy is nothing more than the merest common sense: the disingenuous claim of revisionary epistemologists. Still, Timon’s point may simply be that we organize our lives in response to the appearances—we have no need of arcane speculation concerning the real natures of things. Timon, whether in his own voice or echoing Pyrrho, thus anticipates the ‘practical criterion’ of later Sceptics (*PH* 1 21–4; see Chapter II, 27ff.), including Arcesilaus (Chapter V: 125, 126), and Aenesidemus (Chapter VII: 81, 84).

Finally, honey. Honey’s paradigmatic sweetness was a philosophical *topos* from Xenophanes onward (Chapter III: 25, Xenophanes; 62, Democritus); and Sextus endorses (unattributed) Timon’s undogmatic formula at *PH* 1 19–20, in language suggesting a Cyrenaic original. These fragments imply that Timon’s scepticism ranged beyond the domain of evaluation and action, and foreshadowed the more generally perceptual Third Mode of scepticism.⁵²

Timon and Hypothesis

Two further passages attest the breadth of Timon’s sceptical interests. Book 3 of *Adversus Mathematicos* deals with geometry.⁵³ At the outset, Sextus writes:

since the geometers, aware of the multitude of difficulties (*aporiai*) which pursue them, take refuge in a business which seems to them to be free from danger and safe, namely assuming the principles (*archai*) of geometry by hypothesis, it would be appropriate for us to posit as a beginning (*archē*) of our refutation of them their hypothetical account.⁵⁴ For Timon, in his *Against the*

*Physicists*⁵⁵ thought that one should investigate this first of all, I mean whether anything should be accepted from hypothesis. (95: *M* 3 1–2,=31 LS)⁵⁶

The subject of geometrical hypothesis in the ancient world is complex and controversial.⁵⁷ At *Republic* 6, 509d–11c (the Divided Line), Plato upbraids geometers for treating mere hypotheses as though they were axioms, objecting that they do not attempt to use the deductions to establish the hypotheses, but simply take their truth for granted. By contrast, according to Plato, we must treat them *as* hypotheses, using them to deduce further theorems which will then enable us to ‘ascend once more in the direction of the hypotheses, converting them into axioms’, in such a way that the whole argument ceases to depend for its truth on the mere assumption of the truth of its premisses.⁵⁸ The details of this procedure are obscure, and it is hard to see how such a two-way procedure could serve to ground the hypotheses, turning them into axioms. And perhaps that is what Timon said: the theorems are only as good as the axioms upon which they rest—and hence they cannot provide any independent confirmation of the truth of those axioms. Such a move in some respects parallels Democritus’s argument of the senses against reason (Chapter III: 59); and Sextus makes use of it himself, pointing out that if we hypothesize that $3=4$, then we can infer that $6=8$; but so what? (*M* 3 11; cf. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 2 6, 1222b31 ff.).

However, Timon may not have been particularly concerned with the geometers’ notion of hypothesis. A later Sceptical system, ‘the Modes of Agrippa’ (Chapter X), elaborated a ‘hypothetical mode’ designed to show that many Dogmatic arguments failed because they rested upon an unproved assumption (*PH* 1 173–4, 177; *DL* 9 88–9); and Timon may rather anticipate that here. The Agrippan Mode is entirely general in scope, part of a supposedly exhaustive set of anti-Dogmatic arguments; Sextus suggests (although he does not assert) that Timon’s concern was more purely local. Even so, his objection, even if limited, is important. The geometers behave as though they arrive at certainty by the application of certain arguments. For this reason at least as early as Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* geometry was treated as the paradigm of an exact science yielding *epistēmē*, or scientific understanding. And yet if the geometers cannot justify their original assumptions the whole procedure is built on sand.

At *M* 3 6–17, Sextus argues that the employers of one hypothesis are, *prima facie*, no more worthy of credence than those who posit its opposite: for if they were, it would not be a hypothesis, but a self-evident fact (i.e., there would be no need of further confirmation of it—but since the method accepts that need for confirmation, the hypothesis is initially no more acceptable than its contradictory). Secondly, someone may argue that, if some self-evident (or independently confirmed) proposition q follows from some given hypothesis p , then the truth of q is evidence for the truth of p . But it is an elementary logical fact that truths can follow validly from falsehoods—and hence q is quite powerless to support p (*M* 3 16–17). More needs to be said about the notion of confirmation—and Sextus’s treatment is in some ways inadequate. But it points to a fundamental weakness in the geometers’ position, unless they can produce an argument to the effect that *only* on the assumption that p can q be true. If Timon had anything to do with this, he deserves a place of honour in the history of the study of axiomatic foundations. Sextus’s specific arguments are probably of much later provenance; but we

may at least hypothesize a Timonian hand behind them.⁵⁹

Time

Sextus preserves a fragment of Timon's on time in two places (*M* 6 66; 10 197):

the present time is not indivisible—for as Timon asserts, no divisible thing, such as becoming and perishing, can come to be in indivisible time. (96: Fr. 76 Ds, =1m LS)

The context is the perennial discussion of the nature of the present. Is the present (a) a punctual division between past and future, and hence itself occupying no temporal space? Or does the present (b) itself have a temporal extension? Both options appear to generate paradoxes. If (b), it looks as though the present will be partly past and partly future—which seems unsatisfactory, since past, present, and future are generally taken to be exclusive. But if (a), then change, which takes place in the present, but takes time, becomes problematic. Assume

(11) all change takes place in the present,
and

(12) the present is partless (i.e. for any times t_1 and t_2 , if t_1 and t_2 are both in the present, then $t_1=t_2$);

then, given that change is characterized by the following condition

(13) for any object x and for any property F , if x changes in respect of F , then there are times t_1 and t_2 such that x is more F at t_1 and less F at t_2 , and $t_1 \neq t_2$,
it follows that

(14) no change can take place in the present,
hence

(15) there is no change.

Timon takes the truth of (11), plus the assumption

(16) there is change,

to entail the falsity of (12), by way of (13). Aristotle argued (*Physics* 6 2, 232b20–233a12) that the divisibility of magnitude entails the impossibility of the indivisibility of time (cf. Diodorus Cronus: Chapter XIV, 246). Arguments of this type go back at least to **Zeno of Elea**—and Zeno's paradox of the moving arrow lies behind Timon's reasoning.

Zeno held that an arrow cannot move, since it must move in time, and since at any given instant it occupies only its own immediate space, there is no space for it to move *through* in that instant; but if time is composed of instants, then there is nothing over and above a set of instants in which it can move—and hence it cannot move (*Aristotle, Phys.* 6 9, 239b30–9, =29 A 27 DK). Zeno's argument is not couched in terms of the present—but as the troublesome assumption for Timon is that the present is an instant, this difference is unimportant. Zeno's argument turns on the confusion of two distinct theses:

(17) The arrow is moving at t

and

(18) the arrow moves through (i.e. covers distance during) t .

Propositions (17) and (18) are not equivalent, nor does (17) entail (18). Hence one can reject (18), while maintaining (17); even if the arrow covers no distance during an instant, it does not follow that the arrow is not then moving.⁶⁰ (By contrast, Diodorus Cronus drew the conclusion, no less paradoxical, that nothing can be moving, although it can have moved: *M* 10 85.)

In Timon's formulation, (11) is ambiguous: it may mean either

(11a) if x changes in respect of F , then the whole of that change must have occurred in a present time;

or

(11b) if x changes in respect of F , then every moment of that change must at some time be present.

It is only (11a), in conjunction with the thesis of a punctual present, which has any tendency to show that nothing can change; (11b), which is in any case the more natural reading of (11), has no such sceptical power.

Yet Timon's argument is ingenious—and even if it is not original to him, it still shows him deploying material in a fashion more comprehensive than anything suggested by the extant remains of Pyrrho his master. It seems that there were, in fact, two Timons: Timon of the *Silli*, the *Images*, and perhaps also the *Pytho*, who was concerned to vindicate the Pyrrhonian way against the rash dogmatic claims of the other philosophers, and who was Pyrrho's faithful *amanuensis*. But there was another Timon, of the prose works like the *On Sensations* and *Against the Physicists*, now almost entirely lost, who set himself to expand the horizons of Pyrrhonism into the realms of physics and logic.

V

The Scepticism of the Middle Academy

The Post-Platonic Academy

Plato died in 347 BC. Upon his death, the stewardship of his Academy passed first to his nephew Speusippus, and then to Xenocrates. Aristotle, who had coveted the appointment, left Athens in dudgeon, later returning to found his own school in the Lyceum. Under Speusippus and his successors, the Academy gradually abandoned research to concentrate on producing an orthodox systematization of Plato's metaphysics. Although Speusippus and Xenocrates made some original contributions,¹ the Academy became an increasingly scholastic institution. Xenocrates was succeeded by Polemo in 314, who seems to have been scholarch until his death in about 275 BC, although his contemporaries Crates and Crantor also occupied important positions in the Academy during his headship, Crates finally succeeding him. Polemo influenced Zeno the Stoic, who attended his lectures (*DL* 7 25); and the debate between the early Stoics and the Academy of Arcesilaus is perhaps best seen as a quarrel over who can best lay claim to Socrates' intellectual legacy.²

Arcesilaus

Arcesilaus (c. 318–c. 243 BC) was originally an acolyte of Theophrastus in the Lyceum (*DL* 4 29), but abandoned him, allegedly motivated by love for Crantor.³ He was flamboyant, generous (*DL* 4 37–8), and

very lavish: what else but another Aristippus? He was fond of dining well with like-minded people. He lived openly with Theodete and Phila, the Elean courtesans, and he quoted the maxims of Aristippus to those who upbraided him for it. (97: *DL* 4 40)

He was known as *philochlos*, mob-lover (*DL* 4 41, 42) and hungry for fame (*philodoxos*: *ibid.* 41). Timon waspishly describes him thus:

so saying, he plunged into the surrounding crowd. And they wondered at him, like chaffinches around an owl, pointing him out as vain, because he was a crowd-pleaser (*ochloareskos*). You are no great thing, miserable one: why do you puff your self up (*platuneai*) like a fool? (98: *DL* 4 42, =Fr. 34 DS)

His dialectical prowess was celebrated:

he was particularly skilful at invention [sc. in argument], and was able to answer objections pointedly, and to bring the discussion back to the point at issue, and to suit it to each occasion. He was unrivalled in persuasiveness. (99: *DL* 4 37)

Moreover,

he apparently held Plato in high regard, and possessed a copy of his books. According to some, he admired Pyrrho too, and he was devoted to dialectic, following the argumentative style of the Eretrian school, which is why Ariston said of him: ‘Plato in front, Pyrrho behind, Diodorus in the middle’ [cf. *PH* 1 234]⁴.

Timon speaks of him thus: ‘Having the lead of Menedemus⁵ at heart, he will run either to (?put on?)⁶ that mass of flesh Pyrrho, or to Diodorus’ [Fr. 31 Ds,=32, 33 DC]; and later he has him say: ‘I shall swim to Pyrrho and to crooked Diodorus’. [Fr. 32 Ds,=32, 33 DC] (100: *DL* 4 33)

Whatever one makes of these sibylline pronouncements, Arcesilaus was clearly something of an eclectic. Plato provides the front to his philosophizing, but his actual method derives from Megarian and the Eretrian dialectic, while Pyrrho provides the philosophical thrust.⁷ Timon’s scene is difficult to reconstruct (see n. 6); but it seems that Arcesilaus is portrayed as a fish caught on the hook of Menedemus (the ‘lead’ is presumably a lead fishing-weight), and reeled in either the direction of Pyrrho, or of Diodorus.⁸

None of this suggests that Arcesilaus was seen as a philosophical revolutionary (although he was later portrayed as such: Cicero, *Acad.* 1 15). According to Diogenes

he took over the school on the death of Crates, a certain Socratides having stood down in his favour, (101: *DL* 4 32)

in or around 272 BC. Either he modified his standpoint upon accession to the scholarchy, or his contemporaries saw more continuity between his views and those of his Academic predecessors than his successors did.⁹

Platonism, Pyrrhonism, Dialectic

A number of different sources credit Arcesilaus with introducing *epochē* into the Greek philosophical vocabulary; and all of them imply that Arcesilaus suspended judgement himself. Diogenes writes:

Arcesilaus founded the Middle Academy; and he was first to hold his assertions in check (*epischōn*) because of the contrariety of arguments. (102: *DL* 4 28,=68D LS)

Moreover,

some say that he never wrote a book because of his *epochē* about everything. (103: *DL* 4 32,=68E LS)

In the course of distinguishing Scepticism from other superficially similar philosophies Sextus writes:

Arcesilaus seems to me to have much in common with the Pyrrhonian doctrines, so that his way and ours seem to be virtually identical; for he is never found asserting anything concerning whether anything obtains or not, nor does he privilege anything over anything else in terms of credibility or otherwise, but suspends judgement about everything. He also holds that the end is *epochē* (which is accompanied as we have said by *ataraxia*). (104: *PH* 1 232,=681 LS)

The parenthesis may be Sextus's own intrusion; but the rest is supposedly Arcesilaan. A passage of Plutarch confirms the attribution:

these ('the Academics of Arcesilaus's circle') were the ones who suspend judgement about everything. (105: *Adversus Colotem* 1120c, =68H LS)

'*Epochē* about everything' is thus confidently ascribed to Arcesilaus by three separate sources.

The most detailed account of Arcesilaus's Academy is owed to Cicero's *Academica*, a presentation of New Academy's epistemology (to which Cicero was sympathetic) in Latin dialogue form. One passage is of particular significance:

(1) 'It is now your role,' said Varro, 'since you have seceded from the way of the ancients and approve the innovations of Arcesilaus, to explain what the schism was and how it occurred...' (2) Then I said: 'It was with Zeno, so we are told, that Arcesilaus began his battle, not from obstinacy or desire for victory... but because of the obscurity of things which had brought Socrates to admit ignorance, as also previously his predecessors Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and almost all the ancients who said that nothing could be grasped or perceived or known, that the senses were limited, the mind feeble, the course of life short, and that (to quote Democritus) "truth is submerged in an abyss" [cf. 58:68 B 117 DK] with everything in the grip of opinions and conventions, nothing left for truth and everything wrapped in darkness. (3) Accordingly Arcesilaus denied that anything could be known, not even that thing itself, the one thing Socrates had left for himself; so deep did he think was the obscurity in which everything was hidden that he held that nothing could be discerned or understood. (4) For these reasons no-one must assert or affirm anything, or give the approval of assent to anything, but he should curb his rashness...; for it would be the height of rashness to accept something either false or not certainly known; and nothing is more disgraceful than for assent and

approval to outrun knowledge and perception.’ (106: Cicero, *Acad.* 1 43–5,=68A LS)¹⁰

106 evidently attributes to Arcesilaus the view that the impossibility of arriving at certain (in the sense of rationally indubitable) knowledge makes *epochē* the only reasonable stance to adopt. However, this attribution was challenged by Couissin (1929/83; cf. Couissin, 1929), who saw Arcesilaus as a pure dialectician: faced with Zeno of Citium’s novel epistemology, Arcesilaus developed a series of arguments simply to undermine the Stoic position: embracing no position on *epochē* himself, he merely seeks to show that the Stoics are committed to it *malgré eux*. We may characterize Couissin’s view as the *Dialectical Interpretation* (DI).

Arcesilaus doubtless spent much time attacking the Stoics. Numenius confirms the assessment of 106(2):

Arcesilaus, seeing that Zeno rivalled him in the art and could overcome him, he immediately set himself to demolish the arguments brought up by him, (107: in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 6 12; cf. 5 11,=68G LS)

later remarking that

seeing that both the doctrine of the apprehensive impression (*katalēptikē phantasia*) and its name, which he [i.e. Zeno] had been the first to discover, were highly regarded in Athens, he [i.e. Arcesilaus] employed every means to assail it. (108: in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 15 6 13,=68GLS).

Numenius is a hostile source, and his ambition-driven Arcesilaus must be taken with a pinch of sceptical salt (cf. 120); but that Arcesilaus was spurred to action by Zeno’s new epistemology is beyond dispute.

Numenius paints Arcesilaus as a sophist, a caricature which perhaps supports the *Dialectical Interpretation* (DI):

by preparation and study in the delusive show of his arguments he used to stupefy and juggle...and could neither know anything himself nor let others know; he spread terror and confusion, and in carrying off the prize for sophistries and deceitful arguments, he gloried in his disgrace and prided himself wonderfully on not knowing what is base or noble, or what is good or bad, but after saying whichever came into his thoughts, he would change again and upset his argument in many more ways than he had constructed it. (109: in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 6 2)

The DI derives further sustenance from the *Index Academicorum*:¹¹

he asserted nothing, but only refuted the other schools; (110: *Ind. Acad.*. 20 2–4)

The DI makes Arcesilaus into a wholly negative thinker, concerned merely to point to the

inadequacies and self-contradictions in others' positions. When Arcesilaus says *epochē* is the only reasonable attitude to adopt in the face of sceptical argument, he means, according to the DI, only that it is the only acceptable position *for the Stoics*. They pretend to offer an epistemology of certainty, high-mindedly claiming that the Sage will not assent to anything uncertain; but as everything is, by the Stoics' own principles, uncertain (since their much-vaunted criterion of truth, the apprehensive impression, is itself inapprehensible), then the Sage will not assent to anything—and that amounts to *epochē*. If the DI is right, then Arcesilaus's arguments do not commit *him* to any position whatever on *epochē*.

Most scholars now endorse some version of the DI. But it sits badly with some of the texts we have been considering (104–7); and for all that Arcesilaus devoted most of his time to attacking the Stoa and forcing them to suspension, he may yet have endorsed it himself, as Anna-Maria Ioppolo has recently argued persuasively (1981, 1986: see also Maconi, 1988).

Arcesilaus's philosophy (indeed that of the Sceptical Academy¹² in general) is generally approached under the two distinct headings of epistemology and practical philosophy. The Stoics were not slow to respond to Academic attacks on their epistemology with the Humean charge (*Enquiry* XII § 2 128: 11) that scepticism makes life impossible; and the Academics had to refute it. But the two issues are intimately entwined—and I shall pursue them in parallel by tracing, in this chapter and the next, the course of the two centuries' debate between the Stoics and the Sceptical Academy.

Zeno and Arcesilaus

Zeno's Sage will hold no opinions, where an opinion is defined as being

(D1) 'a weak [and false]¹³ assent' (*M* 7 151)

and

(D2) 'assent to what is not apprehended (*tōi akatalēptōi sunkatathesis*)' (*M* 7 156)

(D1) and (D2) are sometimes taken to define distinct species of opinion; but Cicero apparently thinks they amount to the same thing:

he [i.e. Zeno] held that not all impressions (*visa*)¹⁴ are trustworthy, but only those which have their own 'declaration', proper to themselves, of the things seen; and a trustworthy impression he called 'apprehensive' (*comprehensibile*);...

¹⁵ A thing apprehended by sensation he called itself a sensation, and a sensation so firmly apprehended that it could not be shaken by reason he called knowledge, but anything otherwise was ignorance, out of which arose opinion which is weak and in common with the false and uncognized. (111: Cicero, *Acad.* 1 41, = 40B, 41B LS)

Opinion resembles ‘the false and the uncognized’ because there is no difference in the quality of their intentional objects; whereas the *katalēptikē phantasia*, the cataleptic or apprehensive impression, somehow guarantees its own veridicality.¹⁶

Cicero continues:

but in between knowledge and ignorance he placed apprehension, numbering it neither among the good things nor the bad, but holding that it was trustworthy on its own. (112: Cicero, *Acad.* 1 42,=41B LS)

The cataleptic impression is the cornerstone of Stoic epistemology, since it allows the Stoic to claim some epistemic leverage on the world even if one has not attained the status of the true Sage (and the Stoics were loth to admit that anyone had) who would possess complete knowledge of how the world was. Since the Stoics were determinists, he would also be in a position never to make any practical error, since he could compute the precise ramifications of any action of his. Thus he would be able to avoid making any decisions, or undertaking any tasks, which were, in the nature of things, doomed to frustration. This was ‘assimilating oneself to nature’: the Sage’s particular nature would be perfectly in harmony with the unfolding of Nature at large, the predetermined course of events the Stoics called Fate, and assimilated to the Will of Zeus.¹⁷ But if such wisdom was a theoretical ideal, still the Stoics felt that one could progress in its general direction: although only the Sage was virtuous, and there were no degrees of virtue, one could still be closer to or further from the goal, in so far as one’s impressions were generally cataleptic or not. Thus the notion of the cataleptic impression becomes the pivot upon which the great debate between the Stoics and the Academics turns.

Cataleptic impressions are defined in several ways (cf. Frede, 1983, 163–6); Diogenes reports the earliest version:

there are two types of impression, one cataleptic, the other noncataleptic; the cataleptic, which they hold to be the criterion of things (*pragmata*), is that which comes from something existent and is in accordance with the existent thing itself, and has been stamped and imprinted; the non-cataleptic either comes from something non-existent, or if from something existent then not in accordance with the existent thing; and it is neither clear, nor distinct. (113: *DL* 7 46,=40C LS; cf. *M* 11 183)

This yields

(Def. 1) an impression is cataleptic if and only if (i) it is caused by a real object; (ii) it accurately represents that object; and (iii) it has been imprinted on the sensoria,

presumably Zeno’s original definition. Consider Orestes’ madness (a stock example: *M* 7 249–50; cf. 170, 245), in which he mistakes Electra for one of his pursuing Furies. Unlike the total hallucination-sufferer (who does not satisfy clause (i)), Orestes’ impression is caused by a real object (his sister); but it fails clause (ii), since it does not faithfully

reproduce her particular properties (*idiōmata*): hence it is not cataleptic.¹⁸

Arcesilaus's attack focusses on clauses (i) and (ii):¹⁹

(1) Arcesilaus and his associates did not primarily determine a criterion, and those who appear to have determined one offered it as a counterblast to the Stoics.²⁰ (2) For they say that there are three of them interrelated to each other, knowledge, opinion, with apprehension lying between the two of them; and of these (3) knowledge is the secure and firm apprehension unalterable by reason, opinion is weak [and false]²¹ assent, while (4) apprehension is intermediate between these, being assent to a cataleptic impression. (5) According to these people, a cataleptic impression is one which is true and such that it could not be false. (114: *M* 7 150–2, =41C LS [part])

114(5) suggests something rather different from Def. 1:

Def. 2: an impression is cataleptic if and only if (i) it is true (real) and (ii) it could not fail to be true (real).

Def. 2(i) is a veridicality condition; but 'true' presumably means more than merely that the propositional content of the impression mirrors some actual state of affairs in the world, since that might simply be the result of accident. Perhaps the issue is not so much truth as reality—these impressions really are *impressions*: they really are caused by the external world imprinting itself upon the sensoria. Zeno described an impression as:

an imprinting (*tupōsis*) on the soul, the name having been appropriately borrowed from the imprints made by the seal in wax, (115: *DL* 7 45; cf. 113)

a description Zeno presumably intended literally, since Chrysippus was forced to emphasize its metaphorical nature (*DL* 7 50). Thus Def. 2(i) rules out accidental correspondences. Def. 2(ii) requires not merely that the impressions be veridical, but that there is no way in which they could not be. The final sentence of 113 suggests that this has to do with their clarity and distinctness, and is thus a matter of their internal characteristics (cf. *M* 7 252: 117; see further Chapter VI, 105ff.), although it does not explicitly maintain that *only* cataleptic impressions will have these properties (and hence that they are criterial for them).

This somewhat complex state of affairs can be clarified by placing the evolution of the Stoic doctrine in its dialectical context. Cicero writes that we may imagine Arcesilaus

(1) to have asked Zeno what would happen if the Sage could not apprehend anything, and if it was also the mark of the Sage not to form opinions. (2) Zeno, I imagine, would reply that he [i.e. the Sage] would not form opinions because he could apprehend something. (3) What sort of thing? An impression, I suppose. (4) What sort of impression? An impression that was impressed, sealed, and moulded from something which is, just as it is. (5) Arcesilaus then asked if this held even if there were a true impression exactly the same in form

as a false one. (6) Here Zeno was acute enough to see that if an impression proceeding from something existent was such that there could be an impression of something non-existent of exactly the same form, then no impression could be apprehended. (7) Arcesilaus agreed that this addition to the definition was justified, since one could not apprehend an impression if a true one were such as a false one could be. (8) However he argued forcefully in order to show that no impression of something existent was such that there could not be an impression of something non-existent of the same form. (116: Cicero, *Acad.* 2 77,=40D LS)

116 shows Zeno modifying his original account to meet Arcesilaus's objection that unless there was something about cataleptic impressions that marked them off from non-apprehensive impressions the definition was worthless. Thus clause (ii) of Def. 2 comes to be added to Def. 1 as the rider 'of such a type as could not come from something non-existent' (*DL* 7 50).

This is confirmed by Sextus:

(1) they added 'of such a type as could not come from something nonexistent' because the Academics did not suppose, as the Stoics did, that an impression could not be found in all respects similar to it. (2) For the Stoics assert that he who has the cataleptic impression fastens on the objective difference of things with the skill of a craftsman, since an impression of this kind has a special characteristic of its own compared with other impressions, like the horned serpents as compared with all other serpents; (3) while the Academics hold that a false impression could be found exactly similar to the cataleptic one. (117: *M* 7 252,= 40E LS [part]; cf. *M* 7 152, 163, 248, 416, 426)

This yields

Def. 3: an impression is cataleptic if and only if (i) it is caused by a real object; (ii) it accurately represents that object; (iii) it has been imprinted on the sensoria; and (iv) it is of such a type as could not come from something non-existent.

Clause (iv) is added explicitly in response to Arcesilaus: and it has an uncomfortable air of trivial stipulation about it. After all what is it to satisfy (iv)? What is the force of the modal 'could not'? And how can we know when (iv) is satisfied? It is on these questions that the Academics now turn their guns.

Arcesilaus set out to 'show that there was no criterion, apprehension, intermediate between knowledge and opinion' (*M* 7 153), since you either did grasp what was the case in the appropriate manner (in which case you are wise and have knowledge) or you didn't (in which case you're a fool and don't): he is asking what can possibly be required beyond the security of the cataleptic impression to turn it into knowledge. Zeno would presumably respond that knowledge proper is holistic: one can have cataleptic impressions piecemeal, interspersed with non-apprehensive ones; but the Sage's impressions will be all cataleptic, and taken together they constitute apprehension, *katalēpsis*, in the strong sense.

More important is Arcesilaus's contention that (iv) cannot be satisfied, or at least that it can never be *known* to have been satisfied. **116**(8) and **117**(3) both suggest that Arcesilaus concentrated his fire on the claim that there could not be two indistinguishable impressions where one was true and the other false. He argued:

- (1) nothing can satisfy Def. 3,
hence
 - (2) there are no cataleptic impressions;
so
 - (3) any assent of the Sage must be an 'assent to what is not apprehended', and hence (by (D2)) an opinion;
but
 - (4) the Sage forms no opinions (**116**(1))
so
 - (5) the Sage must refrain from assenting to anything;
so 'it will follow even according to the Stoics that
 - (6) the Sage will suspend judgement (*epechein*)' (*M* 7 155).²²
- (1) is Arcesilaus's own premiss: we shall examine later how the Academics supported it. But basically their claim is that no impression can carry with it a subjective guarantee of its veridicality. (2) commits the Stoics to (3), while (4) is a Stoic premiss; (3) and (4) entail (5); and (5) is taken to amount to (6), since

(5a) refusing assent is nothing other than suspension of judgement; therefore (6) the Sage will suspend judgement over everything. (**118**: *M* 7 158, =41C LS [end])

(5a) is presumably Arcesilaus's inference; and he probably thought he was simply reformulating the inevitable result of non-assent (*asunkatathesis*) in his own language of suspension. The legitimacy of this has been impugned;²³ and Arcesilaus does indeed reject the Stoic account of assent ('assent cannot be to impressions, it must be to judgements': *M* 7 154); but this does not seem to amount in this context at least to a significant difference (the point of Arcesilaus's insistence that assent be to judgements is to emphasize the fact that Stoic theory makes action require rational reflection, which is precisely what the Academics wish to extirpate: see further 86ff.).

I conclude that Arcesilaus is justified in (5a); and hence that, if (2) is true, the Stoics are committed on their own account to *epochē*. All this is of course consistent with the DI: but it does not entail it—and **103–7** still tell strongly against it. Arcesilaus's *presentation* is certainly dialectical; and he clearly hopes to trap the Stoics on their own principles into *epochē*—but that does not prevent him from adopting it himself.

Plato Scepticus: the Provenance of a Tradition

One further set of texts bears on this issue; and the texts concern the longdeferred question of the relations between Plato and Socrates and Academic Scepticism. Arcesilaus was, as befits a long-standing member of the Academy, well versed in the

works of Plato (**100**; cf. **120**; *Ind. Acad.* 19 14–16); he presented himself as a Platonist, indeed as the guardian of Plato's true philosophical legacy, in contrast with his predecessors' arid scholasticism. Ariston's epigram (**100**) is pointed: Arcesilaus employed Diodoran dialectic skills in the service of a philosophy which owed something to Pyrrho (Numenius indeed makes him into 'an associate of Pyrrho' and a closet Pyrrhonist: *Praep. Ev.* 14 6 4–6), but which purported in some sense to be Platonic (see nn. 4, 7 above).

It is indeed difficult to see how disinterested readers of Plato (at least of the later dialogues) could mistake him for a Sceptic; but they might discern scepticism in Socrates' celebrated admission of ignorance, as Arcesilaus, following Metrodorus, did (**106**(3); cf. *Acad.* 2 73). Moreover, they could fasten on Plato's early dialogues as evidence for Socrates' purely refutational procedure (and for Plato's endorsement of it): *Charmides*, *Lysis*, *Laches*, and *Euthyphro* (for example) are aporetic, arriving at no conclusion save the discomfiture of their interlocutors and the destruction of various attempts to provide definitions of temperance, friendship, courage, and piety respectively which are immune to counter-example.

There is some evidence (in Cicero, *Fin.* 2 2) that Arcesilaus adopted the Socratic method of getting his opponents first to state their theses and then arguing against them, rather than initiating arguments of his own (however, see **121**). Of course, the Socrates of the dialogues invariably portrays himself as a disinterested seeker after the truth: but so too do the Pyrrhonians. Moreover, Cicero affirms that

the fact that Arcesilaus did not do battle with Zeno merely for the sake of criticizing him, but wished to discover the truth can be understood from the following. That it is possible for a human being to hold no opinions, and not only possible but rather the duty of the Sage, not only had not been expressed better by any of his predecessors: it had not been said at all. But Arcesilaus deemed this view both true, and honourable, and worthy of the Sage. (**119**: Cicero, *Acad.* 2 76–7)

Cicero's Arcesilaus was motivated by genuine philosophical ideals: he was no mere eristic (although this view was controversial in Cicero's time: see *Acad.* 2 14 on Arcesilaus's 'chicanery'; cf. **109**). But Cicero also adopts what he evidently takes to be the orthodox New Academic line that Socrates and Plato were genuinely sceptical (*Acad.* 2 74): how else can we interpret Socrates' own avowals? And why else but to support it would Plato have written so much in the voice of his master?

Cicero emphasizes Arcesilaus's debt to Socrates and Plato:

Arcesilaus first drew this particular lesson most powerfully from various books of Plato and from Socrates' talk: nothing is certain. (**120**: Cicero, *De Oratore* 3 67; cf. *Fin.* 2 2; *De Natura Deorum* 111.)

Even if the figure of Plato Scepticus seems bizarre to us, later sceptics emphasized his epistemological caution: even the *Timaeus*, in some respects apparently a recalcitrantly dogmatic dialogue, is qualified by Timaeus's disclaimer that he is only telling 'a likely

story' (*Tim.* 29d). And *Theaetetus*, Plato's most intricate and sophisticated discussion of knowledge, is itself aporetic: at the end of it, little progress has been made with the question 'What is knowledge?' bar the elimination of sundry plausible theories.²⁴ Even in the case of metaphysics, the sceptically-inclined could (and did: Gucker, 1978, 40–1) point to the *Parmenides*, which first delivers a devastating attack on the Theory of Forms, and then produces a set of puzzling and apparently insoluble antinomies that offer no comfort for the doctrine whatsoever. Whatever the 'correct' interpretation of the dialogue, it is easy to see how Arcesilaus could give it a sceptical spin. There is no reason to doubt that Arcesilaus saw himself as a Platonist; and so, for the most part, did his contemporaries.²⁵

Even so, according to Diogenes, Arcesilaus was an innovator:

he was the first to argue on both sides of an issue, and the first to stir up the system handed down by Plato, and to make it more eristic by means of question and answer. (121: *DL* 4 28; cf. 99, 132)

while Plutarch puts down his refusal to be seen as such to modesty:

Arcesilaus was so far from desiring the reputation of an innovator and from wishing to pass off some view of the ancients as his own, that the Sophists²⁶ of the day accused him of attributing to Socrates, Plato, Parmenides, and Heraclitus his views (*dogmata*) concerning *epochē* and non-apprehension. (122: Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1121f–1222a; but cf. 98)

What Did Arcesilaus Believe?

The evidence suggests, then, that Arcesilaus did indeed advocate *epochē in propria persona* (103–7, 119). Did he, as Sextus claims (*PH* 1 232:104), treat it as the end, the *telos*? The question turns on how the Academic's arguments relate to suspension of judgement. For the Pyrrhonian the relation between equipollence and *epochē* is not a logical one (Chapter II, 27ff.; Chapter XVIII, 297ff.). The equipoise of the arguments does not entail suspension; rather suspension simply follows upon them. Ioppolo (1986, 157–8) ascribes this view to Arcesilaus too: but the evidence reviewed so far suggests otherwise.

Sextus certainly took Arcesilaus to be a kind of second-order dogmatist:

he says that *epochē* in particular cases is good, while assent is bad... we say these things, but not affirmatively, while he holds that in their very nature *epochē* is good and assent bad. (123: *PH* 1 233)²⁷

123 has Arcesilaus assent to the proposition that *epochē* is good (hence, presumably—if it is the only good—the *telos*). This seems *prima facie* incompatible with the claim to know nothing; but it need not be. If the Middle Academics espoused *akatalēpsia* in their own persons (so Cicero: 103(3), 120; *Acad.* 2 59; cf. Augustine, *Contra Academicos* 3

12, 22), then they did so in regard to the Stoic conception of *katalēpsis*. Nothing can be known securely in that fashion; or, in Cicero's words (120), nothing can be certainly known.

Epistemology is concerned with the scope, the structure, and the provenance of knowledge. But in the face of scepticism, epistemologists must also deal with the second-order question of how we can know that we know what we know: call that the 'justification question' or *J. J* may be the strong demand that each candidate for knowledge be justified in turn, or the weaker requirement for an argument showing that our beliefs are *generally* reliable. The original Stoic doctrine of cataleptic impression tries to satisfy the strong construal of *J.Katalēpsis* is not just a matter of knowing the truth, but of knowing that you know it, by means of a secure criterion. Hence *katalēpsis* may fail compatibly with knowing (in a weak sense) any number of things. Consequently *akatalēpsia* need not entail a denial that things may in some sense be known, and hence does not entail negative E-dogmatism, as Sextus charges. To be *akatalēptos* is to deny that one has conclusive grounds for believing certain propositions to be true simply because they derive from peculiarly clear and distinct impressions.

Thus there is little reason to doubt that Arcesilaus and his friends did advocate, or at least avow that they were in the position of, *akatalēpsia*. His arguments are not merely designed to show that Stoics are committed to it although of course they are, since everybody is. The Stoics are the toughest targets, since they have thought more deeply about *J* than anyone. Hence, if *akatalēpsia* commits even them to *epochē*, *a fortiori* it must do so for everybody.²⁸

Let us return to the argument from *M 7 155–7* outlined above. Premiss (2) is supposed to follow from the Stoics' own definitions: the argument is intended as a *reductio* of the Stoic position. But that does not entail that *all* Arcesilaus did was engage in *reductiones*: and even if he did, he may well have considered that unless, and until, someone produced an epistemology to handle the *J*-question, there was no *katalēpsis*.²⁹

A difficulty for this interpretation arises from Arcesilaus's Metrodoros claim that nothing can be known, not even the proposition 'nothing can be known' (106(3)). This is usually taken to mean that Arcesilaus *denied* that in fact he did not know anything: hence he rejected *akatalēpsia*. But this is just an instance of the general sceptical tolerance for apparent self-refutation—in Sextus's language, he will not mind if the expression 'I know nothing' annihilates itself: but this second-order *akatalēpsia* does not cancel first-order *akatalēpsia*—rather it makes it more thorough-going; non-apprehension is radical and not restricted.

So the sources can be taken at their word—Arcesilaus did adopt *akatalēpsia*. And, as further suggest (notably 106(4)), *epochē* follows from *akatalēpsia*, not merely as a psychological fact (as it does for the Pyrrhonists from *isostheneia*), but as a rationally compelled manoeuvre. And *aphasia*, the refusal to make any positive pronouncements, follows as a simple consequence of *epochē*. According to the DI, only *aphasia* is properly attributable to the Arcesilaean Academic (since his interests are purely refutational, he will assert nothing); but now there seems no reason not to attribute *epochē* and *akatalēpsia* to him as well. Indeed, they stand in clear logical relations to one another: Arcesilaus apprehends nothing; hence he suspends judgement about everything; hence he makes no affirmations about anything.

Arcesilaus and the Practical Criterion

There remains Arcesilaus's alleged 'practical philosophy'. Sextus reports

(1) since it was necessary to inquire into the business of living, which is not such as to be obtained without a criterion, and upon which happiness (i.e. the *telos* of life) depends for its credibility, Arcesilaus says that someone who suspends judgement about everything will regulate his choices and avoidances, and in general his actions, by what is 'reasonable' (*eulogon*), and by proceeding according to this criterion he will go right (*katorthōsei*), (2) since happiness comes to be through wisdom (*phronēsis*), and wisdom consists in right actions (*katorthōmata*), while a right action is that which, having been performed, has a reasonable defence (*apologia*); (3) therefore anyone who attends to the reasonable will act rightly and be happy. (124: M 7 158,=69B LS)

This passage follows the *reductio* of the Stoic theory of cataleptic impressions ((1)–(6) above). The DI-theorist's move is clear: Arcesilaus offers none of this in his own voice—rather it extends the *ad hominem* argument developed from the Stoics' own premisses to show what is available to the Stoics as a criterion of action. But Sextus's tone does not suggest that it was being offered, off the peg as it were, to the Stoics by a totally disengaged Arcesilaus. Moreover, while the passage clearly employs terms from the Stoic technical vocabulary, that vocabulary was not proprietary to the Stoics, and some of the views expressed are philosophical commonplaces (all of 124(1) would be acceptable to an Aristotelian, for example).³⁰

There is, then, no need to posit a uniquely Stoic background to 124. Furthermore, Arcesilaus (as has frequently been noted) defines *katorthōma*, or perfect action (which was a Stoic technical term), in the way in which the Stoics define what was for them the quite different notion of the *kathēkon* (see *DL* 7 107). Broadly, *kathēkonta* are right actions performed by the as yet morally imperfect, and hence without the complete knowledge that characterizes the Sage—only the latter's actions are *katorthōmata*.³¹ Perhaps Arcesilaus is being pointedly ironic: if the Stoic Sage is chimerical, there can be no Stoic-type *katorthōmata*: hence the only possible definition of *katorthōmata* will have them coincide with *kathēkonta*.³²

But that ironizing interpretation may be uncalled for. Ioppolo (1981, 147–51) argues convincingly that *katorthōma* was not yet part of the Stoic technical vocabulary. It is absent from the extant reports of Zeno, Cleanthes, and Sphaerus; and pre-Chrysippean Stoics seem rather to differentiate between two species of *kathēkon*, one performed by the Sage, the other (if we are lucky) by the rest of us fools. Thus Arcesilaus may well simply be adopting a neutral term for an action attended by success, one which belongs to the general philosophical vocabulary (cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2 6, 1107a 14; *Eud. Eth.* 8 2, 1247a4).³³

Finally if Arcesilaus's interests were purely destructive, why should he offer the Stoics an escape-route, as the DI-interpretation has him doing?³⁴ It is surely preferable to see

124 as offering Arcesilaus's own recipe for human action. None the less, the dogmatic tenor of **124(2)** is puzzling. The three claims made there do not seem at first blush appropriate to a sceptical philosophy of action; and why in any case did Arcesilaus feel the need to elaborate a practical philosophy at all?

Plutarch (following **122**) writes:

(1) *epochē* concerning everything was not disturbed by those who toiled away and composed lengthy treatises and arguments against it; but when those from the Stoa finally brought up against it the argument from inactivity (*apraxia*) like a Gorgon's head, they faded away, since for all their twisting and turning, impulse (*hormē*) refused to become assent, and did not accept sensation as tipping the balance, but was seen to lead to action on its own initiative without requiring any addition. For debates against these people are conducted according to rules, and 'as you have spoken, so will you be answered...'.³⁵ (2) It is said, to those who will listen and can follow, that there are three movements of the soul: impression, impulse, and assent. The movement of impression we could not remove even if we so wished; rather as soon as we encounter things we get an impression and are affected by them. (3) The movement of impulse, when aroused by that kind of impression, moves a person actively towards appropriate things (*oikeia*), since a kind of tipping of the balance and inclination occurs in the commanding faculty (*hēgemonikon*). So those who suspend judgement about everything do not remove this impulse either, but rely on the impulse naturally leading them to what appears appropriate. (**125**: Plutarch, *Adv. Col* 1122a–c, =69A LS [part])

Two things stand out. The debate is to be carried out in Stoic terms ('according to rules'); and the argument is replete with Stoic terminology.³⁶ But it is explicitly presented as Arcesilaus's own response to the Stoics' Humean accusation that *epochē* makes action, and hence life, impossible. The Stoics would hardly invoke the *apraxia*-argument unless they thought they were attacking a positive Arcesilaean position; and hence we may attribute the counter-argument of **125(2)–(3)** to Arcesilaus *in propria persona*. The argument might yet be construed dialectically as follows: Arcesilaus claims that the Stoic Sage (and everyone else) must refrain from judgement; *epochē* entails *apraxia*; but it is evident that the Stoics are not inactive; hence *they* do not refrain from judgement. But that is horribly confused (Arcesilaus needs, for dialectical purposes, only to claim that the Stoics, on their own principles, *ought* to refrain from judgement: he has no need of the stronger claim that they actually do). It thus seems overwhelmingly likely that **125** rightly presents Arcesilaus as elaborating a Sceptic's account of how a Sceptic can still get around in the world.

The key disagreement between Arcesilaus and the Stoa concerns assent. Arcesilaus challenged the Stoic contention that assent is to an impression (*M* 7 154): assent is semantic, and must therefore be to the *content* of the impression—consequently that content must be formulated propositionally. This is certainly correct for orthodox Stoicism—what distinguishes human from animal action is precisely the importance to the latter of *lekta*, 'meanings' (which approximate in this case to propositional

contents).³⁷ Arcesilaus denies the need for this extra reflective component in human action, and so one can suspend *judgement*, in the sense of the conscious adjudication between competing claims, or competing possible courses of action, without being thus paralysed. The Sceptic simply goes on his way, moved solely and directly by what *appears* to be appropriate. Plutarch elaborates:

action requires two things: an impression of something appropriate, and an impulse towards the apparent appropriate object; neither of these conflicts with *epochē*. For the argument keeps us away from opinion, not impulse or impression. So whenever something appropriate has appeared, no opinion is needed to get us moving and proceeding towards it, the impulse arrives immediately, since it is the soul's process and movement. (126: Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1122c–d,=LS 69A [part])

'Opinion' here involves strong commitment to the truth or certainty of an impression; Arcesilaus, like the Pyrrhonian, acts in accordance with the appearances, undogmatically (i.e. non-judgementally). Suspension, as he rightly says, is perfectly compatible with action, although perhaps not with what the Stoics take to be paradigmatically human (i.e. rational) action. Arcesilaus, no less than Pyrrho, wants to divest himself of this aspect of his humanity;³⁸ but he goes further. Where Pyrrho merely acted, Arcesilaus fortifies his position with argument.

Colotes apparently argued (like Aristotle: *Metaph.* 4 5, 1010b10 ff.; cf. 4 4, 1108b14 ff.: Chapter IV, 64) that a Sceptic who has no beliefs will not be able to make the appropriate distinctions between things:

how is it that someone who suspends judgement does not rush away to a mountain instead of to the bath, or stands up and walks towards the door rather than the wall when he wants to go to the market place? (127: Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1122e)

Plutarch's Arcesilaan response is simple: presumably he would go towards the mountain if it seemed to him like a bath—but it doesn't: and Epicureans of all people should be able to explain that.³⁹ If it continues to seem like a bath, then it does not matter whether it really is or not; while as soon as it stops seeming like one, the Sceptic's behaviour will modify. The Sceptic has no interest in explaining that behaviour causally. Both Aristotle and Colotes assume, erroneously, that suspension of judgement will alter how things seem to be to the observer: but as Plutarch points out (*Adv. Col.* 1122f), there is no reason to think that that will be the case.⁴⁰

Finally, what of Arcesilaus's own 'criterion'? His Stoic contemporaries define the *eulogon* as 'a proposition which has more chances of being true' (*DL* 7 76). But once again the term is a normal part of ordinary Greek discourse; something is *eulogon* for Arcesilaus just in case it is (apparently) conducive to success (124(1)). Thus he divorces the notion from any Stoic connection with truth—it functions rather as a criterion of *action*. And this helps dispose of another DI-theorist's objection: when Sextus says that Arcesilaus 'did not primarily determine a criterion' (114(1)), he is referring to an

epistemological criterion of *truth*—there is no bar to ascribing to him a criterion of action (Ioppolo, 1981, 159; later Pyrrhonists made similar moves: Chapter XVII, 278ff.).

Nevertheless, Arcesilaus couches his argument for the reasonable at least in part in Stoic terms: and **125(1)** suggests that this is an integral part of Academic methodology. This is grist to the DI—but not conclusively so. First of all, the practice of *reductio* against the Stoic does not demand the DI. Arcesilaus considered the Stoics his most powerful opponents, hence any refutation of them which involved their own premisses and definitions will serve particularly to bolster the Academic position. Moreover, there is as we have seen less genuine contact between Arcesilaan and Stoic vocabulary than is sometimes supposed.

Even so, the three apparently Stoic (or Stoic-influenced) dogmatic claims of **124(2)** are problematic. Long and Sedley, who are DI theorists (at least in this context), think that ‘The subtlety of his argument consists in the fact that it allows the Stoics to retain their doctrines on the connexion between happiness, prudence and right action, while denying that all three of these depend upon knowledge’ (LS 1, p. 457). This is in some ways attractive: but why should Arcesilaus want to allow the Stoics to maintain their theses (n. 34 above)? In any case, as Ioppolo notes, the first of those claims (linking happiness to *phronēsis*), is not Stoic (if anything it is Socratic). Secondly, the authentically Stoic notion that *phronēsis* consists of *katorthōmata*, like the definition of *katorthōma* upon which it depends (above, 87), does not apparently occur before Chrysippus. But whatever their provenance, these theses are undeniably dogmatic in tone: I suggest that, in echoing Stoic terminology, Arcesilaus is attempting to show how, once *katalēpsis* is exposed for the *chimera* it is, even the Stoic view collapses into that of the Academics. Far from repairing the Stoic position, he is showing how it reduces to the Academic criterion of action.

One difficulty remains. Plutarch’s account has the Sceptic act simply as a result of what appears to him: it is, as Maconi emphasizes (1988, 251) ‘purely mechanical’, expressly eschewing any rational reflection. And yet the criterion of the reasonable, as well as the notion of giving a defence, an *apologia*, appears to involve precisely that sort of reflection. Maconi suggests that the criterion is needed in cases in which the Sceptic is faced with a variety of conflicting ‘natural urges’: but it is hard to see why. No doubt urges *do* conflict—but why does the Sceptic not simply follow the one that appears at the time to be more pressing? Of course there may be cases of total equilibrium—occasionally perhaps the Sceptic will find himself in the position of Buridan’s ass. But there is no reason to think that such *impasses* will be permanent, or even persistent. Nature will see to it soon enough that one inclines one way or the other—and will do so even if there is nothing to be said in favour of one alternative over the other. So a criterion does not seem mandatory even in these cases.

Some commentators⁴¹ stress the fact that the definition can be read as involving a defence of the action after the fact (‘when it *has been* performed’), and hence the criterion is backward-looking—something can appear *eulogon* only after the fact. Frede invokes the Aristotelian view that not all right actions are performed as a result of deliberation. But the Greek need not refer to *ex post facto* justification, since the participle (‘having been performed’: *prachthen*, **124**) may be conditional in force: (if the action is performed, it can be defended.⁴² What form might that defence take? Simply, I

suppose, saying that it seemed good at the time.

The Stoics were concerned with criteriology precisely because they wanted to ensure that the Sage never made a mistake, where a mistake consists of attempting to do something that turns out as a matter of fact to be impossible. Indeed, in order to avoid falling into such error, the Stoics urged that the prudent individual, not yet having attained infallible *katalēpsis*, should add a mental ‘reservation (*hupexairesis*)’ to any undertaking: they should aim to do something only God willing. Hence the Stoic’s wants are conditional—he wants to do something only if it turns out to be in accordance with nature; and as nature is determinist, this amounts to wanting to do something only if, as a matter of fact, it will be done. Hence if one happens to fail in any attempt to undertake something, it will turn out that one never actually wanted to do it in the first place. Even so, one will have done *something*—and that action requires a justification, which can be given, according to the Stoics, by showing why it seemed reasonable to be a good idea. Arcesilaus points out that this involves nothing more than simply following the appearances. When I give my *apologia* for my action, all I can say is that it seemed good to do so. Of course, I can elaborate that bare remark—but that elaboration will merely refer to further appearances: this will be all there is to the *ex post facto* or conditional justification. It turns out, then, that what is reasonable to do is simply what one actually does; and piquantly this is true of the Stoics too, once their pretensions to knowledge have been exposed.

VI

Carneades and the Later Sceptical Academy

The Succession to Arcesilaus: Lacydes

Upon Arcesilaus's death (c. 240 BC), the headship of the Academy passed to **Lacydes of Cyrene**. He is said (as is Arcesilaus: *DL* 4 44) to have died of alcohol poisoning (*DL* 4 61): such stories are no doubt designed to emphasize the sceptic's lack of ordinary prudence (cf. those told of Pyrrho: **79–80**). A dubious tradition associates him with Chrysippus (or perhaps *vice versa*: *DL* 7 182), and he is said to have known Timon. We know little else about him (Numenius, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 7 14, says he was influential: 'he found many hearers, one of whom was the distinguished Aristippus of Cyrene');¹ however, a story, reported in Diogenes (*DL* 4 59) and in more detail by Numenius (*Praep. Ev.* 14 7 1–6), concerns Lacydes' conversion to Academic *akatalēpsia*. The tale is apocryphal: but it is philosophically significant. Lacydes developed an elaborate system of locking his storeroom door, sealing it, then posting the signet-ring through it; his slaves observed and copied it, sealing up the door after them after they had taken what they wanted:

so Lacydes, having left his jars full and finding them empty, was nonplussed (*aporōn*) by what had happened; and having heard that *akatalēpsia* was philosophized about by Arcesilaus, he thought that that was what was happening in his storeroom. This was how he started philosophizing with Arcesilaus that nothing can be seen or heard that is clear and unassailable. (**128**: Numenius, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 7 4)

Lacydes found himself in an *aporia*, or *impasse*, unable to explain the mysterious evaporation of his provender: and he was seduced into scepticism because he abandoned the search for a rational solution too soon. The slaves then turn Lacydes' own philosophy against him: if the seal was broken, how can he be sure that he sealed the key in? And if it was resealed, how could he tell the difference between the old and the new seal (*Praep. Ev.* 14 7 8)? A central plank of the Academic attack on the cataleptic impression was the claim that two impressions could be indistinguishable: and Zeno likened perception to impressions in wax (**115**). The slaves argue that Lacydes' own philosophy makes him unable to affirm that the seal has been broken and resealed, since the difference between two seals is *akatalēpton*. Lacydes reacted with 'subtle demonstrations'; but the slaves simply went to the Stoics and learned some new sophistries. So the 'battle of contradictions' went on until all the contents of the store were quite exhausted (*Praep. Ev.* 14 7 9–11). When the seal is found broken, the slaves invoke the uncertainty of memory:

for Lacydes had decided that he should be opinion-free, and hence put no trust in memory, since memory is a form of opinion. (129: *Praep. Ev.* 14 7 9)

In the end, exhausted and completely out of food and wine, Lacydes is forced to concede that

we talk in one way in our discussions, but we live in another. (130: *Praep. Ev.* 147 13)

130 exemplifies the *topos* of the unliveability of the sceptical life; 129 is of more philosophical interest—and it points to a Lacydean innovation. No earlier philosopher is known to have invoked the fallibility of memory. But is memory plausibly a species of opinion (and hence untrustworthy)? Perhaps Lacydes argued as follows:

(1) memory traces are akin to impressions;

but

(2) not all apparent memories are genuine,
since

(3) not all memories are accurate;
furthermore

(4) the accuracy of a memory consists in its relation to an actual event;

(5) there is no internal characteristic that will distinguish a genuine from a rogue memory;

(6) but neither is there a reliable external method of distinguishing genuine from rogue memories;

(7) treating a memory trace as a case of genuine memory involves judgement;
but given (5) and (6)

(8) that judgement cannot be objectively grounded,
hence

(9) the claim that a memory is genuine is an opinion.

There is something to that argument—memory plays tricks on us, and there is clearly no way of directly verifying its truth. Empiricists of various stamps will take issue with (6): perhaps by comparing our own memories with those of others we can establish their plausibility or otherwise—but that will cut little sceptical ice. Heroic rationalists might argue that (5) was false—I submit that (5) is obviously true.

If that is right, memory-claims involve belief: there is no memory-claim so secure that it could not fail to be true. Lacydes deserves credit for seeing the centrality of the topic of memory to epistemology (and the philosophy of mind). Indeed memory-scepticism is perhaps the most powerful scepticism of all. As Hume saw, it cuts at the very foundations of our knowledge of our own identities (*Treatise* I 4 6). Russell (1948, 228) acknowledged there was no logical impossibility in my having come into existence a few moments ago with a full set of apparent memories of an apparent past (compare the Creationist claim that God planted a rogue fossil-record to test paleontologists' faith). In the opinion of Kripke (1982), Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following confront a memory-scepticism which is the most powerful of all. But, with the exception of

Lacydes, this interest is not prefigured in the ancient world.² He was succeeded as scholar by Evander (*Praep. Ev.* 14 7 14; Diogenes makes one Telecles Evander's partner: *DL* 4 60), who was himself followed by Hegesinus of Pergamum. Nothing more is known about them.³

Carneades

Carneades (c. 219–c. 129 BC)⁴ is one of the great figures in the history of philosophy. Already seen as somewhat larger than life by his contemporaries, his reputation in his lifetime as a master dialectician and controversialist was unparalleled: 'even the rhetoricians would dismiss their classes and go to hear him lecture, such was his philosophical stature' (*DL* 4 62). He too wrote nothing—our information about him depends upon an indirect tradition that flows from his pupil and heir Clitomachus, via his successor Philo of Larissa, Cicero's teacher, to Cicero himself. Moreover, Clitomachus, who should have known, declared that he could never tell what views if any Carneades really held (Cicero, *Acad.* 2 139): and the Academy spawned two posthumous accounts of his philosophy, one (developed by Philo and Metrodorus of Stratonicea) making him into a modest sceptic with a fallibilist epistemology, the other (owed to Clitomachus) portraying him as a pure dialectician, espousing no position, committed to no views (*Acad.* 2 78). Numenius (*Praep. Ev.* 14 8 1–10) characteristically paints Carneades as magically weaving spells of words and arguments in order to enslave and corrupt weaker minds while adhering to none of the views he actually argued for; and that Clitomachean assessment has been generally accepted.⁵

Carneades was one of a group of philosophers sent as ambassadors from Athens to Rome in 155 BC (the others were Diogenes of Babylon and Critolaus, the leading Stoic and Peripatetic of the day). While there, he took the opportunity of giving two public lectures on justice. In the first, he undertook a detailed if unexciting defence of conventional notions on the subject; the following day he delivered a point-by-point refutation of the previous day's discourse. This caused something of a stir in the staid circles of Republican Rome—so much so that Cato the Censor, not amused by his systematic destruction of traditional Roman virtue, had Carneades (and the other philosophers) expelled from the city. Lactantius insists that Carneades' object was to refute the views of Plato and Aristotle:

in his first speech [he] assembled all the arguments in favour of justice in order that he might overturn them...not because he thought justice ought to be disparaged, but to show that its defenders had no certain or firm arguments about it. (131: Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 5 14 5,=LS 68M)⁶

Lactantius (no doubt rightly) makes Carneades a genuine sceptic; Cato, and presumably Rome's impressionable youth, took him for a negative dogmatist.

He was immensely learned (*DL* 4 62—although 'somewhat weak in physics'), and particularly well-versed in the voluminous *œuvre* of Chrysippus, who became head of the school on the death of Zeno's successor Cleanthes (c. 232 BC). **Chrysippus** (c. 280–c.

205 BC) revitalized Stoic epistemology in reaction to the Arcesilaan attacks: Carneades used to say ‘if Chrysippus had not existed, neither would I’ (*DL* 4 62), a reference to a Stoic maxim ‘if Chrysippus had not existed, neither would the Stoa’ (*DL* 7 183): i.e., if Chrysippus had not restored Stoic epistemology, the school and its doctrines would have collapsed—and there would have been no need for Carneades.

Eusebius reports that

Carneades took up the succession, and established a third Academy. He applied the same method in argument as Arcesilaus, and he also adopted the practice of arguing on each side of a question, and used to upset all the arguments used by others. But in the principle of *epochē* alone he differed from him, saying that it was impossible for a man to suspend judgement upon all matters, and there was a difference between ‘non-evident (*adēlon*)’ and ‘non-apprehensible (*akatalēpton*)’, and while everything was non-apprehensible, not everything was non-evident. He was also familiar with Stoic arguments, and he grew famous by his eristic opposition to them, aiming not at the truth, but at what appeared plausible (*phainomenon pithanon*) to the multitude. (132: *Praep. Ev.* 14 7 15)⁷

Carneades, then, disagreed with Arcesilaus about the scope of *epochē*. Apparently, he advanced two theses:

- (10) human beings cannot in fact suspend judgement on everything;
but
- (11) they do not in any case need to do so.
- (11) is supported by
- (12) there is a difference between the non-evident and the inapprehensible;
and
- (13) one should suspend judgement concerning an issue if and only if its object is non-evident.

Arcesilaus may be right that all things are non-apprehensible; but non-apprehensibility does not necessarily demand *epochē*.⁸ What does the difference expressed by proposition (12) between the *adēla* (on which see Chapter III: 28; Chapter XI) and the *akatalēpta* amount to? I suggest that Carneades follows Arcesilaus in meaning by *akatalēpsia* the unattainability of Stoic *katalēpsis*. Thus to espouse universal *akatalēpsia* is to deny that we can know with absolute certainty anything *about* anything, i.e. about its nature (120). But this sort of Essential Scepticism in no way entails that everything is non-evident (unless only real properties of things can be evident). I can perfectly coherently hold that the chair seems (evidently) solid to me without having to uphold some thesis concerning its solidity’s real nature.

So, while in a sense all things are inapprehensible (since we can never know for certain what they are really like), it is not the case that everything is non-evident. That the chair is solid is perfectly evident—and hence I need not suspend judgement about it. That view is plainly coherent: how attractive it is, and whether ultimately we should saddle Carneades with it, requires further investigation.

The Direction of Carneades' Philosophy

Carneades directed his assaults principally against the Stoics. But **131** indicates that he was prepared to attack the proponents of any dogmatic tradition, including even Plato, when such a move seemed to be necessary. And that is precisely what one expects of a sceptical controversialist; his arguments will be directed at positions of dogmatic strength, regardless of their provenance.

Carneades' destructive arguments fall broadly into three (admittedly overlapping) categories: (i) Ethics (including the nature of the particular virtues, the general question of the good life, and how they interrelate); (ii) Theology and Metaphysics (the Stoic conceptions of God, free will and determinism, and the possibility of divination); and (iii) Epistemology and Logic (in particular the Stoics' cataleptic impression). Categories (i) and (ii) will be dealt with in later chapters: Carneadean influence can be discerned behind much of Sextus's argument, in particular at *M* 9 49–194 (concerning God: Chapter XIV, 242ff.), and *M* 5 (divination: Chapter XV, 256ff.); but a brief account of Carneades' position is in order here.

(a) *The Good Life*

Carneades pointed out what was, in a sense, obvious: that there was no agreement on the issue between the major philosophical schools, and no consensus as to what was *summum bonum*. But his aims were more comprehensive than that:

since there is disagreement on what this [i.e. the *summum bonum*] consists in, we should draw on the Carneadean division, which Antiochus makes a habit of using. Carneades then inspected not only all opinions on the final good which philosophers have held up to now, but all the possible opinions. He therefore said that no expertise can originate from itself alone. There is no need to develop this point with examples; for it is evident that no expertise is concerned just with itself, but the expertise and its object are distinct. Since, then, corresponding to medicine as the expertise in health and navigation as the expertise in sailing, prudence is the expertise in living, it must be the case that prudence derives its constitution from something else. (**133**: Cicero, *Fin.* 5 16,=64E LS)

The exhaustive enumeration of different possible accounts of the good life known as the *Carneadea divisio* has a perfectly general aim: it is not directed against one particular school, nor is it elaborated as a refutation of any particular set of arguments. Carneades, then, expands upon Arcesilaus's method. The second part of **133** develops the following argument:

- (14) prudence (*phronēsis*), since it is the art of living, must involve expertise (*technē*);
 - (15) every *technē* aims at some end distinct from itself;
- hence

(16) prudence aims at some end distinct from itself.

The assumptions are Stoic (although not exclusively so: cf. Plato, *Rep.* 2, 357b–d; Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 1 1, 11094a1 ff.). Virtues (or Virtue—the specific virtues were identical for the Stoics: cf. Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue* 440e; *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1034c) are, for them, constitutive of the good life, and hence are ultimate and not merely instrumental goods:

virtue is a consistent character, choiceworthy for its own sake, and not from fear or hope or anything external. Happiness consists in virtue, since virtue is a soul which has been fashioned to achieve consistency in the whole of life. (134: *DL* 7 89, =61A LS)

Thus they are committed to

(17) prudence is virtue;

(18) virtue is chosen for its own sake;

and hence

(19) prudence does not aim at an end distinct from itself.

Carneades' strategy is clear. He seeks to commit the Stoics to (16), and hence, given their adherence to (19), to trap them into self-contradiction. His argument turns on the assimilation in (14) of prudence to an *art* of living; if that goes through, then the Stoics' own definitions of *technē*⁹ seem to entail (16): for the Stoics insist that a *technē* is 'a system of co-exercised impressions directed to an end useful in life' (*M* 1 75; 2 10; 7 109; *PH* 3 188, 241, 251; etc.)—and that appears to make all *technai* merely instrumentally valuable. None the less, they apparently consider virtue an expertise: Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2 63.6 ff.

Antipater of Sidon, Carneades' contemporary and head of the Stoa, tried to deal with this and related criticisms. The obvious move was to deny that the art of living was a *technē* in this sense, while holding that it still was a kind of skill, one which was its own reward (rather like an Aristotelian *energeia*, or activity). Even so, there is something *prima facie* odd about thinking that a virtue like prudence is its own reward. After all, the Stoics held that prudence was a matter of making the right selections:

prudence is the science (*epistēmē*) of what should be done, what should not be done, and neither, or the science of things that are good and bad and indifferent as applied to a creature whose nature is social. (135: Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2 59.4 ff., =61H LS [part])

Yet the objects or courses of action selected are, according to the Stoics, indifferent in nature, since virtue is the only good (*DL* 7 101; cf. e.g. Alexander, *On Fate* 199.14 ff. Bruns), and there is nothing intermediate between virtue and vice (see e.g. *DL* 7 127). In line with this radical thesis, the Stoics are prepared to place health, wealth, beauty, reputation, pleasure, and even life itself in the class of indifferent things (*DL* 7 102). Thus, in making selections well, one chooses to pursue things which are, strictly speaking, of no value. The Stoics still, however, described some of the indifferents as 'preferred', others as 'dispreferred': (*DL* 7 105; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 284.18–85.11). Thus

Diogenes [of Babylon] represented the end as: reasoning well in the selection and rejection of things in accordance with nature. (136: Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2 76.9 ff.,=58K LS)

And Antipater offered a variant on the same analysis.

Carneades' attack concentrated on the apparent incoherence of the view that the most worthwhile thing consisted in making the appropriate selections among things which were not themselves worthwhile (Chrysippus indeed was forced to concede that the 'preferred indifferents' might in a sense be labelled goods: Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1048a). This is indeed peculiar—and one Stoic, Ariston of Chios, was moved to abandon the notion that the indifferents were to be pursued at all (Cicero, *Fin.* 2 43; 3 11; 4 47; etc.). However, as Gisela Striker (1986) has shown, this position is not as hopeless as it might appear at first sight. Acting well consists in doing everything in your power to achieve goals which are in accordance with nature (and hence have 'selective value': Cicero, *Fin.* 3 22). But it is the carrying out of the selection to the best of your ability that *constitutes* happiness or the good life:

if a man's object were to aim a spear or arrow straight at something, his doing everything in his power to aim it straight would correspond to our idea of the final good. On that kind of analogy, a man must do everything to aim straight. And yet his doing everything to attain his object would be his end, so to speak, analogous to what we are calling the final good in life, whereas his striking the target would be something 'to-be-selected' as it were, not 'to-be-desired'. (137: Cicero, *Fin.* 3 22, =64F LS)

Carneades' principal target was Stoicism—but it was part of a general project, following the *divisio*, of pointing to people's irresolvable differences concerning the most fundamental of human interests. Cicero's *résumé* of the differences between the schools, probably deriving from Carneades, provides further reason for thinking that the compilation and comparison for mutual inconsistency of opposing views was central to the Carneadean method, comparable with and a precursor to the later Pyrrhonist preoccupation with the construction of disputes (Chapter II, 27; IX, 155ff.; XVIII, 304).

Cicero says (*Acad.* 2 131) that he used to propound the thesis that the *summum bonum* was to acquire the things recommended by nature as primary (cf. however *ibid.* 139:154). But Cicero insists that he did so only to refute the Stoics—and the evidently Stoic language (as well as the fact that Carneades treats as goods things which the Stoics take merely to be 'preferred indifferents') clearly supports that view. Carneades will have argued that the Stoics cannot escape making the actual achievement of the goals part of the good life; and hence cannot avoid making human happiness vulnerable to external conditions—far from being purely a matter for us, our success as human beings is subject to the whim of fortune. We hear nothing from Carneades (unlike Arcesilaus) regarding the *telos* at all; this silence suggests that he construed all such talk as being irremediably dogmatic in content.

(b) Theology and Metaphysics

The lengthy exposition of physical and metaphysical arguments in Cicero, *Acad.* 2 117–28 (if, as seems probable, it is Carneadean in inspiration: Robin, 1944, 102–3), confirms Carneades’ method as consisting in the systematic discovery of mutually incompatible features in the Dogmatists’ systems. Cicero contents himself with pointing to the disagreements and emphasizing their rational undecidability: Aristotle holds that the world is eternal, the Stoics and Epicureans that it was generated (*Acad.* 2 119–20). The Epicureans, following Democritus, hold that everything comes to be as a result of mechanical causation and ‘blind chance’; while the Stoics maintain in their Panglossian way that everything in the world ‘including water-snakes and vipers and the multitude of fatal and harmful land and sea creatures’ (*ibid.* 120) has been created and organized for the sake of human beings:

all these things you [i.e. the Stoics] talk about are hidden...obscured and enfolded in thick darkness, so that no human intellect is sufficiently keen-sighted to penetrate the heaven and enter into the earth. (**138:** *Acad.* 2 122)

Such sentiments recall Xenophanes (Chapter III: **16, 24;** cf. **26**); but the sceptical twist stems from the comparison of the different views. Lacking any criterion for judgement between them, we simply cannot know the truth in matters physical, metaphysical, or theological. We do not even know how our own bodies work: how then can we expect to dissect the heavens (*Acad.* 2 122)?

Carneades is explicit that his intention is not to promote atheism, but merely to show that the Stoics have not made out their case for God’s existence (Cicero, *On Divination* 2 148). That God or gods exist is treated as a more or less universal belief (cf. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 1 44); hence the sceptic Will point out that the various conceptions of the gods are mutually inconsistent; and that the divergence of opinion regarding their nature undermines any argument from consensus for their existence (see further Chapter XIV, 240ff.). Moreover, Carneades’ influential attack on divination¹⁰ was not merely a piece of independent anti-dogmatic argument, but part of a completely general assault on Stoic physics and metaphysics. The Stoics considered that the orderliness and general beneficence of the cosmos entailed that the gods would give some signs of the future to men: Carneades, and his successors in the Academic tradition (notably Favorinus: see Chapter VIII, 141ff.) saw that to attack the claims of divination would strike a blow at the heart of the entire Stoic view of the cosmos.¹¹

Finally, we should consider Carneades’ attack on the Stoic conception of fate. We are fortunate to possess (albeit slightly mutilated) Cicero’s *On Fate*, in which he contrasts the Stoic and the Academic views on fate, determinism, free will, and responsibility. The Stoics are determinists: they define fate as the ‘endless chain of causation whereby things are, or as the formula (*logos*) by which the world goes on’ (*DL* 7 149). But if all things happen by fate, and are simply the ineluctable result of causal laws, then there appears to be no room for the freedom of human action upon which the Stoics insist. Chrysippus tried to maintain both that the unfolding of events in the world was determined (and

hence could follow only one path), and yet that many future things were in some sense contingent; and that human beings could thus be held responsible for their actions.¹² Chrysippus is, then, a compatibilist of sorts; Carneades argues that no such position is logically available to him:

- (20) responsibility entails choice;
 - (21) choice entails freedom;
 - (22) freedom entails freedom from causal determination;
- hence
- (23) responsibility is incompatible with determinism.

While accepting (20) and (21), Chrysippus had argued, however, that

- (24) freedom requires only contingency;
- but
- (25) contingency is compatible with determinism;
- and hence
- (26) responsibility is compatible with determinism.

Clearly (25) is crucial. The Stoics make assent to the content of a mental presentation the locus of human freedom and responsibility. Animals simply have the presentations, which incline them one way or another, and they act on those inclinations (or impulses: *hormai*). Humans, on the other hand, have a further level of rational reflection: they can consider the contents of their presentations and decide whether or not they should be followed. We can be inclined, and yet resist: and our freedom lies in that capacity for resistance.

Cicero reports that

the ancient philosophers had two views. There were those who thought that all things came about by fate, in such a way that fate applied the force of necessity.... The holders of the other view believed that there are voluntary motions of our minds free from all fate. (139: *On Fate* 39,=62C LS [part])

Chrysippus tried ‘to strike a happy medium between the two’, not allowing uncaused mental motions (which would be inconsistent with determinism), but still trying to free human action from the toils of necessity. Can that circle be squared? Cicero, speaking for the Carneadean sceptic, thought not:

those ancient thinkers who held that all things come about through fate said that acts of assent were the result of force and necessity. Their opponents, on the other hand, freed acts of assent from fate, denying that they could, if made subject to fate, be disassociated from necessity. They argued as follows: ‘if all things come about through fate, all things come about through an antecedent cause. And if impulses do this, so do the things which are consequent upon impulse; therefore so do acts of assent. But if the cause of impulse is not located in us, neither is assent itself in our power. Therefore neither acts of assent nor actions are in our power. The result is that neither commendations nor reproofs nor honours nor punishments are just.’ Since this argument is unsound they think it a plausible inference that not all events come about through fate. (140:

Cicero, *On Fate* 40, =LS 62C [part])

Whatever one thinks of the validity of the move of the ‘ancient thinkers’¹³ from facts of human behaviour to claims about the metaphysical structure of things, Chrysippus needs to find very good reasons why fate and determinism, which he upholds, do not entail the vacuousness of concepts of responsibility.

He accepts the opposition’s first premiss, namely:

(27) everything fated is antecedently caused;

but denies that

(28) everything antecedently caused is necessitated,

by treating antecedent causes as necessary but not sufficient for their effects. Further causes (usually of a dispositional nature) must be instantiated for them to operate: they are the external triggers to already primed mechanisms. In a famous image, reported by Cicero (*On Fate* 43) and Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 7 2 6–13), human action resembles the movement of a drum, which requires a push to get started, but thereafter rolls in virtue of its own cylindrical constitution. Equally, although human action is motivated by impressions, they do not determine it, since people react to them differently according to their different constitutions. Hence our actions are partly caused by our dispositions, and thus are not determined by external factors. That subtle line of reasoning does (in a sense) preserve contingency, and can make sense of human freedom—but whether it can underwrite a sufficiently strong notion of responsibility to ground the institutions of praising and blaming is altogether another matter.¹⁴

(c) *Logic and Determinism*

Diodorus Cronus (Chapter IV, n. 6) devised an argument for determinism based on tense-logic and other modal considerations known to the ancients as the Master Argument. Its details are lost, and the subject of controversy;¹⁵ but we know that Diodorus argued from the (Aristotelian)¹⁶ premisses

(29) everything past is necessary

and

(30) an impossibility cannot follow from a possibility,

to the conclusion that the future was determined. Take any event *E* occurring at *t*. By (29), subsequent to *t* *E* is necessary. But assume (A) that at *t*’ prior to *t* not-*E* was possible: since (i) ‘*E* occurred at *t*’ uttered after *t*, and (ii) ‘*E* will occur at *t*’ express the same proposition, then if it *was* possible at *t*’ that not-*E*, then it must *still* be possible that not-*E* at *t*—but *E* is, by hypothesis, *necessary* at *t*—which is impossible. Thus an impossibility has followed from an alleged possibility, (A), contrary to (30); hence (A) is, after all, not possible—and the future is determined.

The Epicureans countered that argument from logic to metaphysics by holding that the principle of bivalence failed for future contingents (and hence implicitly denied that (i) and (ii) did express the same proposition): they were neither true nor false prior to their being actualized, and hence *a fortiori* were neither necessary nor impossible (Cicero, *On Fate* 21–2); and on one view at least, so did Aristotle.¹⁷ The Stoics, on the other hand, accepted bivalence—and with it determinism. Thus both schools accept the Diodoran

inference that future truth and the necessity of the past entail determinism and the resulting dilemma (although they respond differently to it).

Carneades saw that the dilemma could be avoided. Borrowing Long and Sedley's terminology (1987 1, 466), we may distinguish Causal Determinism (CD: the thesis that every event is uniquely determined by antecedent causes); Logical Determinism (LD: if an event is going to happen it is already true that it will happen); and Epistemic Determinism (ED: if it is known that an event will happen, then it cannot but occur).¹⁸ The Stoics maintain that if a future proposition is now true there must be something in the world now *making* it true: it must already be true that it is unavoidable. Carneades shows this to be erroneous: LD does not entail CD. For any future contingent proposition, either it or its contradictory is true, but not necessarily in virtue of anything in the world now; rather it *will be* made true by the event as it turns out:

the truth of propositions like 'Cato will come into the Senate' is brought about by contingent causes, not by causes bound up in nature and the world. And yet that something will come about, when true, is as immutable as the truth that something has come about. (141: Cicero, *On Fate* 28,=70G LS [part])

If it is now true that I shall die at sea, then nothing I can now do will alter that truth. But this does not mean I am fated to die at sea, because that will only now be true if I now do nothing to prevent it, and act in such a way that will eventually lead to my maritime mortality. If, however, I prevent my own aquatic annihilation, it will never *have been* true that I was going to die at sea. The assimilation of LD to CD is unwarranted: CD entails LD—but not conversely (as both Stoics and Epicureans implicitly believed).

Carneades does hold that ED entails CD (and hence LD); hence if CD is false, ED must be also:

that is why Carneades used to say that not even Apollo could tell the future apart from things whose causes were embodied in nature in such a way as to render their coming about necessary. For by inspecting what could even the god himself tell that Marcellus...would die at sea? This was something that was true from eternity but did not have causes working to bring it about. (142: Cicero, *On Fate* 32–3,=70G LS [part])

That is mistaken: one might know that some future event will occur, and yet it not be the case that that event is causally determined at the time of knowledge (perhaps one can simply *see* the map of time laid out before one; perhaps the later event causes my current knowledge of it, even though it has not yet occurred and is not yet causally determined). But even if logically possible, nothing in our experience gives us any reason to suppose that such exotic suppositions are true. And if ED holds, the future events comprehended by it must in some sense be already fixed, and consequently nothing can now be done to prevent them. Perhaps they are not *causally* determined; but they are nevertheless determined, and that alone may be enough to undermine freedom.

Here is Carneades' argument, reported by Cicero (via Clitomachus):

(a) if all things come about through antecedent causes, all things come about through the interconnection in a natural chain, (b) If that is so, all things are the product of necessity, (c) If that is true, nothing is in our power, (d) But there is something in our power, (e) But if all things come about through fate, all things come about through antecedent causes, (f) Therefore it is not the case that whatever happens happens through fate. (143: Cicero, *On Fate* 31,=70G LS [part])

The Stoics accept (e) and (a), and try to reject (b); but it is difficult for them to resist the conclusion that human agents are anything more than instrumental causes of their actions, and hence that (c) is true (at least for any genuine sense of ‘in our power’), (d) is asserted without argument: but it is a Stoic premiss; and given the other premisses, (d) entails (f), *contra Stoicos*.

Cicero’s *On Fate* reports one more significant Carneadean argument. The Epicureans, in effect, accept the argument of 143, and hence deny (a), introducing the notorious swerve, the unpredictable, uncaused deviations of atomic motion, in order to account, *inter alia*, for human freedom.¹⁹ Carneades was unimpressed—and he

showed that the Epicureans could defend their case without this fictitious swerve. For since they taught that a certain voluntary motion of the mind was possible, a defence of that doctrine was preferable to introducing the swerve, especially as they could not discover its cause. And by defending it they could easily stand up to Chrysippus. For by conceding that there is no motion without a cause, they would not be conceding that all events were the results of antecedent causes. For our volition has no external antecedent causes. (144: Cicero, *On Fate* 23, =20E LS [part])

When we say someone acts without a cause, Carneades continues, we mean without *external* cause: their volitions still cause their actions. But the volitions themselves are not caused. Hence the Epicureans can avoid positing uncaused events, with all their associated problems, and yet still reject universal determinism in the name of freedom. Thus the Epicureans can admit the truth of

(31) no event occurs causelessly

and so avoid ‘incurring the scorn of the natural philosophers’ (*On Fate* 25);

and yet still hold that actions are events and are caused, since

(32) actions are caused by the will;

but the volitions themselves are not caused, at least not by anything external to us. This line of argument requires that either the volitions themselves, or what causes them, are not themselves events (if events must have antecedent, and hence independent, causes); ‘pure acts of the will’, or something of the sort, are supposed in some sense to be self-caused, brought about by their own internal nature, in just the same way as atoms fall (on the Epicurean account) by their own nature.

This doctrine has its obscurities, and it will convince no Humean, wedded to the necessary distinctness of cause and effect. Nor does the idea of the will as a sort of self-starting mechanism sit easily with the evident fact, noted by Chrysippus, that external

influences are at the very least necessary conditions of our having acts of the will at all. But it does show that Carneades realized that the Epicureans solved nothing with their swerve—human freedom cannot simply amount to randomness.²⁰

Epistemology

But it was on epistemology, and in the context of the great Stoic-Academic debate, that Carneades left his most enduring mark. As we saw (Chapter V, 80), the Stoics had originally defined cataleptic impressions by way of

(Def. 1) an impression is cataleptic if and only if (i) it is caused by a real object; (ii) it accurately represents that object; and (iii) it has been imprinted on the sensoria;

however, nothing in Def. 1 shows how we can know of an impression that it is cataleptic; and in response to the Academic attack Def. 1 was amended to Def. 3 by the addition of clause (iv) ‘of such a type as could not come from something non-existent’. Even so, Arcesilaus’s arguments point to two serious problems: how can (iv) be satisfied, in the face of the Academics’ insistence that for any true impression a false one can be found qualitatively identical, or at any rate indiscernible, from it (cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 2 20, 56–7, 84–6)? And how in any case can a cataleptic impression be recognized as such?

The interpretation of Def. 3 is crucial. Must the Stoics maintain that there is some infallible internal marker of a cataleptic impression’s veridicality? It is usually assumed so, otherwise much of the Sceptics’ attack (*M* 7 150–65; 401–35) seems to be an *ignoratio elenchi*.²¹ However, neither Def. 1 nor Def. 3 explicitly demand that we can just *tell*, by inspecting it, whether or not a particular impression is cataleptic; and although much of the sceptical attack consists in arguing that we cannot know whether our sense-impressions in fact correspond to the external reality they supposedly represent (since we cannot strip off the veil of perception: *PH* 2 74–5), this can be accounted for even if the Stoics did not construe their definition internally.

Suppose that the Stoics undertake merely to *define* a cataleptic impression, in the sense of specifying what conditions need to be satisfied in order for it to be cataleptic. In that case one might pertinently ask what *use* such a definition might have: how will it help us to detect cataleptic impressions? We are supposedly being offered a criterion: and a criterion is a means of judging something. If you (as a buyer) ask what characterizes a genuine Old Master, you will not be much impressed by the reply that a painting is one if and only if it really was executed by a celebrated artist of some earlier era.

So the Sceptics may in good faith suppose that the Stoics were committed, in so far as they propound the theory of cataleptic impressions as a criterion of truth and reality, to an internalist definition of them: not merely can we know things on the basis of such impressions, but we can know that we know them. Indeed the Stoic texts themselves tend to support that impression. And if the Stoic account only intends to specify conditions under which we can be said to know something, we still need to know *when* we know it. This precisely determines Carneades’ line in what Sextus assures us was intended as a

perfectly general attack on the views of ‘all previous philosophers’ (*M* 7 159). He began by pointing out that there was no single criterion of truth, since all the available candidates (reason, sensation, impression) were on occasion demonstrably delusive (*M* 7 159). Secondly, he argued that even if there were some such criterion, it could still not exist apart from the actual facts of mental alteration; the criterion must be ‘capable of revealing both itself and the object which produced it’ (ibid. 161). But it is precisely in this twofold role that the possibility for error creeps in: the clarity of the impression itself is a fact about the impression, not the object it is allegedly an impression of. Its clarity and distinctness are logically quite independent of any state of affairs it purports to represent. Thus it follows that

we cannot allow every impression to be a criterion of truth, but only the true impression, if any. Then since there is, once again, no true impression of such a kind that it could turn out to be false, but for every apparently true impression an indiscernible false one is found, the criterion will turn out to be an impression that spans true and false. But the impression which spans both of these is not cataleptic, and not being cataleptic will not be a criterion either. (145: *M* 7 163–4,=70A LS [part])

But even so, as Frede (1983) has shown, we need not take the Stoics to mean that cataleptic impressions wear their veridicality on their sleeves; rather there are circumstances where the causal conditions ensure that the impression really is an accurate one; and moreover (and this is the extent of the internalism) any such impression will differ qualitatively from all false congeners.

At *M* 7 424, Sextus reports the Stoics’ account of just when these conditions are satisfied. Five things need to ‘concur’ (*sundramein*): the senseorgan, the object perceived, the environment (*topos*), the manner, and the intellect. The notion of ‘concurrence’ is vague—but more is probably intended by it than that conditions must be favourable for an impression to be cataleptic.²² There seems to be some suggestion of agreement between the explicit content of the impression and what we know (or at the very least have good reason to believe) about the circumstances in which the impression has arisen. Thus, if we have a vivid impression of a pink elephant in our bedroom, yet also remember that we have been to an extremely good party, there is no zoo for miles around, and in any case the room is too small to accommodate an elephant, we shall be disposed to question its veridicality. Essentially we compare impressions of varying types and test them for coherence.²³ Yet our ability to do this in particular cases relies on us having some prior conception of what counts as normal, what as abnormal; and the Stoics owe us an account of that, as the Sceptics are not slow to point out.²⁴

Moreover, if for every cataleptic impression there may be an indistinguishable non-cataleptic one, even if the concurrence conditions are met, the Stoic’s account will be inadequate to deliver guaranteed veridical perception. And this Academic claim seems plausible: why could not there be two such internally indiscernible impressions, where one is but the other is not appropriately caused?

Nevertheless, this notion of distinguishability requires care. The Stoics clearly will not claim that cataleptic impressions must be discriminable as such to anybody, since they

are only too happy to admit that people are frequently wrong about the nature of their impressions: only the Sage will make no mistakes—but there are no Sages (*M* 7 432–3; Chapter V, 78). Discriminable to the properly trained? That is certainly better, and the Stoics held that practice in sensory discrimination was an essential part of learning (cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 2 20, 56–8, 86). But even that seems too strong. Human *sensoria* are blunt instruments: why imagine that even with training they can be brought to such a pitch as to be able to distinguish absolutely between minimally different impressions? No amount of training will make my vision microscopic, or my hearing as good as a bat's.

In any case why think that there must be internal distinctions between any true and false impression? Here the Stoics rely on a Leibnizian law of the identity of indiscernibles (cf. *M* 7 252); but even if they can produce reasons for the view that distinct objects must be distinct in more than merely their relational attributes, and hence that they must at least be theoretically distinguishable, that will have no bearing on practical epistemology. As Cicero puts it, the whole dispute centres on whether there can be two impressions *as a matter of fact* indistinguishable where one is true and the other false (*Acad.* 2 83); and as he has the Academics claim earlier, it makes no difference whether they are absolutely the same in all respects or whether it is merely that they are indiscriminable for us (*Acad.* 2 40).

The Stoics face a dilemma. They can either claim that, at a suitable level of fineness, any two impressions will be found to differ from one another, since for Leibnizian reasons no two things can be exactly alike, and hence no false impression can be exactly similar to a true one. But then they are vulnerable to the charge that their epistemology is practically useless. Or they can hold, heroically, that all true and false impressions really are internally distinguishable to all (or at any rate most) human beings, provided that they are in good health. But that is simply empirically false.

The Stoics and Academics on Persuasiveness: Epistemological Convergence

Nowhere do the Stoics explicitly claim that there are single cognitive impressions which cannot fail to strike their recipients with the force of revealed illumination (although this may have been Zeno's original doctrine, later modified under sceptical attack). They are not committed to the view that cataleptic impressions are such that no-one who has one could doubt its cognitive content. Indeed, they added a fifth rider to their definition:

whereas the older Stoics declare that this cataleptic impression is the criterion of truth, the more recent ones added the clause (v) 'provided that there is no obstacle (*enstēma*)'. For there are times when a cataleptic impression occurs, yet it is incredible (*apistos*) because of the external circumstances. (146: *M* 7 253–4, =40K LS [part])

Carneades rejects other philosophical accounts of the criterion; but even so, Sextus notes

since he himself too has some criterion demanded of him for the conduct of life and the attainment of happiness, he is effectively compelled to adopt a position

on this by taking as a criterion the plausible (*pithanē*) impression and the one which is simultaneously convincing, unreversed (*aperispastos*) and thoroughly tested (*diexōdeumenē*). (147: *M* 7 166, =69D LS [part])

And in so far as an impression represents an object its truth or falsity is a matter of its correspondence (or lack of it) with that object.

However in relation to the experiencer it is only either apparently true or not apparently true; of these the apparently true is called ‘manifestation’ (*emphasis*) by the Academics, and ‘plausibility’ or a ‘plausible impression’ (*pithanē phantasia*)...for neither what appears immediately false, nor what is true but does not appear so to us, is of a nature to convince us. (148: *M* 7 168–9, =69D LS [part])

Furthermore, the impression may be more or less clear, and plausibility comes in degrees. But common to all of them, even the clearest and most convincing, is the possibility of falsehood.

Take the case of Admetus confronted with the resuscitated Alcestis (*M* 7 254; cf. *PH* 1 228): unsurprisingly, he thought that there must be some better explanation for his apparent visual impression of his wife than that it was actually caused by her. But crucially he was wrong: the impression *was* caused by her, in the appropriate way, it accurately represented her, and couldn’t have come from anything else (let us assume that the impression is sufficiently richly limned to meet condition (iv)); that is, all the Def. 3 conditions on cataleptic impressions are satisfied, and *still* Admetus refuses to believe it. Significantly, (v) is *not* presented as a further condition on an impression’s being cataleptic. Rather, Sextus clearly implies that Admetus’ impression *was* a cataleptic one—he just didn’t realize it. So (v), far from further restricting the class of cataleptic impressions, rather indicates the circumstances under which they will be accepted as such. Thus the cataleptic impression on its own is no longer the criterion (in the strong sense) of truth.

The Stoics’ choice of Admetus is not adventitious: we know that it had been seized upon by the Academics themselves (*PH* 1 228: almost certainly Carneades), presumably for the very reasons that prompted the Stoics to introduce (v), to exemplify impressions satisfying two of the Carneades’ three conditions on epistemic eligibility—i.e. that was persuasive and thoroughly tested but not unreversed:²⁵

when Alcestis had died, Heracles...brought her up again from Hades and showed her to Admetus, who received an impression of Alcestis that was persuasive and thoroughly tested (*periōdeumenē*); since, however, he knew that she was dead his mind recoiled from its assent and reverted to unbelief.²⁶ (149: *PH* 1 228)

An impression’s plausibility (a) is a function of its internal characteristics: force and vivacity, clarity and distinctness. It is thoroughly tested (b) just in case its content has been compared against that of other impressions (of different sense-modalities, or of the

same modality under different conditions) and not found to be in conflict with them. It is unreversed (c) when its content is not in conflict with some more deeply-held belief.²⁷

Thus the Stoics took over an Academic example in order to show how, given (v), it did not threaten the doctrine of the cataleptic impression. Conversely the Academics adopt the language of the persuasive impression from the Stoics (*M* 7 241–6), even to the division of such impressions into those which are true, those which appear true but are in fact false, and those which are (in a sense) both true and false, since they are caused by a real object, but do not represent it (Academics: *M* 7 168–9:148; Stoics: *M* 7 174–5: Orestes again illustrates the latter case).

Furthermore, if the Stoics did not consider that an *individual* cataleptic impression could, in and of itself, guarantee its own truth in such a way that its possessor could not be mistaken about it (as (v) suggests), little now separates them from the Academics. For the Stoics, no less than the Academics, confirmation and corroboration take the form of testing the content of one impression against others; or as they would put it, attempting to improve the perceptual conditions ‘until one can receive a clear and striking impression of the thing being judged’ (*M* 7 258; cf. Frede, 1983, 168–9).

Neither Stoics nor Academics, then, hold that any impression can be (subjectively speaking) self-guaranteeingly true (for the Stoics accept that ordinary people will fail to recognize cataleptic impressions); both claim that the plausibility of impressions has a crucial role to play in deciding whether or not they should be accepted; and both believe that the way to minimize perceptual delusion is by comparing the contents of impressions one against another. The Stoics still officially believe in the possibility of the Sage who will never assent to a false presentation; but that is of little help to the rest of us. Three centuries later Galen was to claim that there was in reality no distinction between the Academic and the Stoic position at all.²⁸ there is more to be said for his view than is generally allowed.

Carneades and the Stoics on Justification and the Practical Criterion

But the ascription of a positive position to Carneades requires care. Perhaps he is simply showing the Stoics that all they are entitled to on their own principles is a fallible criterion. No doubt he *is* doing that. But I doubt whether it is all that he is doing. Sextus in 147 unequivocally presents Carneades as offering the criterion of the plausible in his own voice in answer to the standard dogmatist objection to any form of Scepticism—that it destroys life. A little later on he ascribes to Carneades the view that

in matters of no importance we make use of the merely convincing impression as a criterion, but in weightier matters the unreversed impression, and in matters which contribute to happiness the thoroughly tested impression. (150: *M* 7 184,=69E LS [part])

Either Sextus is mistaken, or Carneades does indeed have positive opinions on the issue. Modern scholarship favours the former view; but in any case Carneades is not offering a criterion in its usual Greek sense of a means of rigorously distinguishing true from false

coin, since he is quite explicit that convincingness or plausibility will not do that. Rather this is the best we have to go on—and is perfectly serviceable at that. One may well ask here what the notions of truth and falsity come to for Carneades, and whether he can make use of them at all. Lucullus, arguing the anti-Academic case in *Acad.* 2 43–4, objects that by the very fact of engaging in discussion concerning true and false impressions in the first place, the Academics presuppose and make use of notions that they must, on their sceptical principles, reject. Carneades (I assume Carneades is the target here—others see only Philo behind this doctrine) destroys the criterion of the cataleptic impression by claiming precisely that some apparently true impressions are false. But how can he *know* that unless he is himself in possession of some criterion? The Academic position is self-stultifying.

The key to the Academic reply rests on their often-misunderstood ‘practical criterion’ of the plausible, *to pithanon*. Cicero’s rendering of *pithanon* as ‘probabile’ encouraged the English translation ‘probable’, which has in turn nourished the fantasy that Carneades was dealing in a kind of ‘probabilism’.²⁹ To say that an impression (or more properly its content) is probably true is to issue a draft on the way things are likely to be: it implicitly introduces a commitment to the world independent of the senses, a position indeed difficult for a sceptic coherently to maintain.³⁰

However, plausibility, as a subjective criterion, suffers from no such drawbacks. When sceptics say that plausible impressions may be false, they need not commit themselves to the view that some of them will as a matter of absolutely objective and independent fact turn out false. If I now reject a proposition I had previously taken to be plausible, I do not thereby assert that it is false. I simply say I once accepted it, but altered circumstances (as a result of further scrutiny of the proposition’s epistemic surroundings) make me no longer disposed to accept it. The process of comparing one impression against others or against background assumptions is both entirely internal and theoretically open-ended. Consider a famous Carneadean example of the threefold ‘criterion’:

when a rope is lying coiled in a dark room to one who enters in a hurry it presents the simply plausible appearance of being a snake; but to the man who has looked carefully around and has investigated the conditions—such as its immobility, its colour, and each of its other properties—it appears as a rope according to an impression which is plausible and thoroughly tested. (151: *PH* 1 227–8)

There is no commitment, even after thorough testing, to the way things actually are. It still merely *appears* to be a rope. Something qualifies as a rope for us if and only if all its appearances suggest that it is, and none (or only ones which can be explained away) do not. But its possible appearances are inexhaustible—and a rogue appearance may always crop up to ruin the coherence of the picture and cast the whole ascription into doubt. Thus to say that an impression is thoroughly tested and unreversed is simply to offer a report on the current state of play, and perhaps to issue a weak draft for the likelihood that things will continue that way. And this ‘weak draft’ does not commit its issuer to any claims about probability: it simply denies that there are any current reasons to inquire any further into the question.

Carneades (132) disagreed with Arcesilaus's view that a life without assent was possible, thinking rather that one must assent in order to act, but that the content of that assent was much less than that demanded by the Stoics—it involves no *commitment* of any kind (cf. 154).³¹

the formula 'the Sage withholds assent' is used in two ways, one with the meaning that he gives absolute assent to no impression at all, the other when he restrains himself from replying so as to convey approval or disapproval for something, with the consequence that he makes neither an affirmation nor a negation; and this being so, he holds the one plan in theory, so that he never assents, but the other in practice, so that he is guided by plausibility...he who restrains himself from assent about all things nevertheless does move and does act, there remaining impressions of a sort to arouse us to action, and also answers that we can give in the affirmative or the negative in reply to questions, merely following a corresponding presentation provided that we answer without actual assent. (152: Cicero, *Acad.* 2 104,=691 LS [part])

'Actual assent' is strong assent, commitment to the metaphysical truth of a proposition, as opposed to provisional inclination. The Academic avoids dogmatism and error in rejecting the former, but acts on the basis of the latter. Consider again the Carneadean distinction between the *akatalēpta* and the *adēla* in 132. Things which are not *adēlon* command our weak assent; since everything is *akatalēpton*, nothing is worthy of strong assent. When Clitomachus says that Carneades 'performed a labour of Hercules' in ridding himself of assent (*Acad.* 2 108), he clearly means strong assent. The Stoics object that if one accepts no impression as truth-guaranteeing then even weak assent is impossible. But weak assents are mere inclinations—and one can be inclined in the face of a belief (weakly held), that no impression is apprehensive.

If Carneades did advocate the epistemology of plausibility, then the Stoic and Academic positions may indeed turn out to be pragmatically equivalent. Everything that the prudent Academic assents (weakly) to will be something that the prudent Stoic takes to be apprehensive. Of course, each may go wrong: if they do so, their diagnoses of error will be different—the Academic will note that something has turned up to make the previously plausible now implausible, while the Stoic will say that he had mistaken a plausible impression for cataleptic.

Still, the Stoics and Academics disagree over what I label 'Essential Realism'. You are an Essential Realist just in so far as you believe that we can be justified in claims made about the real natures or essences of things in the world (note that rejection of Essential Realism need not take the form of denying that there are such essences, merely of denying that they are apprehensible). The Stoics are Essential Realists, viewing their system of logical sign-inference as a means of penetrating to the essential heart of things from their phenomenal appearances (Chapter XI, 201).³² The Academics (and *a fortiori* the Pyrrhonists), rejecting such claims, are Essential Sceptics. The Stoics implicitly take the general pragmatic success of suitably-sifted perceptual impressions to point to their metaphysical truth—the Academics make no such realist moves.³³

The Views of Carneades

All of this presupposes that Carneades offered his epistemology in his own voice (and hence that the DI is wrong). The evidence is mixed and contradictory—and the issue was disputed in the immediate post-Carneadean Academy (above, 94). I see no reason, however, for assuming that he did not do so—and reasons parallel to those in the case of Arcesilaus (Chapter V, 86ff.) for thinking that he did. Of course nothing prevents a severely dialectical Carneades from reducing the Stoics' vaunted criterion of truth to mere plausibility—but why then make them a present of arguments showing such a 'criterion' to be perfectly adequate for life? Much more reasonable to take Carneades to be responding to the 'lazy argument' raised 'like a gorgon's head' against the Sceptics themselves (Chapter V, 125). Inclinations are sufficient for action; and the precise point of allowing, against Arcesilaus, that this constitutes assent, albeit in a weak form, to what is apparent is to deflect Stoic criticism that a reflective belief to the effect that everything was *akatalēpton* must paralyse even in the face of inclinations.

Antiochus held that *akatalēpsia*, being a piece of negative dogmatism, amounted to saying that it was certain that nothing could be known for certain—and that, he alleged, was self-contradictory (Chapter VII, 116ff.). Cicero responds on Carneades' behalf that

on the contrary he holds this particular opinion, that nothing can be apprehended, in precisely the same way that he holds the plausible but not apprehended views just mentioned. (153: Cicero, *Acad.* 2 110)

If this is right, Sextus's picture of Carneadean Academics and Pyrrhonists at odds over their attitudes to *akatalēpsia* may be misleading:

the word 'believe' has two different meanings: it means not to resist but simply to follow without strong inclination or commitment...; but sometimes it means to assent to a thing out of choice and with what amounts to sympathy due to strong desire.... Since therefore Carneades and Clitomachus say that they are persuaded and take something to be plausible with a strong inclination, while we say we simply yield without commitment, we differ in this respect. (154: *PH* 1 230)

This text is problematic: if Clitomachus really did use the 'strong inclination' formula, it requires some explaining away. Perhaps the point is psychological: it is a fact of human mental life that some impressions induce stronger inclinations than others—but to have a strong inclination is still not the same as thinking that the propositional content of the impression is true. The difference between Pyrrhonian and Academic then will reside in the fact that ideally the Pyrrhonian's inclinations will exhibit no differences of *degree*, while the Academic accepts those differences of degree and does not try to eradicate them, but simply takes them as a subjective given. However, Sextus suggests that what the Academics accept 'with a strong inclination' is not some proposition *p* itself, but

rather the second-order proposition that *p* is plausible; and perhaps further they take it as a consequence (psychological rather than logical) that if one assents strongly to the proposition that *p* is plausible, then one will assent weakly to *p*.³⁴

As regards *akatalēpsia*, Sextus paints the Academics, perhaps unfairly, as positively affirming (in negative E-dogmatic fashion) the non-apprehensibility of things, while the Pyrrhonist ‘regards it as possible that some things might be apprehended’ (*PH* 1 226). The issue hinges on the sense in which things might be said to be apprehended. If all this amounts to is that we might as a matter of fact satisfy all the Def. 3 conditions on genuinely veridical perception (including clause (v)), without knowing that we did so, the Academics may happily accept it (as Philo did: Chapter VII, 116–20). But there is still a distinction between them and the Pyrrhonists. The Stoics make claims for the cataleptic impression which necessarily go beyond what is given in perception; for precisely this reason the Academics are committed to the view that we can never know for certain that a particular impression is cataleptic, and hence it cannot wear its cataleptic nature on its sleeve. That follows, they rightly think, from the nature of the metaphysical differentiation that the realist is forced to make between appearance and reality. The Pyrrhonist, by contrast, lays no store by such abstract argument. When he says something may turn out after all to be cataleptic, he means that in the strongest Stoic sense—he might, for all he knows, some day be struck by an impression that is, all previous experience notwithstanding, self-guaranteeingly veridical.

VII Secession

The ‘Fourth Academy’ and Aenesidemus

Philo of Larissa, Antiochus of Ascalon

Of Clitomachus we know little (how much depends on the extent to which he lies behind Plutarch’s *On Common Conceptions* and *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*; see Chapter VIII, 140). He wrote voluminously on Carneades, but still was unable to decide what if anything he had believed (*Acad.* 2 139; Chapter VI, 94); however, that admission occurs in the discussion of the *telos*, or end, and may well have been restricted to that context. He ran the Academy from 129 BC until about 110, when he was succeeded by **Philo of Larissa** (c. 160–c. 83 BC), who led the school until his own death. Philo was Cicero’s teacher, and it is to Cicero that we owe the bulk of our knowledge of Academic scepticism. The evidence for his and Metrodorus of Stratonicea’s¹ divergence from the Clitomachean account of Carneades comes from Cicero (*Acad.* 2 78: the interpretative dispute centres around Carneades’ claim that, in the absence of *katalēpsis*, the Sage may opine). Sextus credits Philo with founding the ‘Fourth Academy’ (*PH* 1 220), which implies some new departures on his part; and Cicero explicitly describes him as an innovator (*Acad.* 2 18).² Numenius (in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 9 2) attributes Philo’s apostasy from the New Academic orthodoxy to ‘his conversion by the clear evidence (*enargeia*) of his own experiences’.³

A longtime associate of Philo’s was **Antiochus of Ascalon** (*Acad.* 2 63, 69). Some time in the 90s or 80s BC,⁴ however, Antiochus was moved to revolt in the direction of dogmatism: according to Sextus, he ‘taught Stoicism in the Academy’ (*PH* 1 235). Cicero (*Acad.* 2 11–12) describes how Antiochus, although ‘by nature the mildest of men’ was roused to fury by some new works of Philo, the so-called ‘Roman Books’. At first he refused to believe Philo responsible; but eventually, convinced of Philo’s authorship, he lambasted the new position in his *Sosus*, so named after a leading Stoic of the previous generation. What was the locus of the quarrel?

Sextus writes puzzlingly:

Philo asserts that objects are inapprehensible so far as the Stoic criterion [i.e. cataleptic impression] is concerned, but are apprehensible as regards their real nature. (155: *PH* 1 235)

Robin (1944, 131) notes that this testimony is ‘passablement obscur’, encouraging us to seek enlightenment in Cicero.

when he [i.e. Philo] maintained that nothing could be apprehended..., if that impression of which he spoke...was, as Zeno defined it, an impression impressed and moulded from the object in a form such that it could not have come from an object that was not in fact the one that it actually did come from (we say that Zeno's definition [i.e. Def. 3] was absolutely correct, for how can anything be grasped in such a way as to make you absolutely confident that it has been perceived and known, if it has a form that could belong to it even if it were false?)—when Philo weakens and abolishes this, he abolishes the criterion between the unknowable and the knowable; which leads to the inference that nothing can be grasped—so he incautiously comes round to the position he most wants to avoid. (156: Cicero, *Acad.* 218; cf. 2 44).

Philo, I suggest, went beyond Carneadean scepticism by espousing a form of metaphysical realism. Whereas Carneades could avoid the charge that he was making illegitimate use of precisely the distinctions that he was calling into question by saying that for practical purposes truth and falsity now merely amounted to (provisional) confirmation or disconfirmation, Philo, by introducing a doctrine involving the metaphysical status of true and false propositions, risks self-refutation:

Antiochus used to say that Philo found [this criticism] most disturbing: for when it was assumed (a) that there were some false presentations, and (b) that they differed in no respect from true ones, Philo failed to realize that while he admitted (a) on the strength of the apparent existence of a certain difference among impressions, this was a fact denied by (b) ...nothing could be more inconsistent. This would be true if we [i.e. Philo and co.] abolished truth altogether—but we do not, for we distinguish some [sc. impressions] as true and some as false; but approval has to do with the form [sc. of the impression], while there is no sign of apprehension. (157: Cicero, *Acad.* 2 111)

Philo apparently claims that he is committed only to distinguishing impressions as true and false on the basis of likelihood, not certainty. But if p is likely, then there is a likelihood that p is true (i.e. independently of any observer's states). The mistake is to *commit* yourself to (a) as to a metaphysical truth about the way things really are. All you need is to say that (a) appears to be the case (after the fact, let us say, one changes one's mind about the truth of impressions given further evidence, impressions that had seemed to be unshakeable); and there is nothing in the actual structure of the impressions themselves that can allow us at the time to pick out the certainly true from the plausible but false.⁵

The latter is Carneades' position—and in committing himself to more than Carneades, Philo courts charges of dogmatizing and incoherence. Yet matters are not so clear-cut. If we assume reasonably that much of Cicero's *Academica* argument is Philonian, the core of the disagreement between Philo and the Stoics concerns clause (iv) of Def. 3 (Chapter V, 82). Philo was not of course the first to say that (iv) cannot be satisfied; his originality rather lies in his accepting the first three clauses—he allows that there can be true impressions reporting on the actual states of objects, caused in some appropriate way—

and he supposes that this in fact suffices for knowledge:

they [i.e. New Academics] say that they only remove the possibility of anything presenting such an appearance that there could not be a false appearance in the same manner. (158: Cicero, *Acad.* 2 33)

Antiochus replies that this is incoherent, since the Academics now remove the only means of deciding for any given impression whether or not it is true; and this is like saying that even after blinding someone you have not removed their possible objects of sight (ibid. 33; cf. 187). But if Philo rejects clause (iv) while accepting the rest of Def. 3, he has surely abolished *katalēpsis*, at least in the strong Stoic sense, since no *individual* impression can be known to be cataleptically true; but *contra* Antiochus, Philo still apparently thinks that things may be known, although not via Stoic criterion (cf. 155).

The Stoics, and following them Antiochus, accept the KK thesis (Chapter II, n. 8): if I know p , I must know that I know it. Philo implicitly rejects it. Take a (suitably large) set S of clear and distinct impressions. Mere clarity and distinctness will not guarantee their truth—nor can any amount of testing and confirmation finally rule out the possibility of any one of them being false. Hence (iv) is to be rejected. But for all that, might I not think that it is overwhelmingly likely that *some* members m_{i-j} of S are true? In that case, I believe that in some cases the first three conditions are satisfied, and in those cases what I believe I know, even if I can never know that I know them. Philo's account of knowledge is externalist:⁶ it is the observer-independent *fact that* conditions (i)–(iii) of Def. 3 are met that makes belief knowledge; but that is logically quite independent of the question whether we can ever know them to be satisfied. Thus Philo holds that we may know some things, and indeed we can know that there are some things we know; but cannot know *of any particular candidate for knowledge* that we know that.⁷

This position is no longer genuinely Sceptical, since it asserts that there are veridical impressions. All it denies is that the Stoic conditions on *katalēpsis* are met in full. But it is a coherent, indeed attractive, epistemology. It is, however, vulnerable at one point. What can our *grounds* be for asserting that any m_i is in fact true? Surely I can only justify holding

(a) $(\exists x)(Fx)$ (for some domain) on the basis of prior knowledge of some proposition of the form

(b) $Fa?$

But that is precisely what Philo rejects. That is surely the burden of Antiochus's objection lurking behind the rather garbled text of 157. Moreover, one might ask (from the Carneadean perspective) why the move to metaphysical truth is needed at all. Consider 156 again: if any impression that I have which is as a matter of fact true is such that, for all I know, it might be false, I can never be in a position to assert that I know anything.

There are a number of possible responses to that objection: I shall sketch just one. One might hold that the mere fact of our being able to get around in the world with a modicum of success was a powerful indication that some of our perceptual information was reliable—it cannot be the case that we are systematically fooled by our senses. In that case I can hold (a), but need not be committed to any particular proposition of the form of

(b). Such views nowadays tend to cluster under the flag of evolutionary epistemology; but they need not all be Darwinian in form. It might just be taken to be a fortuitous *fact* that things must be that way, but none the less one whose factual status was guaranteed by our general orientational success. Or it might be justified, but by way of a teleological appeal to nature and its structure. The latter course was indeed adopted in the ancient world, by the Stoics, by Galen, and perhaps also by Aristotle.⁸ Such arguments will not convince any hardline sceptic, of course; but they do show that Antiochus's claims of incoherence or groundlessness are themselves unfounded.

There is one more perplexing feature of **155**: what does it mean to say that Philo held that objects are 'apprehensible as regards their real nature'? That seems to imply something stronger than anything I have argued for above, namely that we really *can* know how each thing is. But how could that be the case, in default of the Stoic criterion? One might read Philo as saying that there is indeterminacy in the objects themselves, and hence the fact that we can make only probable claims represents an ontological state of affairs—the world itself is probabilistic. But whatever that might amount to (cf. Pyrrho: Chapter IV, 60ff.; and Aenesidimus: below, 131), it will not square with the externalist epistemology discerned above, with which **155** can be consistently interpreted. When Def. 3 (i)–(iii) are in fact satisfied, we do know how those things are as to their real natures, because it is in fact true that our sense-impressions faithfully report the real contours of the object in question; but that is quite independent of our *knowing* that those conditions are satisfied. Perhaps the point of borrowing the Stoics' own term *katalēpton* here is to emphasize precisely the restricted nature of this apprehension. The Stoics hold that a cataleptic impression reveals both (a) the object and (b) itself as cataleptic—Philo accepts (a) but denies (b) (cf. the last sentence of **157**); and hence denies that there are cataleptic impressions. Carneades held (*M* 7 160–1) that *enargeia* must provide the foundation of any dogmatic epistemology; but he did so only to deny that such an epistemology could be well-founded. The Stoics (and Antiochus) hold that under certain conditions *enargeia* is a criterion in the strong sense. Philo adopts the weaker, but still profoundly un-Carneadean position, that *enargeia* may be a guide, albeit a fallible one, to the truth. And furthermore, in a classical syncretistic move, he claims that this was really the view of the Academy all along. The view of Platonic epistemology which Sextus reports at *M* 7 141–4, in which perceptual *enargeia* plays a role, but may be corrected and refined by the intellect, perhaps derives ultimately from Philo (cf. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3 9–11).⁹

Pyrrhonism Revived: the Scepticism of Aenesidemus

According to Menodotus (a second-century AD Empiricist doctor: Chapter XIII, 232–4), Pyrrhonism lapsed with the death of Timon, and was revived by one Ptolemy of Cyrene (*DL* 9 115);¹⁰ but nothing is known of this Ptolemy¹¹—and the revival of Pyrrhonism after more than a century's desuetude is usually attributed to **Aenesidemus**. Aenesidemus is a shadowy figure. His dates are uncertain (Zeller placed him as late as the second century AD); but it is now generally accepted that he flourished around the middle of the first century BC, in spite of Aristocles' comment (Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 29), that 'a

certain Aenesidemus began yesterday and the day before to stir up this nonsense [i.e. Pyrrhonism] in Egypt'. Curiously, Cicero never mentions him (particularly in view of the fact that Aenesidemus dedicated his *Pyrrhonian Discourses* to Lucius Tubero, Cicero's contemporary and friend); and Cicero invariably describes Pyrrhonism as a doctrine long fallen into disuse. But, as Brochard argues (1923, 244–6), it seems clear from our major source (Photius's *Bibliotheca*, a ninth-century Byzantine patriarch's library catalogue) that Aenesidemus is reacting directly against the Philonian Academy which he castigates as 'Stoics fighting with Stoics' (Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170a16–17)—which suggests that Aenesidemus was writing as early as the 80s BC.¹²

He wrote other works besides the *Pyrrhonian Discourses*: Aristocles mentions an *Outline* (in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 11) and an *Elements* (ibid. 16); Diogenes refers to a *Pyrrhonics* (*DL* 9 78:164; probably identical with the *Pyrrhonian Discourses*),¹³ as well as an *Against Wisdom* and an *On Inquiry* (*DL* 9 106); Sextus additionally talks of a *First Introduction* (*M* 10 216).

Aenesidemus is thus generally considered the refounder of Pyrrhonism (although Photius does not actually present him as such), and the first person to call its adherents Pyrrhonists. Moreover, it is usually assumed that his hand lies behind much of Sextus's voluminous argument, in particular the Ten Modes often referred to as the 'Modes of Aenesidemus' (e.g. in the title of Striker, 1983). But the evidence is slight: and the modes are not attributed to him in the presentations of either Diogenes (*DL* 9 79–88) or Sextus (*PH* 1 36–163). Aristocles (*Praep. Ev.* 14 18 11), however, refers to *nine* Aenesidemean modes: below, **162**,¹⁴ and Sextus once mentions a treatment of 'the ten modes of Aenesidemus' (*M* 7 345; presumably in the lost book preceding *M* 7: Chapter I, 7), which seem to be the familiar Ten Modes. In introducing the Ten Modes at *PH* 1 36, Sextus ascribes them to 'the older sceptics', who are later contrasted with 'the younger sceptics' (*PH* 1 164) responsible for the 'Five Modes of suspension' (or the Modes of Agrippa: Chapter X). It is impossible readily to determine whom Sextus might mean here. At first sight, one might take the reference to be to Pyrrho and Timon; but *skeptikos* did not mean 'sceptic' in their time, and Sextus carefully does not call Pyrrho *skeptikos*, saying rather that he 'applied himself more thoroughly than any of his predecessors to *skepsis* (inquiry)' (*PH* 1 7).¹⁵ Thus the 'older sceptics' of *PH* 1 36 may well be Aenesidemus and his circle. Plutarch wrote a book (now lost) called *On the Ten Topics of Pyrrho*: 'topic' (*topos*) is presumably a synonym (perhaps even a misprint)¹⁶ for *tropos*, mode: and much the likeliest supposition is that Plutarch was indeed writing about the basic set of ten. If so, the title apparently fathers them on Pyrrho; but little weight can be put on that (see Chapter VIII, 140).

Yet, if the Ten Modes did form a basic part of Aenesidemus's scepticism, they make no appearance in Photius's summary. Some scholars have detected them in Photius's description of book 5 of the *Pyrrhonian Discourses*:

his fifth discourse too holds out an aporetic guard against causes, refusing to concede that anything is the cause of anything, saying that the aetiologists are mistaken and enumerating some modes according to which he thinks that, by being attracted to causal theory, they have been steered into such an error. (159: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170b17–22, =72L LS [part])

But **159** plainly refers to the Eight Modes against the Aetiologists (*PH* 1 180–5), which are indeed securely ascribable to Aenesidemus (Chapter XII, 213–17).

Thus while Aenesidemus probably did employ the Ten Modes, there is no evidence to suggest either that he formulated them in a particularly rigorous or systematic new way, or that they were particularly important to him. And in general Sextus's reliance on Aenesidemus has been exaggerated: Sextus refers to him by name fewer than twenty times; and in many of those cases Aenesidemus appears in a puzzlingly Dogmatic light (below, 129–31).

The Pyrrhonian Discourses

Aenesidemus's target is a catholic one:

(1) the whole aim of the book is to ground the view that there is no ground for *katalēpsis*, whether through perception or thought. (2) Consequently, he says, neither the Pyrrhonists nor the rest know the truth in things; but the philosophers of the other schools, as well as being ignorant in general, and wearing themselves out uselessly and expending themselves in ceaseless torments are also ignorant of the very fact that they apprehend none of the things of which they think that they have gained apprehension. (3) But he who philosophizes after the fashion of Pyrrho is happy not only in general but also, and especially, in the wisdom of knowing that he has firm apprehension of nothing. And even with regard to what he knows, he has the propriety to assent no more to its affirmation than to its denial. (**160**: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 169b18–30, =71C LS [part])

The language probably reflects Aenesidemus's own;¹⁷ yet it is puzzling. In **160**(2) Aenesidemus appears to say that there is no ground for holding that anything is apprehended; but he is happy to allow, for a weaker sense of 'know' than that of Stoic *katalēpsis*, that that fact at least can be known. Hence Aenesidemus is not Metrodoran—his position is rather the Socratic one that at least one's ignorance can be known (although it cannot be *apprehended*). Aristocles accuses Aenesidemus of a familiar incoherence:

when he was making these and other fine speeches one would have liked...to ask him whether he was stating with full knowledge that this is the condition of things, or without knowledge. For if he did not know, why should we believe him? But if he knew, he was vastly silly for declaring at the same time that all things are uncertain, but yet saying that he knew so much (**161**: Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 12)

Aristocles is concerned with Aenesidemus's arguments against the reliability of perceptual and other judgements:

when Aenesidemus...goes through his nine modes, in all of which he attempts to show that things are non-evident, are we to say he speaks with or without knowledge? For he says that there is a difference in animals, and in ourselves, and in states, and in the modes of life and customs and the laws. (162: Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 11)

Since our perceptions are dependent upon our constitutions, and our constitutions differ, our perceptions will differ too, and not necessarily in accordance with real differences in the objects (cf. Chapter IX, 161ff.). This argument is supposed to be part of a general strategy to ground the view that we in fact know nothing (160); but if we know nothing, what then is the status of its premisses (cf. Democritus: Chapter III, 59)? Surely propositions such as 'our constitutions differ' make dogmatic claims about the way things actually are, dogmatic claims the conclusion of the argument refuses our title to? This objection will trouble no reflective sceptic. For one thing, such arguments may be dialectical: it is the Dogmatists who are committed on their own theories to the unreliability of perception. But secondly, the argument delivers its conclusions just in case its premisses are true, as they may be even if I do not know it. Thus if the premisses *are* true, the conclusion follows; and I cannot know them to be false—hence I ought not repose any confidence in the deliverances of my senses.

Aenesidemus claims to have 'firm apprehension of nothing' (call that '*I*' for inapprehensibility: 160(3)), and that he knows that, although he does not have firm apprehension of it. One reason for his disallowing such second-order apprehension might simply be that such meta-knowledge of *I* is not of the proper logical type to qualify for possible apprehensive status. One has apprehension only of *objects*: and since propositions are not objects, they cannot satisfy the conditions of Def. 3.

But there is perhaps something more interesting to be said. For me to apprehend that *p* (or more properly that *x* is *F*: logical form here is crucial) I must be aware that I know it. If apprehension is supposed to be transparent for whoever has it, then my simply not being in that transparent state (because I doubt that *p*, or at any rate I am not certain of it) is enough to show that I do not apprehend it. But it shows that quite unconditionally. Hence, on the transparency assumption, I can know that I do not have *katalēpsis*. But that knowledge need not be transparent to me (such that I have second-order *katalēpsis* of *I*, the fact that I have no *katalēpsis*), because I can still allow that first-order *katalēpsis* is a possibility for me—I might some day be in that transparent cognitive state (this is Sextus's position: Chapter XVII).

Some difficulties stand in the way of ascribing that view to Aenesidemus. In 160(3) he is careful to say that one should assent no more to the assertion of *I* than to its denial; and that considerably undercuts the extent to which it makes sense even to say that he knows that he apprehends nothing. Aenesidemus might simply (compatibly with the account of the last paragraph) be ruling out assent in its strong sense, assent to the absolute and incontrovertible truth of something, on the grounds that something apprehensible may for all we know turn up.¹⁸ However the general tenor of Aenesidemus's attack on the Academics suggests a stronger objection:

(1) in the first book he distinguishes the Pyrrhonists from the Academics in

almost precisely the following words. He says that the Academics are Dogmatists: they lay down some things with confidence and unambiguously (*anamphibolōs*), while the Pyrrhonists are aporetics and free from all dogma. (2) Not one of them has said either that all things are apprehensible or that they are non-apprehensible,¹⁹ but that they are no more (*ouden mallon*) of this kind than that, or that they are sometimes of this kind and sometimes not, or that for one person they are of this kind, for another person not of this kind, and for another not even existent at all. (3) Nor do they say that all things in general, or some things, are accessible to us, or not accessible to us, but that they are no more accessible than not, or that they are sometimes accessible to us and sometimes not, or that they are accessible to one person but not to another. (4) Nor indeed do they say that there is true or false, convincing or unconvincing, existent or non-existent. But the same thing is, as it might be said, no more true than false, convincing than unconvincing, existent than non-existent; or sometimes the one, and sometimes the other; or of such a kind for one person, but not for another. (5) For the Pyrrhonist determines absolutely nothing, not even the claim that nothing can be determined (we put it like this, he says, for want of a better way to express the thought). (163: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 169b36–170a14,=71C LS [part])

With 163 the *ou mallon* formula resurfaces in Greek scepticism (Pyrrho: 76–7; Chapter IV, 59ff.; cf. Chapter III, 61–3): which was surely one reason why Aenesidemus styled himself a Pyrrhonist. Similarly with non-determination (163(5)), although the second-order non-determination of one’s non-determination is perhaps an innovation: Aenesidemus is the progenitor of Sextus’s insistence that the slogans of scepticism refer to, and hence ‘cancel’, themselves (*PH* 1 14–15 [2], 206; cf. 2 188; *M* 8 480). Indeed, the entire discussion of the sceptical slogans at *PH* 1 187–209 may be Aenesidemean: speaking of the slogan ‘I determine nothing’, Sextus says (*PH* 1 197) that ‘the Sceptic determines nothing, not even the very proposition “I determine nothing”’; while Aenesidemus himself fathered, albeit dubiously, non-determination on Pyrrho (Chapter IV, 65:83; cf. 165). But whatever the obscurity of his doctrines, Aenesidemus seems clearly responsible for creating (or at least recreating) the figure of Pyrrho, archetype Sceptic.

163 makes much of the *ou mallon* in the course of distinguishing the Pyrrhonian attitude from that of the Academics, who

- (1) strongly affirm some things
- and
- (2) strongly deny (other) things,
- while the Pyrrhonists assert neither
- (3) all things are non-apprehensible
- nor
- (4) all things are apprehensible.
- Rather they hold that they are either
- (5) no more *A* than not-*A*;²⁰
- or

(6) sometimes *A*, sometimes not-*A*;

or

(7) *A* for *x* and not-*A* for *y* and non-existent for *z*.

Furthermore the Pyrrhonist will not hold any of

(8) all things are accessible to us

(9) some things are accessible to us

(10) all things are not accessible to us

(11) some things are not accessible to us;

but they will say that things are either

(12) no more accessible than non-accessible to us;

or

(13) sometimes accessible to us and sometimes not;

or

(14) accessible to *x*, but not to *y*.

Finally, the Pyrrhonist will not say

(15) some things are true

or

(16) some things are false;

will not say either

(17) some things are plausible

or

(18) some things are implausible;

nor yet

(19) some things are existent

or

(20) some things are non-existent;

however he will hold

(21) the same things are no more true than false, plausible than implausible, existent than non-existent;

or

(22) they are sometimes true, plausible, existent, and sometimes not true, plausible, and existent

or

(23) they are true, plausible, or existent to *x*, not true, not plausible, and non-existent to *y*.

That is all pretty indigestible and the material in (21)–(23) is compressed for brevity's sake: each proposition should properly be expanded into three. But the basic structure of Aenesidemus's line of thought emerges with reasonable clarity. Propositions like (1)–(4), (8)–(11), (15)–(20) are illegitimate because dogmatic; while the isomorphic trios (5)–(7), (12)–(14), and (21)–(23) are acceptable.

It is clear why the illegitimate propositions are taken to be dogmatic: even in the case of (17) and (18), to *assert* the plausibility of a proposition is presumably to take it to be *intrinsically* plausible, and hence that it *should* commend itself to observers—and that goes beyond a mere avowal of something's appearance. Of the acceptable trios, (5), (12), and (21) adopt the *ou mallon* formula; (6), (13), and (22) modify the unacceptable

dogmatic claims with temporal qualifiers; while (7), (14), and (23) relativize them to different individuals.

But problems occur in trying to see how each of the three types of sceptically-acceptable proposition can be put to work within the same coherent framework. What is the relation between the *ou mallon* claims and the relativized sentences? Are the latter alternatives to them, or explications of what they mean? Crucially, does Aenesidemus *commit* the Pyrrhonist to relativism, either temporal or interpersonal? And if so, does that compromise his scepticism? Genuine scepticism and relativism are incompatible—as Sextus realized.²¹ Is Aenesidemean relativism restricted (see Chapter III, 46)? Or can the Aenesidemean utter propositions like (7) only non-dogmatically, to make an avowal of an appearance, without committing himself to some sort of second-order truth? The evidence is equivocal. Photius sometimes hints at an Aenesidemus of the second variety:

the followers of Pyrrho, in determining nothing, remain absolutely consistent.... Above all, the Pyrrhonists, by entertaining doubts about every thesis, maintain consistency and do not conflict with themselves, whereas the Academics are unaware that they are conflicting with themselves. (164: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170a22–8, =71CLS[part])

Philonian scepticism is incoherent (Aenesidemus argues) since it involves the *assertion* of *akatalēpsia*; hence Aenesidemus cannot here want to distinguish different levels of discourse (the fact that the proposition ‘all propositions asserting apprehension are false’ is second-order does immunize it against self-refutation). Thus a consistent Aenesidemus should make no non-relative judgements, even of relativized judgements. And that sits well with the insistence that non-determination applies to itself. But Aristocles thought that Aenesidemus’ position was incoherent precisely because he positively commits himself to the truth of certain relativized judgements (162). And while Aristocles may be mistaken, or deliberately distorting Aenesidemus’s real position for polemical purposes, we cannot simply ignore his testimony.

A clue towards the solution of this difficulty may be found in Aenesidemus’s characterization of the Pyrrhonists as aporetics (163(1)). The term ‘aporetic’ is familiar from the Socratic tradition; Plato’s early dialogues are called ‘aporetic’ because of Socrates’s habit of reducing his various opponents to *aporia*, the state of being totally at a loss.²² The aporetic dialogues are also refutational, as was Aenesidemus’s argument; it is plausible to see him consciously drawing on the Socratic heritage in his fight with Philo’s Academy.²³ Moreover, Aenesidemus was prominent among those who interpreted Plato sceptically: *PH* 1 222.²⁴

A passage of Diogenes supports the assumption that Aenesidemus employed some of the material collected in the Ten Modes (possibly in book 3 of his *Pyrrhonian Discourses*: 167 below; in any case much of it antedates Aenesidemus: cf. Chapter III, 54):

Pyrrhonist discourse is a kind of recollection of appearances, or of ideas of any kind, on the basis of which they are all brought into confrontation with each other, and, when compared, are found to present much disparity and confusion.

This is what Aenesidemus says in the summary of his *Pyrrhonics*. (165: DL 9 78,=71B LS)

How, then, did Aenesidemus conceive of the structure of his refutations? The Ten Modes, in Sextus's presentation, all aim to induce *epochē* on the basis of the undecidability of dogmatic disputes; but that undecidability does not entail *epochē* (indeed it undermines the notion of entailment): rather it causes it (Chapters II, 28; XVI–XVIII). On the other hand, earlier versions of the Modes (which sometimes persist in Sextus's text) tend to represent the arguments as *proving* their conclusions.

If Aenesidemus really was merely a refuter on the Arcesilaan model (Chapter V, 75ff.), then this would be unsurprising. Woodruff (1988, 144) even claims that 'we must admit that Aenesidemus drew unqualified negative conclusions in his *Discourses*'. Woodruff's evidence comes from Photius's description of *Discourses* 2–8 (*Bibliotheca*, 212, 170b3–35). Thus book 2

analyses truths (principles?),²⁵ causes, affections, motion, generation and destruction, and their opposites, exposing by tight reasoning (or so he thinks) the impossibility of grasping them. (166: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170b4–8,=72L LS [part])

Book 3 dealt with

motion²⁶ and sense perception and their properties. Working elaborately through a similar set of contradictions he puts them too beyond our access and apprehension. (167: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170b11–12, =72L LS [part]);

In book 4 he attacked indicative sign-inference (171–2; Chapter XI, 204ff.), as well as physics, cosmology, and theology (ibid. 170b13–17). Book 6 dealt with choice and avoidance, good and bad; book 7 with the virtues; and book 8 with happiness and the end (ibid. 170b18–35: below, 134ff.). Hence if, e.g. the conclusion of book 3 (167) is unqualified, Aenesidemus seems committed precisely to those propositions (3) and (10) earlier rejected as dogmatic.

Woodruff's solution involves distinguishing two ways of taking a non-apprehensibility claim. It can amount either to

(S1) it is the nature of x not to be F

or

(S2) it is not the nature of x to be F ;

and 'S2 is compatible with the possibility that the object will happen contingently to be F ; S1 is not. Aporetic conclusions in the form of S2 can be drawn from evidence that the object is F in some circumstances but not in others' (1988, 146: cf. P2 and P3 below). Thus the *ou mallon* conclusions will be intermediate, themselves licensing the unqualified negative conclusions.

However we need to determine what exactly Aenesidemus's *ou mallon* means. As we saw (Chapter III, 50), the *ou mallon* formula can be used (i) positively (x is no more F than not- F since it is both: Protagoras) or (ii) negatively (x is no more F than not- F since

it is neither: Democritus; cf. **62**). Indeed Plato himself, as Woodruff notes (147–50), uses it in both ways. These are not necessarily incompatible, at least if (ii) denies that either the predicate or its contradictory hold of the object *by nature*, while (i) merely affirms that in some (suitably relativized) sense both the predicate and its contradictory hold of the object. Aenesidemus accepts some negative S2-type conclusions; but they are non-dogmatic because they make no positive assertion about anything's nature or essence; hence they are perfectly compatible with relativized predications such as (5) and (6). So when Aenesidemus says in **167** that things are 'beyond our access and apprehension' he is talking of their natures. We can know that they *are* beyond us—although as that is not itself a matter of knowing a nature it does not itself qualify as *katalēpsis*: the earlier provisional account is vindicated (cf. Metrodorus of Chios: **66**, Chapter IV). Thus Aenesidemus's Essential Scepticism mirrors that of Pyrrho (Chapter IV, 61); perhaps after all Pyrrho is more than just a suitable Aenesidemean role-model.

The Heracliteanism of Aenesidemus and the Nature of Things

None the less, Aenesidemus sometimes appears (in Sextus) in an undeniably and uncomfortably dogmatic light. Sextus attributes (probably falsely) to Heraclitus the view that

things which appear in common are trustworthy, since they are judged by the common reason, while those which appear to each person privately are false; (**168** [= **36**]: *M* 7 134; cf. **31**, **34**)

i.e., Heraclitus allegedly held P1 (Chapter III, 39–40). Whatever the truth about Heraclitus, there seems no doubt that it can be ascribed to Aenesidemus:

Aenesidemus and his followers say that there is a difference in things apparent, and says that of these some appear in common to all, while others appear privately to individuals, and of these those which appear in common to all are true, while those which do not are false. (**169**: *M* 8 8)

Sextus does not suggest that Aenesidemus presented the claim of **169** dialectically, in the course of arguing that, since nothing satisfied it, nothing counts on this criterion as true. Furthermore, P1 (negatively deployed) is buttressed (in Sextus's arguments) by a widely-held dogmatic thesis concerning the natures of things: for something to be *F* by nature is for it to be *F* absolutely and non-relatively (see Chapters IX, 159; XVI, 268ff.). Plato certainly subscribes to it: that is why the beautiful girl of *Hippias Major* 289c is 'no more beautiful than not': she is beautiful relative to mortals but not to Aphrodite; and if she is merely *relatively* beautiful she is not beautiful by nature. In Plato this sort of view is metaphysically loaded, in favour of granting only the Forms absolute reality. But divorced from its Platonic metaphysical context, it expresses a standard Greek view about natures:

(P2) *x* is *F* by nature if and only if *x* is *F* non-relatively.

However, Sceptics interpret P2 very strongly, as

(P3) x is F by nature if and only if for any observer O x appears F to O ;

and P3 is put to destructive use throughout Sceptical argument. The interpretation of P2 as P3 is probably Aenesidemean, deriving from his concern with natures and their apprehensibility: if people disagree over the apparent properties of things we have no good reasons for thinking that any of them have grasped their natures or essences—hence only in cases of complete agreement is any such confidence justified.

Of course any Sceptic can argue like that, dialectically: Sextus does, frequently. But **169** appears to commit Aenesidemus to thinking, unseptically, that there *are* such cases of universal agreement; and nothing suggests that it is meant dialectically. None of Photius's testimony remotely prepares us for this dogmatic Aenesidemus. But **169** is not an isolated text: the 'common reason' of **168** is a divine intelligence that permeates the cosmos (*M* 7 127–31): but Sextus also attributes this doctrine to Aenesidemus 'according to Heraclitus' (*M* 7 349). This odd phrase apparently means 'in agreement with Heraclitus':²⁷ Sextus thus makes Aenesidemus out to be (at times) a Heraclitean. The phrase crops up elsewhere: at *M* 10 216, Aenesidemus 'in agreement with Heraclitus' is represented as holding that time is a body (and in this passage he is explicitly numbered a Dogmatist; cf *PH* 3 138); and at *M* 9 337, he is reported as saying that a part is both the same and not the same as the whole (cf. Heraclitus's Unity of Opposites: **41–4**, Chapter III, 41). Two other fragments present a dogmatizing (if not Heracliteanizing) Aenesidemus. At *M* 10 38, he is said to espouse 'the view of the majority' that there are two types of change, of place and of quality; while *M* 7 350 credits him with adhering to Strato of Lampsacus's view that the intellect 'peers out through the senses'.²⁸

Three possibilities suggest themselves. Firstly, Aenesidemus might have offered his Heraclitean arguments dialectically, as one arm of a *diaphōnia* (Chapter II, 27ff.; IX, 155ff.). This would be an unimpeachably Sceptical manoeuvre—he produces the 'septical' account of Heraclitus to counter the prevailing Stoic dogmatic Heraclitus.²⁹ But this cannot account for Sextus's explicit picture of Aenesidemus (in some circumstances) *agreeing* with Heraclitus:³⁰ either Sextus radically misunderstood Aenesidemus's dialectical purpose (which, given Sextus's ubiquitous and self-conscious employment of such dialectical manoeuvres, stretches credulity); or he deliberately misrepresents him (but why? Aenesidemus was one of his own); or we take the 'agreement with Heraclitus' at face-value. If we do that, we may try to finesse the apparent inconsistencies of Aenesidemus's philosophy by means of some interpretative strategy; or we could adopt a genetic account, according to which Aenesidemus was at one time genuinely septical, and at another Heraclitean.³¹ Genetic accounts are usually philosophically boring—but they are often plausible; and in this case they seem to have Sextus's own *imprimatur*.

[as] Aenesidemus and his followers say that the Sceptic way is a road leading to the Heraclitean philosophy, since saying that opposites appear to hold of the same thing precedes saying that they actually do hold of the same thing, and while the Sceptics say that opposites appear to hold in respect of the same thing, the Heracliteans proceed from this to their actually holding. (**170**: *PH* 1 210)

But even if the move from Scepticism to Heracliteanism is one of development, one may still ask how much of the original view is retained along the way.

Sextus suggests that the Heracliteans consider there to be an argument leading from conflicting appearances to conflicting facts, from indeterminacy of impressions to indeterminacy in the objects (cf. Pyrrho: Chapter IV, 61). How might Aenesidemus have endorsed this? First of all, the burden of his attack on the Academics in **163** is compatible with the view that the only acceptable Aenesidemean predications will be relativized. This can be squared with **167** on the assumption that **167** asserts only the non-apprehensibility and inaccessibility *of natures*. But the Heraclitean position *is* a position about natures: it asserts that things are of such a nature as to bear contradictory properties.

Perhaps Aenesidemus argued as follows. If *O* thinks that *x* is *F*, and *O** thinks that *x* is not-*F*, then by P3 *x* is really neither, since there is no universal agreement about *x*'s qualities. But the universal consent condition can be applied at the meta-level, since it *does* seem universally to be held that *x* is either *F* or not-*F*. Thus by P3 *x* is either *F* or not-*F* by nature; hence it really has each property, although not of course to the exclusion of the other. That argument is confused and fallacious; but it shows how one might think to move from indeterminacy in the appearances to indeterminacy in the objects by way of P3. Moreover, this is not dogmatism, if to be dogmatic is to assert without qualification that a particular property holds uniquely and to the exclusion of its contradictory of any object. Thus Aenesidemus initially rejects claims about natures via P3; but then, by a second-order application of the same principle, he modifies that original anti-dogmatic stance to encompass a version of the Heraclitean Unity of Opposites thesis.³² Thus Aenesidemus's scepticism is restricted. He objects to the Philonian Academy's commitment to dogmatic first-order propositions of the form '*x* is really and non-relatively *F*' (not to *particular* propositions of that form, but rather to the belief that some such propositions are true: 116–20 above). That is what it is to dogmatize: believing that some first-order propositions are strictly, literally, and without qualification true; and that is what Aenesidemus rejects.

Aenesidemus then agrees with Antiochus that the only grounds one could have for holding that *some* such propositions were true would be actually to know of one that *it* was; but Aenesidemus, in opposition to Antiochus, takes it that the latter condition is never satisfied. This does not resolve all problems: some of the texts mentioned above still seem recalcitrantly dogmatic on more or less any interpretation. But the position is, I think, coherent—and it is the best that I can do on behalf of a consistently Sceptical Aenesidemus.

Aenesidemus on Signs and Causes

Aenesidemus produced a series of arguments against 'the aetiologists', or causal theorists (**159**), which Sextus summarized (*PH* 1 180–5: XI, XII, 213–17); and probably he took the attack on explanation and cause to be fundamental to the undermining of such concepts as motion, generation, and destruction (**166**; cf. *PH* 3 17, 13–150; Galen, *On Antecedent Causes*³³ xi 123). Equally, sign-theory was a major target for his scepticism:

in the fourth book he says that signs, in the sense in which we call apparent things the sign of the non-apparent, do not exist at all, and that those who believe they do are deceived by an empty enthusiasm. And he raises the usual series of difficulties about the whole of nature, the world, and the gods, contending that none of these things falls within our apprehension. (171: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170b12–17, =72L LS [part])

The idea that appearances are signs of the hidden natures of things originated with Anaxagoras and Democritus (Chapter III, 37, 48: 28); by the Hellenistic period such claims had engendered a full-scale debate (crucial to medical Empiricism: Chapter XII) about the propriety of the move from evident to non-evident, in the course of which elaborate typologies of signs were created and criticized; and a fundamental distinction emerged between the indicative sign, where something evident signifies something non-evident, and the commemorative sign, where something merely temporarily non-evident is signified by something immediately evident (*PH* 2 100–1: Chapter XI, 201ff.). The Sceptics reject only indicative signs, on the grounds that they deal with what is essentially non-evident (*PH* 2 102).

The issue obviously matters to Aenesidemus. Dogmatic claims concern natures; natures are unobservable. If any disagreement about natures suffices to throw into doubt any claims about them (because of P3), then there can be no secure indicative route to the hidden truths about things. Sextus writes:

Aenesidemus in the 4th book of *Pyrrhonian Discourses* propounds an argument against the same assumption in much the same way as follows: ‘if apparent things appear alike to all in a similar condition, and signs are apparent things, then signs appear alike to all in a similar condition. But signs do not appear alike to all in a similar condition; and apparent things appear alike to all in a similar condition; therefore signs are not apparent things’. (172: *M* 8 215; cf. 234; cf. Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170b13–17)

The rider ‘to all in a similar condition’ represents a significant weakening of P3: universal agreement is no longer, apparently, required (see Chapter XVI, 268–71). The argument is subtle. On the Dogmatists’ own account, the antecedent in a sound indicative-sign conditional (‘if there is sweating, then there are invisible pores in the skin’) is evident; now, the *fact* (‘there is sweating’) may be evident enough: but it is evident *as a sign* only if there is general agreement as to its significance—and that condition is not satisfied (see further Chapter XI, 204ff.). The Eight Aenesidemean Modes against the Aetiologists are, in effect, an elaboration of this fundamental point; indeed, the First Mode simply reiterates the argument against the conclusiveness of any indicative sign (*PH* 1 181; for a full treatment of these Modes, see Chapter XII, 213–17).

This does not exhaust Aenesidemus’s contribution to the debate on causes. At *M* 9 210–36, Sextus reports a series of arguments against the view that anything can cause anything else. They fall into three basic groups; and all of them exhibit the same fundamental argumentative structure. Here is the first:

if there is a cause, either body is the cause of body, or the incorporeal of the incorporeal, or body of the incorporeal, or the incorporeal of body; but as we shall establish, body is not the cause of body, nor the incorporeal of the incorporeal, nor body of the incorporeal, nor the incorporeal of body; therefore there is no cause. (173: *M* 9 210)

The argument is structurally lucid: first, a complex conditional with a disjunctive consequent is asserted; then those disjuncts are severally denied, entailing, by *modus tollens*, the falsity of the antecedent. The conditional is itself established on the grounds that its disjunctive consequent is exhaustive, hence (given the existence assumption provided by the antecedent) necessarily true. 173 is one of a set:³⁴ and since Sextus writes:

so people set forth the components of the arguments set out; but Aenesidemus has in his treatment of them made a more intricate use of the *aporiai* concerning generation, (174: *M* 9 218)

scholars generally ascribe the whole set of disjunctive arguments to Aenesidemus. But Sextus explicitly only attributes these ‘more intricate’ versions to him; and we know from Galen (*On Antecedent Causes* xvi 199) that the original of 173 is owed to Herophilus, the third-century Alexandrian physician (Chapters XII, 219; XIII, 226).³⁵ These ‘more intricate’ Aenesidemean arguments occupy only *M* 9 219–26, and are difficult to disentangle—but their central claim is that the concept of generation is fundamental, and fundamentally incoherent. Their intricacy consists in their making subtler disjunctive divisions:

body will not be the cause of body, since such a body is either ungenerated, like Epicurus’s atom, or generated, like man, and either visible, like iron or fire, or invisible, like the atom. (175: *M* 9 219)

However this division is not exploited (in particular visibility plays no role in what follows: the text may be deficient here). In fact, the argument employs a rather different strategy:

it [i.e. the cause] acts on something either while continuing by itself or while uniting with another. But while remaining by itself it will not be able to effect anything more than itself and its own nature; and when united with another it would not be able to produce some third thing not already in existence. (176: *M* 9 220)

The underlying considerations here are Parmenidean: generation is impossible since it requires something to come from nothing, either directly from the cause, or if as a result of co-operation between agent and patient, some third thing distinct from all of them. Aenesidemus apparently invokes Descartes’ principle that there is always at least as

much reality in the cause as the effect; and that the totality of the effect can never exceed that of the combined causes. However, he provides no reason to think that causing (or, more precisely, causing of one body by another) necessarily requires such a bootstrapping up of powers and entities. Aristotle's analysis of change should have buried for ever the fallacy that all change required the coming to be of something from nothing. Aenesidemus's argument emphasizes the need for care and precision in causal analysis; but these jejune considerations do nothing to cast doubt on the coherence of the concept in the first place.

This Aenesidemean contribution to the debate on the coherence of causal concepts is thus neither particularly original nor particularly impressive. No doubt he is right to see cause and explanation at the basis of every Dogmatist's account of the world; but he would have done better to concentrate (as indeed he did in the Eight Modes), on problems in the epistemology of causes, rather than train his guns on their metaphysics.

Aenesidemean Ethics

Books 6–8 of the *Pyrrhonian Discourses* were devoted to ethical matters. Sextus avers that

it is sufficient to say (as Aenesidemus used to) that whereas all men consider that the good is whatever attracts them, whatever that may be, the particular views they hold about it are conflicting. (177: *M* 11 42)

And he elaborates: everyone agrees that there is such a thing as a beautiful body, yet they cannot agree which bodies are beautiful. So even if it is true that 'in a way both laymen and philosophers share the same preconception and believe in the existence of good and evil' (*M* 11 44), their agreement is not necessarily substantial. This argument takes on particular point in the context of Aenesidemus's adherence to the consensus epistemology of P1-P3, since if there is a consensus that the good is choiceworthy, is not that at least apprehended, a fact of nature? No, because such conceptual knowledge falls outside the proper ambit of apprehension in the first place, because it is not clear whether the concept has any genuine reference. Hence this superficial agreement poses no threat to a genuine Scepticism in ethics (see Chapter XVI, 267ff.).

This justifies Aenesidemus's adoption of another part of his Pyrrhonian heritage, namely living according to appearances. Aenesidemus defended Pyrrho against the 'lazy argument' (81, *DL* 9 62: Chapter IV): philosophical suspension need not paralyse, and a refusal to dogmatize about what is *really* good is quite compatible with acting on the basis of what seems appealing (cf. the criterion of Arcesilaus: Chapter V, 125).

One issue remains. Photius records that book 8 of *Pyrrhonian Discourses*

launches an attack on the end, allowing the existence of neither happiness nor pleasure nor prudence, nor any other end which any philosophical persuasion might believe in, but asserting that the end which they all celebrate simply does not exist. (178: Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170b30–5)

178's apparent negative dogmatism should no longer trouble us: the philosophers' disagreements show that nothing is by nature choiceworthy, no life by nature the best, according to their own lights. Hence what is denied is that *their* conditions are satisfied, not that some life might seem (and hence be) best for an individual. Still, **178** contrasts with the following:

as end the Sceptics name *epochē*, upon which *ataraxia* follows like a shadow, as the followers of Timon and Aenesidemus put it. (**179**: DL 9 107,=71A LS [part])

179 is indirectly confirmed by Sextus's remark that some 'estimable sceptics' have held that the end is '*epochē* in investigation' (*PH* 1 30). Sextus demurs: for him *ataraxia* itself is the end. But how can the Sceptics profess an end of any kind? This is a problem for Sextus as much as for Aenesidemus (perhaps more so, given Sextus's tougher line on what counts as dogmatism: see Chapter II, 23ff.). However, once one accepts Aenesidemus's account of what makes a position dogmatic, the problem largely evaporates. Aenesidemus need not be construed as *recommending* suspension of judgement as the end, in the sense of being the best possible life for man. Rather he is saying that, since no other philosophy meets the standards of proof required to show that their own dogmatic conceptions of the end are in fact to be preferred, there is no alternative to suspension of judgement. Hence it is the end only in a weak sense (although it is perhaps accompanied by pleasure: **77**(5), Chapter IV)—it is the end of the argument.

Compatibly with this, Long and Sedley (1987 1, 472–3, 487–8) develop a slightly different strategy for making sense of Aenesidemus's protestations of consistency. They concentrate on **163**(5), in particular the parenthetic claim that there is something intrinsically problematic about even understanding or expressing the thought at issue. In their neat characterization 'his ground for the consistency claim lies in the [Sceptics'] policy of bringing his sceptical utterances within their own and each other's scope. This is clearly a delicate procedure, since it involves simultaneously making and withdrawing an assertion.' Such difficulties are not unparalleled in the history of philosophy. Sextus himself confronts it in the case of the arguments against proof:

just as it is not impossible for a man who has ascended to a high place by ladder to overturn the ladder with his foot after the ascent, so also it is not unlikely that the Sceptic after he has arrived at the demonstration of his thesis by means of the argument proving the non-existence of proof, as if by ladder, should then abolish this very argument. (**180**: *M* 8 481)

Such Wittgensteinian manoeuvres at least have a good pedigree. How coherent they are, and if coherent how compelling is a question I defer until Chapter XVIII.

VIII

The Scepticism of the Early Empire

Later Academic Scepticism

Antiochus's secession and the death of Philo mark the end of the sceptical Academy as a functioning school of philosophy. Academic Scepticism gave place to revived Aenesidemean Pyrrhonism; and the early imperial period saw the beginnings of the syncretizing dogmatism characteristic of Middle Platonism. However if the Academy itself ceased to function as a sceptical institution (indeed as an institution altogether),¹ Academic Scepticism did not entirely die. We know of one Eudorus teaching in Alexandria in the third quarter of the first century BC,² whom Plutarch (*On the Generation of the Soul in 'Timaeus'* 1013b) paints as a Platonist relying on a criterion of the 'likely' (*to eikos*) fathered upon the Plato of the *Timaeus* (29b–d: cf. Chapter V, 84). Eudorus does not seem to be himself an Academic (in the sceptical sense: 'Academic' now means 'Academic Sceptic')—Tarrant (1985, 5) traces the origins of the Middle Platonist concentration on metaphysics and cosmology to him.

In the first century AD Plutarch, a major source for Hellenistic philosophy, styled himself an Academic, as did Favorinus of Arles a generation or so later; and his rough contemporary Epictetus attacks Academic Scepticism with every indication that his targets are real (*Discourses* 2 20; below, 145–6).

Anon. *In Theaet.*

We begin, however, with a rather different source: a papyrus fragment of an anonymous *Commentary on Plato's Theaetetus*. Anon. *In Theaet.* used to be assigned to the second century AD; however, Tarrant (1983) argues plausibly (although not conclusively, as he himself acknowledges) that it dates from the first century BC.³ Following Tarrant (1985, 66) I shall refer to the text of Anon, as *K*, and to its author as *A*.⁴ *A*'s philosophical acumen has not been universally admired. Indeed *K* is usually dismissed as a hack-written second-rate school text that 'maintains a stupefying level of banality': Dillon (1977, 270).

For *A*, Pyrrhonists reject altogether the possibility of genuine criteria (in contrast with the Academics):

for what he [i.e. Socrates at *Theaet.* 151e] is saying is not the Pyrrhonian dictum that one would not determinately assert any dogma but just say that it appears to one. For according to Pyrrho, what is the criterion is neither reason, nor a true impression, nor a plausible impression, nor a cataleptic impression, nor anything

else of the kind, but what now appears to him. Whether or not it is such as it appears he does not assert, because he thinks that the arguments for the opposing views are of equal strength, and he makes the impressions on a par with each other, leaving no difference between them in respect of their being true or false, plausible or implausible, self-evident or obscure, apprehensive or non-apprehensive, but holds that they are all alike. He does not even assert as a dogma the consequence—to live his life in accordance with whatever impression befalls him at each time, not on the grounds that it is a true impression, but because it now appears to him. (181: Anon. *In Theaet.* 61.10–46, =71D LS [part])

A's Pyrrhonists thus invoke phenomenal (i.e. non-judgemental) appearances (he rightly contrasts this with Plato's epistemic construal of appearance in *Theaetetus*: see Chapter III, 45–7).

One further passage is relevant to the Pyrrhonist revival:

(1) In a different way the Pyrrhonists say that everything is relative, so that nothing exists in its own right, but everything is in relation to something else. Neither shape, nor sounds, nor things tasted, smelled, or touched, or anything else perceived, has its own properties; for if these things were the same, they would not affect us differently because of distances or things seen along with them, just as we are impressed differently by the sea according to the states of the air. (2) Nor yet do our sense organs have their own proper constitution, otherwise animals would not be differently affected by the same things, as vine-shoots please goats, and mud pigs, but both are inimical to humans. (3) Then they pass on from perception to reason, making this relative too, saying that different people assent to different things, and that the same people change their mind and do not remain constant. (182: Anon. *In Theaet.* 63.1–40)

The text immediately preceding 182 is mutilated, but its subject is Protagoras's man-measure doctrine (*Theaet.* 151e–52a: 46, Chapter III; cf. 54); *A* apparently means to contrast Pyrrhonian and Protagorean notions of relativity ('in a different way'). *A* is familiar with a Pyrrhonism of comprehensive scope, covering both senses and reason, and deriving, in standard Pyrrhonist fashion (Chapter IX, 156ff.), undecidable and inarbitrable conflicts that render any certain attribution of anything to anything else impossible. 182 (1) effectively answers to the Fifth and Sixth Modes (with a dash of the Eighth: Chapter IX, 171–81): the surroundings and background conditions in which we perceive things affect our perceptions of them: hence we do not directly perceive their properties.

That argument relies upon a strongly realist conception of properties; and the realism is Essentialist, in the sense of Chapter II. That is, Pyrrhonists rely on something like:

(P4) if *F* is a real property of *x*, *x*'s *F* appearance cannot be dependent on circumstances extraneous to *x*.

Analogous principles occurred in Aenesidemean contexts (Chapter VII, 129); and they

will become ubiquitous. P4 is, however, a very strong principle—and one might well ask why Pyrrhonists feel themselves entitled to it. It is plausible that P4 arose dialectically; i.e. the Pyrrhonists hold that dogmatists of whatever stripe, in that they espouse Essential Realism, are committed to something like P4. P4 is, moreover, ontological in import; and all the Sceptics themselves really need (and all, I think, they actually press in non-dialectical contexts) is its weaker epistemological cousin

(P5) unless x presents an F appearance under all circumstances, we have no right to conclude that F is a property of x ;

which is the basic articulating principle that lies behind the Ten Modes (Chapter IX, 156ff.).

182(1)'s illustrative example is not found elsewhere; but it is clear what A has in mind. The sea looks blue under a clear Caribbean sky, dark grey under a dismal British one; consequently the sea is neither really blue nor really grey. The examples in 182(2), by contrast, do crop up among the various extant versions of the First Mode (pigs like mud: *PH* 1 56; goats like vine-shoots: *DL* 9 80). This shows (if our dating is right) that these examples were already Sceptical commonplaces in the first century BC, and perhaps Aenesidemean in origin. But most importantly, on A 's interpretation the Pyrrhonists are relativists; and this suggests once again that in its earliest Aenesidemean form revived Pyrrhonism did indeed embrace a relativism which later Sextan Scepticism was to repudiate.⁵

How then does it contrast with Protagoras? In so far as we can determine from the mutilated text, A had been discussing types of relative predicate such as 'left' and 'right' (62.47–8). Perhaps A is simply making the point that when Pyrrhonists discuss epistemological relativity it is not that kind of thing they have in mind (since the fact that such predicates are intrinsically relative carries no sceptical implications). But there is also a stronger point to be made. Protagoras simply reports as a statement of blunt fact that the same wind seems cold to one person and warm to another—and merely draws the conclusion that as it feels so it is. A 's Pyrrhonists go further: for they take the fact of such relative judgements to entail the non-existence of these appearances as real properties: their relativism is allied with a type of negative O-dogmatism. That too, if I am right, is Aenesidemean.⁶

Plutarch of Chaeronea

Plutarch (c. 50–c. 120 AD) wrote voluminously on philosophy: the 'Catalogue of Lamprias' mentions 227 volumes, almost 200 of them on philosophical subjects. Of those which survive, some are clearly spurious, while in others the philosophical component is minimal. But several are genuine works of philosophy; and of these some, notably *On Common Conceptions* and *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*, are Academic in tone. If von Arnim is right, they derive directly from Clitomachus, and hence afford us a picture of Carneades' refutational practice—but this is highly speculative.⁷ These texts are anti-Stoic polemic; and as we have seen (Chapter V, 88–9), the Epicureans too come under

Plutarch's fire in *Against Colotes*, which defends Arcesilaus against the 'lazy argument'. We also know he wrote *On the Ten Topics of Pyrrho* (Lamprias 158: see Chapter VII, 121), presumably the Ten Modes (Chapter IX); but we know nothing of Plutarch's treatment of them.

However, Plutarch was a dogmatist in religion, and held strong views on moral virtue, its nature and acquisition. He seems generally concerned to rehabilitate a more genuine and authentic, albeit Pythagorean-influenced, Platonism. His Middle and New Academic tendencies seem confined to his love of refutational argument, a love much in evidence in *On Common Conceptions* and *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*.

The principal target of the latter treatise is Chrysippus—but this affords us no real clue as to the provenance of the arguments it contains, since Chrysippean Stoicism was canonical at the time of Plutarch's writing. Plutarch's treatise has often been thought to lack cohesion, but the analysis of Cherniss (1976, 372–96) shows it to be more coherent than appears at first sight. The principal focus of the first half is on Stoic ethical theory, charging among other things that the doctrines of the unity of the virtues and of the absolute indifference of most human ends, as well as the concept of the Stoic Sage, are incoherent. The bulk of the second half of the treatise (1047e ff.) is devoted to exposing the difficulties involved in reconciling the Stoic notion of divine providence with their views that nothing of intrinsic value comes from the gods and that most human beings live wretched lives (chs 30–7). Moreover, the Stoic account of the overall indestructibility of Zeus and the universe is inconsistent with their physical principles (chs 38–45); finally (chs 46–7) the inviting target of the Stoic account of possibility, necessity, responsibility, freedom, and fate is attacked: how can we give any content to the ideas of human freedom and responsibility if the whole working-out of the universe is settled from the beginning of time by an ineluctable sequence of causes? In the course of his polemic, Plutarch deploys arguments taken from the Epicureans—and there is no reason to doubt that he returned the compliment in the (lost) *On Epicurean Self-Contradictions* by ranging Stoic arguments against the atomists. In short, Plutarch's procedure here is a model of Academic dialectic.

In the attack *On Common Conceptions*, Plutarch concentrates first on ethics, then switches to physics. Some of the same considerations that were pressed into service in *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* reappear here: but the main purpose of the text is to undermine the central Stoic notion of the common conception, *koinē ennoia*, itself. A common conception is not, for the Stoics, to be identified with a commonly-held view: for they hold that the majority of mankind is sunk in a trough of ignorance. Indeed, some common conceptions they allow to be paradoxical, in conflict with the view of the majority. Rather they are supposed to be the logically-tidy general concepts derived as a result of clarifying and sorting out the more basic preconceptions (*prolēpseis*), universals which are available to anybody and everybody. At times in the course of his polemic Plutarch seems to overlook the distinction the Stoics themselves insist upon between common conceptions (which are certainly not for them common human property) and generally-held views. But for all that, Plutarch has a powerful basic case. The Stoics are, after all, empiricists—and they rely, for epistemological justification, on the notion of clarity, *to enarges*. But if the intellectual outcome of their reasoning is to produce doctrines entirely at odds with the natural views of the general run of humanity, what is there to be said,

from an empiricist point of view, for those outcomes? The position is, in many ways, analogous to that of the Democritean battle between reason and the senses (Chapter III: 57, 59); and it invites some of the same rejoinders. But we have no space to pursue them here.

Favorinus of Arles

Favorinus (fl. c. 100 AD) was a colourful figure. He became a member of the Emperor Hadrian's court, but fell out badly with him (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1 8 2), although as he himself put it he lived to tell the tale. The dispute perhaps concerned a petition for exemption from religious duties (ibid. 1 8 3; cf. Dio Cassius 69 3): philosophers were allowed to claim such immunities, as well as tax-breaks, from the Emperors. Favorinus was refused, however, apparently on the grounds that he was not a philosopher (ibid. 1 8 3). He may even have been exiled for his pains. He was also a congenital eunuch; Polemo, another sophist with whom Favorinus quarrelled violently, paints him as a monster of vice: 'no-one is more adept in evil than he who is born without testicles' (ibid. 1 6 5, =T 3 B).⁸ Remarkably, this did not prevent his being prosecuted for adultery.

He was, according to the *Suda* (s.v. 'Favorinos'), polymathic in his interests. He wrote a *Miscellaneous History*, dealing *inter alia* with the history of ideas (he held some peculiar views about Plato: *DL* 3 24, 57), and a *Memorabilia* (*DL* 3 48). Of his philosophical works, besides his treatise on the Ten Modes (see below), we know of an *On Homer as Philosopher*, an *On Socrates and the Art of Love*, *On Plato*, and *On the Regimen of the Philosophers*. He was particularly concerned with matters of style and syntax, at least if the testimony of our main source, the antiquarian **Aulus Gellius** (c. 130–80 AD), is reliable; and much of the rest of what survives is distinctly dogmatic in tone. Favorinus encourages mothers to breast-feed their own children, rather than give them to a wet-nurse, on the grounds that that's what breasts are for, and nursing promotes the strongest form of bonding (Gellius, *Attic Nights* 12 1 1–24). He also apparently concerned himself with questions concerning the moral virtues (cf. ibid. 2 1 3: he wrote an *On Fortitude*), and Gellius at least does not give the impression that these were at all sceptical in tone.

In fact, only a handful of Gellius's reports even hint at a sceptical Favorinus, the most important being several arguments of a Carneadean bent against divination (ibid. 14 1 1–36), one of which (ibid. 8–13) seems unparalleled elsewhere (Chapter XV, 257–8), and a debate with the conservative jurist Sextus Caecilius on the nature of the law, in which Favorinus adopts an appropriately sceptical position on the subject of strict construction (ibid. 20 1 1–55, esp. 4, 9–19): in it, Favorinus explicitly cautions:

don't ask me what *I* think, for you know that, according to the practice of the persuasion to which I belong, I am accustomed rather to inquire than to decide.
(183: Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 20 1 9, =T 47 B)

In his youth, Favorinus associated with Plutarch, who dedicated *On the Primary Cold* to him, concluding which he invites Favorinus in Academic fashion to compare what he has

said with the views of others, and even if it contains little of plausibility by comparison with them, to welcome the opinions in it ‘considering that it is more philosophical to withhold (*epechein*) from giving assent in non-evident matters’.⁹ Plutarch also intriguingly comments:

Favorinus himself was the most remarkable lover of Aristotle in other matters, and he assigned the greatest portion of the plausible to the Peripatos. (184: Plutarch, *Quaestiones Conviviales* 734f.=T 21 B)

Which suggests (as Glucker, 1978, 284, says), that Favorinus was prepared to extend the indubitably Academic concept of the *pithanon* beyond its original context of action-related impressions to the doctrines of the schools themselves.

But the testimony relating most directly to his philosophical orientation, and hence to the question of what became of scepticism in the earlier part of the Roman Empire, comes from Galen’s short treatise *On the Best Method of Teaching*. Galen describes Favorinus as an Academic, and ascribes to him a work entitled *Plutarch*, as well as an *On the Academic Disposition* (*On the Best Method* I 41), but does not greatly concern himself with distinguishing this position from Pyrrhonism. Scholars have consequently tended to consider him as much a Pyrrhonist as an Academic; but this is a mistake, deriving from the fact that he wrote on the Ten Modes (*DL* 9 87; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 11 5 5: see below), and the belief that ‘Academic’ means ‘Platonist’, and the Platonists of the period were dogmatizing Middle Platonists.¹⁰ In fact, Favorinus presents himself as an Academic in the tradition of Arcesilaus and Carneades, and distinguishes between Academicism and Pyrrhonism, even though that distinction may be difficult for the uninitiated to pin down:

(1) those whom we call the Pyrrhonian philosophers are designated by the Greek name *skeptikoi*, which means roughly ‘inquirers’ or ‘investigators’. For they decide nothing and determine nothing, but are always engaged in inquiring and considering whether there is anything which can be decided or considered. (2) Moreover, they do not believe that they clearly see or hear anything, but rather that they undergo and experience a sort of seeing and hearing; but they are in doubt as to the nature and character of those things which cause these affections in them, and they deliberate about them. (3) They declare that in all things assurance and truth seem to be so inapprehensible owing to the mixed and confused signs of truth and falsity, that anyone who is not rash and precipitate in his judgement ought to use the locution which they say was employed by Pyrrho, the founder of this philosophy: ‘it is no more thus rather than so or neither’.¹¹ (4) For they deny that there are signs of each thing and that genuine properties can be known and apprehended, and they try to teach and to show this by means of many Modes. Favorinus has composed upon this subject ten most subtly and keenly argued books, which he called *Pyrrhonian Modes*. (5) But it is an old question, treated of by many Greek writers, whether and to what extent the Pyrrhonians and the Academics differ. Both are called *skeptikoi*, *ephektikoi*, and *aporētikoi*, since they both affirm nothing and think that nothing

is apprehensible. (6) They say that impressions, which they call *phantasiai*, are produced from objects not according to the nature of the objects themselves, but according to the affection of the mind and body of those to whom the affections come. Therefore they call absolutely everything that affects men's senses relative.¹² (7) This expression means that there is nothing which is constituted by itself and has its own power and nature, but that all things are referred to something else, and appear to be such as their appearance is when they appear, and such as they are created¹³ according to our senses to which they come, and not according to the things whence they came. (8) But although the Pyrrhonists and the Academics express themselves very much alike about these matters, yet they are thought to differ from each other in certain respects and especially for this reason, namely that the Academics do (as it were) apprehend the very fact that nothing can be apprehended, and (as it were) decide that nothing can be decided, while the Pyrrhonians say that not even that can in any way be regarded as true, since nothing seems to be true. (185: Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 11 5 1–8, =Fr. 26 B)

Sections (1)–(4) deal with the characterization of Pyrrhonists as sceptics.¹⁴ Section (1) emphasizes what is to be a key feature of Sextan Scepticism, namely that it involves continual inquiry (Chapter II, 13ff.), as well as hinting at its second-order nature—it is an inquiry into inquiry itself. Section (2) is also orthodox for later scepticism, at least if not believing *p* is not tantamount (as it should not be) to believing that not-*p*: the Sceptic does not believe his senses—but he does not disbelieve them either. Furthermore, the language of the second sentence of (2) is suggestive: it does not seek to cast doubt on *the fact that* these impressions are caused, only to undermine any claim to knowing *what* caused them—and that further suggests (although it does not entail) that the scope of the scepticism is limited to the targets offered by an Essential Realism (see Chapter II, 26; Chapter VI, 113; Chapter XVII, 281ff.).

Section (3) attributes '*ou mallon*' to Pyrrho, as did Aristocles (Chapter IV: 77); but there (as I argued) the 'no more' formula covered the first two disjuncts only, leaving the second pair as free-standing alternatives not governed by the *ou mallon*. Here it seems impossible to take the (more restricted) set of disjuncts thus—and the obvious way of interpreting the formula attributed to Pyrrho is such that the *ou mallon* covers *p*, not-*p*, and neither *p* nor not-*p*. Section (4) appears to saddle Pyrrhonists with negative dogmatism; but again it can be read consistently with a consistently radical (in the sense of unrestricted) scepticism: to say that there are no signs of things is to make a claim about the phenomena—none of the things apparent is such as to justify any inference to real properties. That, of course, does not entail that there are no real properties, and hence it does not entail relativism. I suggest that in the interim between Aenesidemus and Aristocles, who took Pyrrho to be a relativist of sorts, and Favorinus there arose a new more radical school of Pyrrhonists who read Pyrrho not as being a relativist, but as an unrestricted sceptic. This accounts for the different handling of the *ou mallon* formula, and Gellius's careful insistence that for the Pyrrhonians things only *seem* to be inapprehensible (185(3)). It is tempting to attribute this new *démarche* to Agrippa (so, effectively, Woodruff, 1988); but we know so little of Agrippa that such an attribution

can really amount to no more than convenient speculation (Chapter X, 182).

Section (5) shows that the problem of distinguishing Academics from Pyrrhonists was a serious one; Gellius begins his examination of this 'old question' by stressing what the two persuasions have in common. First of all (6), both deny that anything satisfies the Principle of Essential Realism (P4 above). Gellius apparently takes that to amount to a type of relativism ((6)–(7)); and (6) apparently ascribes responsibility for the nature of a particular appearance solely to the perceiver, surely too strong a stance for either Academic or Pyrrhonist. But to say that impressions are produced according to individuals' affections is not necessarily to deny that they may themselves have some external cause. In particular (7) seems to espouse a relativism of properties (in the manner of 182): but Gellius is here concerned to emphasize both the similarities and the differences between Pyrrhonist and Academic; and on the face of it both of them make relativistic moves. The difference is spelled out in (8): while Academics commit themselves (in a sense that allows them to escape the charge of self-refutation: hence Gellius's 'as it were's)¹⁵ to second-order truths, the Pyrrhonists will not even do that.

Epictetus and Favorinus

Galen reports (*On the Best Method of Teaching* I 41 Kühn) that Favorinus wrote an *Against Epictetus*, a dialogue ironically placed in the mouth of Plutarch's slave Onesimus, which suggests that there was indeed an active debate between the Stoics and Academics of the time. That impression is confirmed by a passage from **Epictetus** (fl. c. 100 AD) himself. In his *Discourses* 2 20, a polemic directed against both Academics and Epicureans, Epictetus presses versions of the familiar charge of incoherence. First of all, he claims, there is no greater proof of the universality of some principle if people are found to be compelled to employ it even in denying it (*Discourses* 1 20 1–2). Academics are committed to urging that one should know that nothing should be known; they ask to be believed that nothing is to be believed; they teach that nothing can be taught; and claim to prove that there is no such thing as proof (ibid. 3–5: cf. 189). Thus Academic scepticism is logically self-refuting, for quasi-transcendental reasons of a type similar to those deployed by Aristotle in support of the Principle of Non-Contradiction in *Metaph.* 4 4–5.

Later he presses the argument for its being operationally self-refuting as well: 'When you eat, where do you put your hand: to your mouth or your eye? When you bathe, where do you go?' (*Discourses* 2 28). He imagines himself as such a man's slave, who, having anointed him with pickled hot sauce instead of oil, says 'Really Sir, it seemed so like oil as to be indistinguishable from it'; and likewise serving vinegar instead of soup.

Epictetan Stoicism is a pale shadow of the earlier school's intellectual glories; and his 'arguments' amount to little more than pious exhortations and apothegms. However, he clearly feared the morally deleterious influence, as he saw it, of Scepticism:

they take not the least care what they say, nor on what subjects, nor to whom, nor what may be the consequence of their talk—whether any well-disposed young man, on hearing such doctrines, may not be affected by them, and so

affected as entirely to lose the seeds of his good disposition; whether they may not furnish an adulterer with occasions of growing shameless in his guilt; whether a public plunderer may not find excuses from these doctrines; whether he who neglects his parents may not gain an additional audacity from this teaching. (186: Epictetus, *Discourses* 2 20 34–5)

Epictetus played Cato to Favorinus's Carneades. In spite of 186's sermonizing tone, Epictetus may have mounted a more serious argument against Favorinus; and Galen wrote an *On Behalf of Epictetus against Favorinus* (now lost), which at least suggests that the argument may have been couched elsewhere in more philosophical terms.

Galen and Sceptical Epistemology

Galen (129–c. 210–15 AD) was no friend of scepticism (although he had early nearly fallen prey to Pyrrhonism: *On his Own Books* XIX 40 Kühn): Pyrrhonian Sceptics are mentioned several times in his voluminous *œuvre*, invariably contemptuously.¹⁶ He believed passionately that certain knowledge could be achieved *via* self-evidently true basic propositions derived (although not without effort) from the evidence of the senses suitably supplemented by reason. That is, he adopted something like the standard Peripatetic-influenced Middle Platonist epistemology.¹⁷ The senses are not infallible: but suitably trained, and controlled by reason, they can allow us to construct a positive picture of the world. In *On the Distinction of Pulses* (VIII 776–86 Kühn) Galen ridicules those who refuse to rely on what is clearly apparent, saying 'that touch perceives the artery expanding, but it is impossible to know with certainty whether it really expands', on the grounds that perception can be deceptive; even Timon declares that we must follow *the phainomena* (ibid. 781:94, Fr. 69 Ds; Chapter IV, 70).

Moreover, ordinary life will be impossible for anyone who doubts such evidences:¹⁸ when the sun clearly appears to have risen, or a ship clearly to have put into land, they will remain in bed uncertain as to whether it really is day or night, and refuse to disembark puzzling over whether what appears to be land really is so (ibid. 782–3). Yet they say they are not quarrelling about phenomena, which they claim to trust in so far as it is useful to do so, but only about the essential natures of things: in that case, Galen replies, he cannot see the point of the dispute. Instead of saying¹⁹ that after the rains the river rose and destroyed the bridge, you may if you wish speak of the apparent rain, the seeming river, the apparent rise, and the seeming destruction; but anyone actually talking that phenomenalist language would simply be taken to be insane (ibid. 784).

Galen's attack is twofold: either the Sceptics are serious, in which case they will stay in bed or aboard ship, and life will become impossible for them; or they are not, and their phenomenalist language amounts simply to a trivial linguistic reformulation betokening no real doctrinal differences: the two supposedly distinct ways of looking at things will be pragmatically equivalent. Thus Galen seeks to impale the Pyrrhonists on the horns of a dilemma—either their essential anti-realism is a mere semantic move, having no effect on ordinary life, in which case it is empty; or it does, as the Sceptics themselves allege, have substantial implications for one's beliefs—in which case, in a familiar way, it renders life

impossible. In order to survive, the Pyrrhonists are Dogmatists *malgré eux*.

This is of a piece with his view (noted above, Chapter VI, 110) that the Stoic and Academic epistemologies are pragmatically equivalent. The only liveable epistemology will be practically indiscernible from one which involves belief—hence it too must, in some suitably behaviourist sense, involve belief, in spite of what its practitioners claim. That attack is more sophisticated than any we have seen so far on the coherence of the life without belief. I think that ultimately it fails—but the reasons for that failure must wait on Chapter XVIII.

Galen and Favorinus

In *On the Best Method of Teaching*, Galen sets out to dispute Favorinus's claim that the Academics offered the best philosophical training to their pupils²⁰ by teasing out the contradictions between different aspects of his practice. Favorinus exhorts his pupils to practise *isostheneia* by producing arguments of equal weight on either side of a question (ibid. I 40–1 Kühn), and maintains that this is the best method of teaching; but he also encourages them to choose the better (in the sense of 'more persuasive') among them (ibid. 41). Sometimes his suspension of judgement (*epochē*) is so extreme that he refuses to allow that the sun is apprehensible (ibid. 40); yet elsewhere he ascribes knowledge to his pupils even without teaching them its criterion (ibid. 40–1). In his *Alcibiades*²¹ he takes sides with one or other of his Academic predecessors when they dispute about arguments—yet he says it seems plausible to him that nothing is *katalēpton*; while in his *Plutarch* he apparently allows that there are things which are securely known (*bebaiōs gnōston*: ibid. 41), which Galen takes to be equivalent to *katalēpton* (ibid. 42).

Thus Favorinus is forced to dogmatize in spite of himself, and hence his position lapses into incoherence. At least 'the older ones'²² were consistent in their pursuit of *epochē*; Favorinus wavers between asserting that absolutely nothing is knowable and claiming to be able to teach things. There are obvious replies to be made here on behalf of Favorinian scepticism; Galen too quickly dismisses as inconsistent a position which seeks to marry a methodology of dialectical opposition with a limited acceptance of moderate belief. It is, after all, Galen who says that 'securely known (*bebaiōs gnōston*)' must be equivalent to *katalēpton*;²³ indeed, he only writes that it *seems* that Favorinus accepts that some things are securely known.

Next Galen appeals to the fact that

we think we see, hear, or in general perceive some things, as in dreams or madneses, while other things we not only think we see or perceive but actually do; and in the case of the second class everyone (except Academics and Pyrrhonians) thinks they have come to secure knowledge, and considers every image formed by the soul while asleep or struck by madness to be false. (187: Galen, *On the Best Method* I 42 Kühn,=Fr. 28 B [part])

Galen's claim is conditional: everyone believes that *if* they are awake, untouched by madness, etc., *then* their perceptions are veridical; that is compatible with our doubting in

specific cases whether we are awake or dreaming, sober or drunk, lucid or delirious. Call this the Conditional Conception of Veridicality, or CC. Moreover, he takes the Academic and Pyrrhonist (treated here indiscriminately) not merely to be denying that we can ever know when the antecedent of CC is satisfied—rather they are committed to the altogether stronger position that even if it were, we should still give no more weight to the impressions of a sane and sober man than to those of a raving lunatic. The denial of CC is not attested for the Academics; but *PH* 1 100–17 (esp. 102–4), the Fourth Mode of scepticism, shows that the Pyrrhonists did advance it (Chapter IX, 169–71). The argument undertakes to establish that there can be no uncontroversially ‘natural’ state with which the Dogmatist can ground his claim that impressions of objects that come to people ‘in a natural state’ are veridical; the concepts of ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ are themselves relative: for a sick man, being sick is the natural state, and hence the impressions that come to him are natural *qua* sick. Likewise with sleeping and waking:

[they] give rise to different impressions, since the things we form images of while asleep we do not form images of when awake, nor *vice versa*; so that whether these things exist (*einai*) or not is not something unconditional, but is relative, relative to sleep and waking. So it seems plausible that when asleep we see things that, although they are non-existent (*anuparkta*) to the waking state, are not absolutely non-existent things; since they exist in our sleep in just the same way as waking things exist, although they do not exist in sleep. (188: *PH* 1 104)

There is a sense in which nothing can be said to a scepticism this broad in scope. But Galen offers an argument: if things really are as Favorinus says, and the sane are no more to be trusted than the mad, then there can be no criteria of truth at all, and it will be thus impossible to determine whether the arguments for the opposing positions really do have equal weight. The Sceptic’s search for *isostheneia* requires him to satisfy criteria which the argument itself shows to be inapprehensible—hence the position self-refutes.

The Sceptics have replies to that general strategy, and Sextus at least was untroubled by self-refutation.²⁴ But Galen switches tack here, asking, as a Dogmatist, how he is meant to take Favorinus’s arguments (ultimately drawn from Carneades and earlier Academics: *On the Best Method* I 45 Kühn): is he (a) simply being prodded to accept them, or is he (b) supposed to examine them to see if they are true? If (a), then this is not argument but coercion; but how can he satisfy (b) unless there is either some natural criterion or some method of judging truth and falsity in argument (*ibid.* I 46)? But there cannot be a natural criterion for this, since people get taken in by sophisms; hence there must exist some method (of logical analysis); but one can’t expect to get that from an Academic.

Favorinus, Galen asserts, incoherently claims to have a method of teaching (*ibid.* I 40), when teaching involves knowledge which Favorinus’s own position eschews:

Favorinus seems to have done something equivalent to saying that although Dio is blind none the less he can tell which of us is dirtier and which cleaner, not knowing that anyone who is to judge this sort of thing needs to be sighted. (189:

On the Best Method I 51 Kühn; for a similar Stoic charge, cf. *M* 7 260; and see 159)

Galen accepts that there are natural criteria for judging sense-perceptions (although not arguments), which themselves ground the development of artificial criteria (such as the ruler and so on),²⁵ and the success of the arts or skills (*technai*) founded upon them is itself testimony to their basic reliability:

man has created these things starting from natural organs and criteria, beyond which we have no more venerable or reliable criterion. We must start from here. Mind (*nous*) tells us that while it is possible to trust or distrust our natural criterion, it is not possible to judge it by means of something else. For how could this thing, by which all others are judged, be judged by something else? (190: Galen, *On the Best Method* I 49 Kühn, =Fr. 28 B [part]; cf. 59)

Moreover, if you doubt your senses when they tell you, in ideal conditions, that something is an apple or a fig, and the reports of one sense are corroborated by those of another, then there is no point in any further argument. Galen concedes that scepticism is logically possible—but in common with many modern treatments of the issue, he holds it to be sterile. The sceptical victory is won at the cost of destroying all rational discourse; his success is not merely Pyrrhonian—it is Pyrrhic too. We shall see in the final chapters what the Pyrrhonists have to say in response to these charges.

Lucian and the Second Sophistic

Philostratus, in his *Lives of the Sophists*, refers to a ‘Second Sophistic’,²⁶ a second-century AD re-emergence of the activities associated with the much-reviled fifth-century BC rhetorical and forensic movement, with which Favorinus was associated. Not mentioned by Philostratus, but clearly linked with the movement in style and temperament, is **Lucian of Samosata**, who wrote in the latter part of the second century. Two of his works are of particular importance for us. First, there is the humorous dialogue *Philosophies for Sale*, in which Zeus and Hermes conduct an auction of philosophy to an eager Attic buyer; the sale gives the representative of each school the opportunity to describe its characteristics in satirically-drawn colours. The last item to be knocked down is a Sceptic called, pointedly, Pyrrhias:

Buyer: Tell me, what do you know? *Pyrrhias*: Nothing. *B*: What do you mean? *P*: That nothing at all seems to me to exist. *B*: So we don’t exist? *P*: I don’t know that. *B*: Not even that you exist yourself? *P*: I know that even less. *B*: What an *aporia*! What do you use these scales for? *P*: I weigh arguments in them and make them balance one another; and when I see they are perfectly like and of equal weight, then I do not know which is the truer. *B*: What else are you competent to do? *P*: Everything except catch a runaway slave. *B*: Why can’t you do that? *P*: Because, my friend, I cannot apprehend anything. *B*: I’m not

surprised: you look pretty slow and idle to me. But what is the end of your wisdom? *P*: Ignorance, and neither hearing nor seeing anything. *B*: You mean you are blind and deaf? *P*: Yes; and unjudging and unfeeling to boot—in general no better than a worm. *B*: Then I'll buy you for that reason. How much is he worth? *Hermes*: An Attic mina. *B*: Take it. Now what have you to say, my man? Have I bought you? *P*: That is non-evident. *B*: No it isn't: I bought you for ready cash. *P*: I am suspending judgement on that, and investigating it. *B*: Come along, follow me, as befits a slave. *P*: Who knows if what you say is true? *B*: The herald, the mina, and everyone else here. *P*: Is there anyone else here? *B*: I'm going to throw you into the mill and convince you by using the worse argument!
²⁷ *P*: Suspend judgement on it. *B*: No, by God, I have already affirmed it. (191: Lucian, *Philosophies for Sale*)

Lucian is evidently familiar with Pyrrhonist technical terminology; and he presents a Pyrrhonism no doubt exaggerated for the sake of comedy. Pyrrhias, who is portrayed as a peculiarly irritating individual, doubts the existence of absolutely everything, himself included; he adopts *akatalēpsia*; and Lucian pokes fun at Pyrrhias's claim to be an investigator. This is knockabout stuff, and hence of limited evidential value. But it represents the plain man's version of Galen's exasperation with the extremes of Pyrrhonism.

More substantial is Lucian's dialogue *Hermotimus*,²⁸ in which Lycinus, a sceptic, argues with Hermotimus, a Stoic of twenty years' standing, against the rationality of adhering to any particular school, supporting instead the view that an ordinary way of life is the most likely to lead to satisfaction. The argument is basically a simple one. The philosophical schools evidently differ from one another in their tenets and prescriptions (*Hermotimus* 14); hence if one is to be chosen rationally over the others one needs to find some criterion with which to judge their relative excellences (*ibid.* 19–20); but no such criterion exists (29–34), and hence any such preference would be mere rashness. In any case, no-one has actually tried all philosophies out and is thus able to offer an informed opinion: it would take too long (45–6). But even supposing that we could test them all, how would we know when we had found the right one (65–6)? Evidently it is no good trusting a layman's judgement: we need the opinion of a philosophical expert (68–9), someone who really can tell the true coin from the counterfeit. But how are we to tell which he is?

(1) even if we were to find someone who professes knowledge of the art of demonstration and the ability to teach it to another, we will not, I think, believe him immediately, but we will seek out someone capable of judging whether the man speaks truly. But even if we find him, it will be non-evident to us whether our arbiter knows how to distinguish the one who judges rightly or not, so we will, I think, need another arbiter for this one. (2) For how could we ourselves know how to judge the best judger? You see how this stretches out *ad infinitum*, and cannot be stopped or arrested? (3) For you will see that the proofs themselves, such as you are able to find, are disputed and have nothing certain about them. Most of them try and compel belief on the basis of assumptions

equally disputed, while others tack on the most obscure things to those which are self-evident, things which have nothing to do with them, and then say that they have demonstrations for them in this way, just as if someone thinks that they can prove that gods exist on the grounds that there seem to be altars to them. (192: Lucian, *Hermotimus* 70)

Lucian's argument calls into question our ability to discern expertise in philosophy (cf. Anacharsis: Chapter III, 35–6); but it is implicitly far more general than that. Moreover, 192 deploys some of the most devastating weapons in the later sceptics' strategic arsenal. Section (2) anticipates the Infinite Regress Mode of Agrippa (Chapter X, 188–9); while (3) hints at the Hypothetical Mode from the same collection. Finally, another passage (74) notes that mere mutual coherence of beliefs and assumptions is not enough to show their truth, a view supported by an attack on the demonstrative status of geometry that powerfully recalls that of Sextus (*M* 3 1–2, 11: see Chapter XVI; cf. IV: 95). Lucian argues, effectively, that either one's assumptions will remain simply postulates, or they will be mutually entailing. If the former, then the Hypothetical Mode will come into force (nothing can be proved on the basis of assumptions which are themselves unproven and dubious: *PH* 1 168); but if the latter then at best the proofs will be circular—but by the Fifth Mode of Agrippa, circular proof is no proof at all (*PH* 1 169: Chapter X, 187–8).

Lucian's *Hermotimus* is the product of an environment familiar with a mature and powerful form of Scepticism, in short, the Scepticism of Sextus Empiricus. It is to that, and to an examination of Pyrrhonism's mature structure, that we now turn.

Book II

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IX

The Ten Modes of Scepticism

Our story has taken us from the beginnings of epistemology in pre-Classical Ionia to the splendours of the second-century AD Roman Empire. Sextus Empiricus, our best and most complete source for Greek scepticism, belongs roughly to this period;¹ and here we shall abandon the historical mode of treatment. The remainder of this study will consist of a topically-ordered exposition and analysis of Sextan Scepticism.

The Ten Modes: Sources and Structure

The goal of sceptical philosophy, according to Sextus, is *ataraxia*, the state of tranquillity which is supposed to attend the purgation of all cares and concerns (*PH* 1 8, 12, 18, 25–30, etc.), although this is not peculiar to the Sceptics.² *Ataraxia*, on their view (*PH* 1 25–30), supervenes upon suspension of judgement (*epochē*) as to the real nature of things; and *epochē* is induced by the fact that conflicting appearances are the subject of undecidable disputes (*diaphōniai anepikritoi*: *PH* 1 31–5).

The Sceptic considers the appearances, finds none worthy of credence, and suspends judgement. The fundamental arguments, or argument-schemata, with which the Sextan Sceptic promotes the undecidability of things are the Ten Modes of Scepticism, usually ascribed to Aenesidemus (however, see Chapter VII, 120–21). They are preserved by three ancient sources. Apart from Sextus, Diogenes offers a briefer and less sophisticated account (*DL* 9 78–88); and the earliest version of all, although incomplete (it contains only eight Modes), is owed to **Philo of Alexandria** (c. 30 BC–c. 45 AD), a Jewish philosopher and writer of religious commentaries, in his *On Drunkenness (De Ebrietate)* 169–202 (the intoxication in question is the source of Noah’s shameful exhibitionism: Genesis 9 21). There is also Aristocles’ brief notice, already glanced at in connection with Aenesidemus (Chapter VII, 122:162); and a short report in the bizarre mediaeval compilation ascribed to ‘Herrenius’, clearly deriving from the same source as Philo.³ We will concentrate on Sextus’s account in *PH* 1 36–163, supplemented where philosophically relevant by Diogenes and Philo.⁴

The arguments of the Ten Modes share a basic form:

- [A] (1) x appears F relative to a ;
 (2) x appears F^* relative to b ;
 (3) at most one of the appearances of (1) and (2) can be true;
 (4) no decision procedure tells decisively either for (1) or (2);

so

(5) we should suspend judgement as to what x is like in its real nature (*phusei, kata tēn phusin*).

That argument⁵ is not formally valid; but its premisses, if true, provide a powerful incentive to acceptance of the conclusion. At all events, if (A1)–(A4) hold, it is hard to see how we could be rationally justified in still making claims about *x*'s nature.

[A] is couched in terms of relativity because Sextus himself holds that the mode from relativity (which also, confusingly, figures as the Eighth Mode in his account) is in some sense architectonic for all the others (*PH* 1 39). Furthermore, under the basic genus of relativity there are three further species of Mode: from the judger, from the thing judged, and from both, of which the Ten are sub-species. It is not clear how this structural hierarchy is supposed to work out; it appears only in Sextus, and as Annas and Barnes (1985, 25–6) remark, it is not 'a very vigorous growth' even there. But however that may be, [A] supplies the general form for all the Modes; and they are to be distinguished according to what goes in the variable places *a* and *b*. Thus in the First Mode, the substituends will be animal species ('oil is pleasant to men, unpleasant to bees': *PH* 1 55); in the Second, different individual human beings, or different races ('The sun warms you, but chills Demophon, Alexander's butler': *PH* 1 82); in the Third, different sensory modalities; and so on. As for the variables labelled *F* and *F**, the relation between them must in general be one of incompatibility: they must be either contradictory or contrary properties.

Sextus spends most of his time establishing instances of conflict, finding examples of (A1) and (A2). Once that is done, he thinks, the rest of the argument will go through unproblematically, since for each mode it will be identical in form. He does, however, make some remarks about the considerations that lead from (A1) and (A2) via (A3) and (A4) to (A5). I shall begin by looking at them.

After running through a variety of examples supposed to show that we have no right to assume that things appear the same way to animals as they do to us, Sextus writes:

(1) if the same things appear different owing to the variation in animals, we will be able to say how they are seen by us, but we shall suspend judgement as to how they are in their nature (*pros tēn phusin*). For we cannot ourselves judge between our impressions and those of the other animals, since we are ourselves part of the dispute (*diaphōnia*), and are consequently more in need of a judge than able ourselves to pass judgement. (2) Furthermore, we are unable to compare favourably our own impressions with those of the irrational animals either with or without proof, since in addition to there possibly being no such thing as proof, the alleged proof will itself be either evident or non-evident. (3) If non-evident, we will not accept it with conviction; while if evident to us, since we are investigating as to what is evident to animals and the proof is evident to us as animals, then it must itself be investigated into to see whether it truly is as it appears to be. (4) And it is absurd to try to establish the matter under investigation by means of something also under investigation, since the same thing will then be both trustworthy and untrustworthy, trustworthy in so far as it purports to prove, untrustworthy in so far as it requires proof, which is impossible. Thus we will not have a proof which allows us to compare our own impressions favourably with those of the allegedly irrational animals. (5) So if the impressions are different owing to the variation in animals and are

impossible of judgement, we must suspend judgement as to the external objects.
(193: *PH* 1 59–61, =72B LS [part])

193 presents the considerations which push the Pyrrhonist from the fact of conflicting appearances to *epochē* regarding the real natures of things: and crucially they involve appeal to the sophisticated methodological Modes of Agrippa (Chapter X). Sextus is perfectly well aware that the mere facts of conflict will not on their own induce the appropriate sceptical attitude, since other reactions to them are possible.

The scepticism advocated here is Essential in form (Chapter II, 26): 193(1) argues that the *natures* of things are inapprehensible. And if 193(5) seems to hint at a stronger, Existential, scepticism, that is to be explained as carelessness or compression on Sextus's part. We are to suspend judgement not as to whether objects exist, but as to what they are like in their nature. If we are presented with conflicting propositions of the form of (A1) and (A2), at most one of them can be a guide to the real nature of the object. That is, Sextus wants to interpret (A3) as being a claim about the real natures of things; and it is underwritten by appeal to some sort of ontological principle of non-contrariety:

(PNC) it is impossible for any x genuinely to bear contrary properties F and F^* .

PNC is familiar from Plato (*Rep.* 4 436a) and Aristotle (*Metaph.* 4 3, 1005b 19–22); and as both Plato and Aristotle realized, PNC needs qualification—clearly a ball can be both black and white if it is striped, and both in motion and at rest if it is spinning on the spot. Thus they qualify PNC with riders like ‘in the same respect’, ‘at the same time’, ‘with the same part’, ‘in relation to the same thing’. And so interpreted, PNC does indeed seem rationally compelling: it is hard to see how a ball could be completely black and entirely white, both spinning and not spinning. If PNC is adopted, and given some principle of empiricism such as

(PE) the only possible guide to the real properties of x are the appearances x presents (cf. 28: Chapter III),

then, if x does present contrary appearances ((A1) and (A2)), and there is no way of deciding which among them is to be preferred (as (A4) has it), then (A5) may well seem in order. But as it stands PE is hopelessly vague: what counts as being a ‘guide’ to the real properties of things? Why should any sophisticated empiricist feel that adherence to some version of PE carried any sceptical threat? After all, PE is (in this form) a perfectly general commonplace of empirical science. So how can Sextus move from PE to (A4)?

First of all, the Sceptics seek to construe PE as

(PE*) the only possible guide furnished by x 's F -appearance is to x 's real F -ness.

PE* specifies more precisely than PE how the guidance is supposed to work—and it rules out the possibility of inferring to deep structural properties radically different in kind from any surface phenomenal property. Democritus adopted a limited version of PE: the mind

has to take its start from the evidence of the senses (59:68 B 125 DK). But he thought that the real atomic nature of the world was radically different from the phenomenal face it wears. To hold PE* is precisely to reject that possibility. Now, if it is the case that (A1) and (A2) hold, while PNC rules out the possibility of their both *genuinely* holding, and PE* tells us that, if the phenomena are to be guides to reality at all, they must be guides to a reality strongly isomorphic with the phenomena, then (A3) is established (where ‘true’ means ‘genuinely true of the object’). Hence we need to examine the plausibility of (A4).

Suppose x appears F to you, non- F to me. We examine our appearances, and decide that their conflict is non-trivial (we aren’t each looking at opposite sides of a two-tone ball, for instance), hence that our dispute concerns apparently contrary properties of such a kind as to run counter to PNC were the appearances both genuine. At most one of the appearances can be true (in the sense discerned above); we cannot simply adopt the promiscuous Protagorean procedure of happily embracing both (Chapter III, 42–5). But if that is right, we need to decide which of (A1) and (A2) is in fact the more reliable guide consistent with PE*. But how can we do that? Each of us is a party to the dispute—if I simply prefer my own appearance because it is mine, then I violate a basic judicial principle.

But to what could we appeal to settle the issue? 193(2) offers a dilemma: we prefer a ’s appearance to b ’s either (a) with or (b) without proof. If (b), then our preference is unmotivated, and not worthy of rational acceptance. But if (a), we will be invoking a procedure which is itself controversial, since the ‘proof’ will either be (c) evident or (d) not (193(3)); if (d) then not worthy of credence; but if (c) then it will itself form one of the objects supposedly under investigation (since what is at issue is the discrimination between different conflicting evident things). Sextus’s argument is clever, perhaps too clever. The sense in which proofs are sometimes taken to be evident is that they are *self-evident*: no-one understanding their terms could fail to accept them. They are not, then, mere appearances; and Sextus’s argument trades on that ambiguity.

But his argument can be repaired: for no Sceptic will accept that there are such self-evident facts. A key part of the Sceptical procedure, programmatically laid out in *PH* 1 31–4 (see Chapter II, 29–30), is precisely to point to the universality of disagreement; that is (borrowing from Chapter VII: 129), they rely on the ontological principles

(P2) x is F by nature if and only if x is F non-relatively;

and

(P3) x is F by nature if and only if for any observer O x appears F to O ;

and deny that anything as a matter of fact satisfies (P3). Indeed, they really only require the weaker Heraclitean⁶

(P1) $(\forall p)(p$ is trustworthy if and only if p appears true to everyone).

If P1 fails to be satisfied, as Sextus continually argues it does, then we can have no

confidence in the objective basis of any of our appearances. Now, P1 applies to proof as much as to anything else: there are no self-evident canons of proof. But neither can we establish such canons—for they would necessarily invoke the concept itself (cf. *PH* 2 134 ff.: Chapter XI, 209ff.), and thus beg the question.

It is important to see that the sceptical conclusion (A5) follows from the facts of conflict only if these assumptions, or others similar to them, are invoked—and if one accepts PNC as a regulative condition on genuine predication. It is only under those circumstances that the route to Protagorean relativism (and its ontological Heraclitean cousin) is blocked. Moreover, PE* excludes the Democritean path. Is Scepticism then fatally flawed, relying on Dogmatic assumptions (as Aristocles alleged: **161**)? As usual, the Sceptic has a ready answer. Sextan Scepticism is radical, in the sense that there is no privileged meta-level of judgement immune from sceptical attack. Hence, if anyone were to say that the premisses of [A] were equally compatible with relativism, Heracliteanism, and Democriteanism, the Sceptic can perfectly happily agree—but will then point out that the dispute between Heraclitus, Democritus, and the relativists is itself undecidable. Effectively, Democritus rejects PE* while accepting PNC; Heraclitus accepts PE*, but, since he rejects PNC, is able to hold that we can indeed know things about objects and their properties, consistent with PE*; while Protagoras refuses to move beyond the phenomenal level at all in view of the conflict between PNC and PE*, claiming that appearances *are* the objects. But, given this dispute and its supposed undecidability (to ground its undecidability, the Sceptics will simply redeploy the arguments for (A3) and (A4)), the only safe position is suspension of judgement.

But, one might object, P1 is an extraordinarily strong, and hence extremely implausible, principle. Why must we insist that absolutely everyone agree, including dreamers and madmen, before we are to accept a particular claim as trustworthy? Sextus tackles this issue at *PH* 1 87–9:

(1) while we are no doubt able to say what each thing appears to be, relative to each difference, we are unable to say what it is in its real nature. (2) For we shall have to believe all men or some. But if we believe all, we shall be attempting the impossible and accepting contradictions; and if some only, let us be told whose views we are to endorse. ‘Plato’s’, the Platonist will say, ‘Epicurus’s’, the Epicurean, and equally for all the rest. And so, by their undecidable conflict, we shall be brought around to *epochē*. (3) Furthermore, he who says we should assent to the majority view is making a childish proposal, since no-one can visit the whole of humanity and determine what pleases all of them; and there may well be races of which we know nothing. (**194**: *PH* 1 87–9, =72C LS [part: immediately follows **201**])

The last clause invokes the Micawber Policy (Chapter II, 30); even if we can, *per impossibile*, poll the whole of mankind as we know it, there may well be other tribes as yet undiscovered with radically different appreciations of things (a thought which has I suppose been borne out by modern anthropology). No sample, Sextus is saying, will be large enough to rule out the possibility that what is now a majority view may end up in the minority; and, if this is temporally open-ended, that seems true. Sextus, in effect,

relies on a particular case of the fallibility of statistically-based judgements of frequency and size. One may appeal either to ‘experts’ or to the majority: but expert testimony is conflicting and motivated by personal interest (cf. Anacharsis’s argument: *M* 7 55–9, Chapter III, 35–6), while in the case of the majority we can never know for sure whether we even have a majority on our hands at all.

Sextus merely attacks the feasibility of forming an accurate assessment of the majority view; he does not canvas the further possibility of a genuine majority judgement being wrong. Presumably, if there is some actual fact of the matter in dispute, then it is at least logically possible that all of the people might be fooled all of the time. Why imagine that the view of the majority, if it could be ascertained, would be reliable? Perhaps Sextus feels he simply has no need of further argument here, having already effectively dealt with the feasibility of making such appeals. But that would be unlike Sextus—his method consists in piling argument upon argument, even where the subsequent arguments might appear to be redundant. The likeliest explanation is that he is here working within the framework supplied by Dogmatist ideas of justification, and he feels that he needs only to show how they fail in their own terms.

The ‘Modes from the Judger’

(a) *The First Mode*

I will describe the Modes through which *epochē* is induced making a firm statement neither about their number nor their power, since it is possible that some may be worthless and that there may be more than those mentioned. (195: *PH* 1 35,=72A LS [part])

With that typically Sceptical disavowal, Sextus begins his detailed presentation of the Modes. The first Four form a sequence. In the First, humans are compared with other animals; in the Second, humans with other humans; in the Third, different sense-modalities (in the same human) are contrasted; while the Fourth invokes the effect of different ‘circumstances’ (*peristaseis*) on the deliverances of the same sense-modality.

The overall strategy of the First Mode is to establish that things appear differently, or more precisely that it is probable that they appear differently, to animals of different kinds. The material used is ancient—Aristotle knew of such appeals to differential animal perception (55: Chapter III.); the twist lies in its deployment to Sceptical rather than relativist ends. However, Sextus begins curiously by invoking differences of animal reproduction:

(1) first...is the argument according to which animals, depending on their mutual differences, are not impressed by the same appearances from the same things. We infer this both from the differences in the ways they are produced and from the variation in the composition of their bodies. (2) In the case of the

ways they are produced, this is because some animals are produced asexually and some as a result of intercourse. (3) Of those produced asexually, some are produced from fire like the mites that appear in furnaces, some from stagnant water like mosquitoes, some from souring wine like gnats, some from earth,⁷ some from slime like frogs, some from donkeys like dung-beetles,⁸ some from green vegetables like caterpillars, some from fruits like the gall-insects that come from wild figs, some from rotting animals like bees from bulls and wasps from horses. (4) Of the animals generated sexually, most come from parents of the same kind, but others such as mules come from parents of different kinds. Again, some animals are born alive, like humans, some as eggs, like birds, and some as flesh, like bears. (5) It is likely that these differences and dissimilarities in generation should produce great differences in ways of being affected which in turn should produce divergence, disharmony, and conflict. (196: *PH* 1 41–3, =72B LS [part])

In 196(5) Sextus gives no justification for his claim that it is ‘likely’ (*eikos*) that such reproductive differences should result in differences in the way in which animals perceive things—and one does not leap to the eye. Philo’s (*Ebr.* 171) brief account mentions reproduction but once: and he makes nothing more of it.⁹ Annas and Barnes (1985, 39–40) discern a slightly more lucid argument in Diogenes:

(1) First is the mode depending on the differences among animals with regard to pleasure and pain and harm and advantage. Through this it is inferred that different appearances are produced by the same things, and *epochē* follows upon this kind of conflict. (2) Some animals are produced asexually like fire-creatures, the Arabian phoenix, and worms; others after coition like humans and the rest. (3) And some have one kind of constitution, others another. Hence they differ in their perception too—hawks have very acute eyesight, dogs very keen smell. (4) It is reasonable, therefore, that the appearances presented to animals of different kinds should themselves be different. (5) Vine-shoots are edible by goats, but bitter to humans, hemlock nourishes quails but is fatal to humans, and dung is edible for pigs but not horses. (197: *DL* 9 79–80)

Annas and Barnes take Diogenes to be arguing from differences in modes of reproduction to differences in physical constitution; and thence to differences in affect. That requires some work to make it remotely plausible; but it would explain why reproductive considerations figure first in both presentations. But I cannot find that argument in 197. In 197(1), Diogenes presents the argument as moving simply from alleged differences in appetitive behaviour to differences in appearance. The reproductive considerations seem, as they do in Sextus, to be merely tacked on; there is no inferential particle linking 197(2) and (3), as one would expect if the argument really were articulated in the manner Annas and Barnes claim.

Can anything be done to repair it? ‘As it stands’, Annas and Barnes rightly remark, ‘it seems...to have not the slightest force’ (1985, 41). First of all, the Sceptics are here working with a broad notion of ‘appearance’: it ranges beyond perceptual appearances to

embrace evaluative impressions as well. Thus a *phantasia* can be more than something's simply seeming red, or fast-moving: it can involve its seeming edible, or threatening, or repulsive. All of these evaluative features are directly bound up for the Greeks in the perception itself. It is important to see that this extension of the range of the concept of appearance does not involve reconstruing appearance as judgemental rather than phenomenal—indeed, this is precisely what allows the Sceptics to couch all their arguments at the phenomenal level, and hence to avoid being committed to beliefs (cf. **181**; Chapter XVII, 286ff.).

Thus the facts of differential appetitive behaviours are taken to indicate that animals have different affections—because they will behave differently in the same circumstances only if those circumstances affect them differently. Hence the fact (if it is one) that pigs like eating dung shows that dung presents itself to pigs as being edible, as it does not to humans. At *PH* 1 55–9, Sextus runs through a set of examples of just this sort: perfume pleases humans but not bees; olive oil is good for us, but destroys wasps; fish like drinking sea-water, but humans do not (the original is Heraclitean: cf. **42**,=Fr. 22 B 61 DK); oak twigs paralyse vipers but are harmless to us.¹⁰

Provided, then, that one accepts that evident differences in appetition are evidence for differences in appearance (as they plausibly are for a broad construe of 'appearance'), one can infer that animals have different impressions of the same objects. But why think that differences in reproductive mode will occasion differences in the appearances? Only animals that reproduce sexually are likely to find other animals sexually attractive. And sexual attractiveness is a matter of appearance.

But Sextus is not apparently concerned with appearances of that sort. From *PH* 1 44–55, Sextus collects cases of apparent differential *perceptual* appearance among animals, beginning with vision (ibid. 44–9), and proceeding through touch and hearing (ibid. 50), smell (ibid. 51), and taste (ibid. 52). His aim is to establish on the analogy with various types of deviant human experience the probability that animals, whose conditions match those of the deviant humans, will perceive things differently from us. Thus, if people with jaundice see things yellow,¹¹ or those with bloodshot eyes see them red, then animals whose eyes are naturally in this condition are likely to be affected permanently in this way (ibid. 44). Similarly it is a supposed datum of experience that fever-sufferers whose mouths are dry find things 'earthy, unpalatable, and bitter' (ibid. 52); but some animals have naturally dry tongues—so we should expect their gustatory experience to be similar.

This argument from analogy is not as weak as sometimes supposed. If the correlation between dry mouth and bitter taste really does exist, and nothing else differentiates the sensoria of fever-victims from those of their healthy comrades, it is a plausible causal conjecture that the dryness has something to do with the alteration. And, as Annas and Barnes (1985, 41–2) note, Sextus never dogmatically claims that other animals do as a matter of fact have different impressions—he merely points out that, on the best available evidence, and according to the Dogmatists' own theories, they are likely to. At the very least, we cannot be certain that they do not; and that should do the sceptical work that Sextus requires.

But there is still no clear connection with reproduction. However, consider the following:

just as the same nourishment when dispersed in one place becomes veins, in another arteries, in another bone, in another sinew, and so on, displaying different powers depending on the difference of the parts receiving it; and just as the same undifferentiated water when dispersed in trees becomes in one place bark, in another a branch, in another a fruit...; and just as one and the same breath blown by a musician into a flute becomes in one place a high note and in another a low one, and the same pressure of a hand upon the lyre produces in one place a low sound, in another a high one; in the same way it is likely that external objects will be seen differently because of the different construction of the animals that receive the impressions. (198: *PH* 1 53–4, =72B LS [part])

198 claims that differences in processing produce different results with the same materials. Perception is a causal process, and hence one to which the particularities of each sense-organ contribute (this is a Dogmatic commonplace). So the same perceptible raw material will produce different impressions in differently-constituted sensoria. But on any theory of heredity, animals presumably owe something to their forebears; and if wasps are produced from rotting horseflesh, then their perceptual apparatus must be composed, ultimately, of bits of horse. That material fact may be plausibly thought to affect their basic construction, and hence to affect the way they see the world. That argument is not compelling; but it does indicate how different modes of generation might be thought to result in different ways of seeing the world.

What should we make of these arguments? First of all, even if many of Sextus's examples strike us as odd, even factually mistaken, his fundamental claim, that different animals see the world differently, seems to be true. Most animals, for instance, do not have the retinal equipment to distinguish colours. Similarly, dogs can hear things which we cannot; in that sense, their picture of the world is fuller than ours is (*PH* 1 62–77 is devoted to exalting canine perceptual abilities). So is the world coloured or monochrome? Does it contain sounds that we cannot hear? Such questions are central to any empiricist account of the world and our perceptual access to it; and Sextus later canvasses the possibility of there being other sense-modalities than our five which would give us more information about the world than we now possess (the Third Mode: *PH* 1 96–7; below, 167–9).

But for there to be a genuine conflict between one animal's sensory picture of the world and another's, those pictures must actually be incompatible: and here Sextus needs to invoke PE and PNC. For it is only if we take appearances to be capable of being direct guides to the real natures of things (by PE), that PNC will prevent differing perceptual appearances from being at least indications of how things stand.

A sophisticated empiricist, then, will reply that the differences of perceptual and evaluative appearance show neither that there is something radically indeterminate about the objects themselves, as the Heracliteans would have it, nor that we cannot know anything about their real natures. Rather, the perceptual differences are to be explained on the basis of a suitable causal theory of perception, a theory which will show how the real nature of the objects, when conjoined with the various natures of the sensoria, conspires to produce precisely these differing impressions. If we ask if the sun is really orange at midday, for example, or really red at sunset, we will be asking the wrong question: the

sun really is such as to appear orange at midday and red at sunset to animals sensorially constituted as we are—exactly the same nature will, when conjoined with suitable facts of bovine neurophysiology, explain why it appears pale grey at midday, and a darker shade at sunset, to cows.

But, Sextus may reply, no such empiricism has yet commended itself as universally, or even widely, acceptable to most reflective observers. And that was no doubt true in Sextus's day. It is less true now—even if people differ about the details, few I think dispute the sophisticated empiricist story in its broad outlines. So Sextus is outmoded? Perhaps. But were he alive today, he would no doubt point to the transience of scientific fashion, claiming, *via* Micawber, that current consensus is no guarantee of future agreement; and he would invoke the Eight Modes against the Aetiologists (Chapter XII, 213–17).

(b) *The Second Mode*

The Second Mode collects cases of conflict in which the substituends for 'a' and 'b' are different individual human beings, or more generally human kinds; there is some overlap here with the Tenth Mode, which also collects cases of human deviancy, although of a more obviously ethical kind.¹² That the Modes are meant to form an ascending sequence of persuasiveness is betrayed by Sextus's opening comment:

even if one were to concede by way of hypothesis that humans are more credible than the irrational animals, we shall still find *epochē* brought upon us by way of our own differences. (199: PH 1 79,=72C LS [part])

Sextus begins by noting that Indians' bodies differ from Scythians' 'because of the dominance of different humours' (ibid. 80); and infers in First Mode manner that

in virtue of these humours there are many differences in our choice and avoidance of externals; for Indians enjoy different things from us, and enjoying different things is an indication that we receive different impressions from the underlying objects. (200: PH 1 80,=72C LS [part])

He sums up:

since, then, choice and avoidance are located in pleasure and displeasure, and pleasure and displeasure lie in perception and appearance, when some choose and others avoid the same things we infer that they are also affected differently by the same things, since otherwise they would all alike have chosen and avoided the same things. But if the same things affect different people differently owing to human differences, then on this ground too we shall reasonably be led to *epochē*. (201: PH 1 87,=72C LS [part]: immediately precedes 195)

Sextus argues that

- (1) choice depends on pleasure
and
(2) pleasure depends on appearance;
hence
(3) choice depends on appearance.

Variations in choice indicate variations in appearance: if an Indian consumes with pleasure a curry that brings tears to your eyes, he perceives the curry rather differently from you. Sextus refers all these things to our ‘idiosyncrasies’ (*PH* 1 81); and many of his examples involve ingestion. Thus some people digest beef better than fish, while others suffer diarrhoea after drinking Lesbian wine-coolers (*ibid.* 81). Some are immune to poisons (Sextus collects these cases with relish: *ibid.* 81–3); and there is always Demophon, Alexander’s butler, who felt warm in the shade, but shivered in direct sunlight (*ibid.* 82; *DL* 9 80), as well as Andron of Argos who could go waterless through the desert (*PH* 1 84; *DL* 9 81).

All the cases are drawn from the writings of the Dogmatists (*PH* 1 85); and Sextus does not commit himself to their truth. Indeed, he does not positively *assert* that things seem differently to different people; rather he argues that it is plausible that they do. His arguments are dialectical: he adopts the views of the Dogmatists for the sake of argument and shows how they lead the Dogmatist to sceptical conclusions. The Sceptic, already being in the condition of *epochē*, has no need of the arguments himself (on this very important theme, see further Chapter XVII, 280ff.).

The conclusions of the Second Mode are psychological:

seeing that men differ so much in body...they likely do so in soul as well; for the body is a sort of outline (*tupos*) of the soul, as the science of physiognomy shows. (202: *PH* 1 85,=72C LS [part])

Sextus backs up this move from evidence to psychological hypothesis with quotations from the poets designed to show that different people find different things appealing (*ibid.* 1 86). But it is a mistake to see the Second Mode breaking down into two distinct parts, physical and psychological—for Sextus’s strategy all along is to infer, by way of the Dogmatists’ own theses, from the physical to the psychological.

(c) *The Third Mode*

The Third Mode assembles differences between the reports of different senses in the same individual. Here we are on more familiar sceptical ground:

that the senses disagree with one another is evident: thus paintings appear to the eye to have recesses and projections, but not to the touch. (203: *PH* 1 91–2,=72D LS [part])

The example recalls Anaxarchus (68: Chapter IV); and the philosophical implications of *trompe l’œil* painting were exploited by Plato (*Rep.* 10, 602c– 603b). The point of Sextus’s example¹³ is clear enough—paintings present a three-dimensional appearance to

the eye, but are only apparently two-dimensional to the touch. Hence (here the fillers for ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’ are different sense-modalities) sight and touch are in conflict, and we cannot prefer one to the other; and we cannot say what the surface is like in its real nature.

But surely this is a case where the hasty conclusion based on the evidence of one sense is corrected by the intervention of another: any initial illusion is easily dispelled by further perceptual investigation. Why not think that, as perceptual conditions improve, we can make these corrective judgements? For Sextus’s modern counterparts, the appeal to illusion generally forms part of a two-stage argument. First the possibility of such conflicts is established—but then, if it is alleged that these perceptual judgements can be corrected, the modern sceptic will reply that such corrigibility is always open-ended. There is in principle no unrevisable perceptual judgement.

But whatever the force of that argument, Sextus does not, in general, avail himself of it (although it recalls Carneades’ discussion of the plausible: Chapter VI, 108ff.). Rather he apparently thinks that the opposition of judgements itself will do the necessary sceptical work, since he rejects the claim of one sense to take precedence over another. Why should we privilege touch over sight in the painting case? If we cannot answer that question without begging it, as Sextus supposes, then he has no need of any more complex sceptical considerations (see further below, 171–4: the Fifth Mode).

Even so, Sextus’s argument seems simply to miss the obvious, Lockean point. Many of Sextus’s examples concern secondary qualities: ‘honey seems to some pleasant to the tongue but unpleasant to the eyes...; ¹⁴ perfume pleases the olfactory sense but is unpleasant to taste’ (*PH* 1 92). Empiricists will simply deny that sceptical argument has any real leverage here, for they will deny that there is an issue concerning the real properties of objects at all. ‘Is perfume really pleasant?’ is a nonsensical question; pleasantness is not intrinsic to objects. We can agree with Sextus about the facts, and yet resist the move to *epochē* about the object’s real nature; equally, we will avoid *akatalēpsia*, except in the trivial sense that something non-existent is not graspable. For we will assert, in negative O-dogmatic fashion, that there is nothing there to be grasped. Only by presupposing the admissibility of questions concerning the real nature of perfume’s affective properties does his argument get off the ground.

By contrast, in the case of the surface of the painting, we do seem, from the (non-Berkeleyan) empiricist’s perspective at least, to be in the realm of primary qualities. Our theories suggest that smoothness or roughness is a property intrinsic to a surface: and here, then (unless one adopts the Berkeleyan line of making all properties proprietary to individual senses, hence refusing to countenance the existence of properties discerned by more than one sense), there is an Essential Realist issue: what is the surface *really* like? But unless Sextus can give us good reasons for not preferring the combined verdict of touch and some visual impressions to the initial untested visual judgement, we shall not be moved to *epochē*. Can Sextus produce considerations which might force the empiricist to admit the fragility of his preferences? He is aware that there is work to do here:

each of the appearances perceived by the senses seems to be a complex: the apple for instance seems smooth, fragrant, sweet, and yellow. But it is non-evident whether (a) it really has only these qualities, or (b) whether it has only one quality, but appears varied owing to the varying construction of the sense-

organs, or (c) whether it has more qualities than are apparent, some of which escape our perception. (204: *PH* 1 94, =72D LS [part])

In support of (b), Sextus reiterates the cases of the differential elaboration of nutriment in bodies, air in flutes (198); in support of (c) he invokes the thought-experiment of imagining a further sense in addition to the normal five (above, 164).

He concludes, unsurprisingly, that we cannot decide between these possibilities (ibid. 97). But, the empiricist will reply, we need not claim that the senses give us complete knowledge of things—reliable partial knowledge will be quite sufficient,¹⁵ hence we need not decide between (a) and (c); while once again (b) presents problems only to someone wedded to extreme versions of PE. The obvious move is to make real properties of objects dispositional—and to cash out those dispositions in terms of potentiality to produce sense-impressions. We might still have good reasons for preferring (a) over (b), or *vice versa*; we may be able experimentally to isolate the aspects of the object which are causally responsible for their various perceptual appearances, and hence to determine that, for instance, what is causally responsible for the Stilton's distinctive odour is not its marbled green appearance.

But for all that Sextus has a point. The mere fact that objects present different faces to different senses will not, on its own, allow us to choose between (a), (b), and (c). The sophisticated dispositional account I have just crudely sketched clearly invokes a whole host of concepts at which a Sceptic may reasonably cavil, most obviously those of cause and disposition (see further Chapter XII). And against a naïve version of Essential Realism, to the effect that the real properties of objects just are their perceptible qualities (augmented by PE*), Sextus's argument has real leverage.

Sextus concludes his Third Mode as follows:

if the senses do not apprehend external objects, neither can the mind apprehend them; hence because of this argument it seems we shall be driven to *epochē* regarding the external underlying objects. (205: *PH* 1 99)

205 emphasizes the empiricism lurking behind Sextus's Modes; but Sextus is not himself a closet empiricist; rather empiricism is the epistemology of the majority of his Dogmatic opponents. For them, no less than for Hume, the mind can only operate on the material presented to it by the senses; beyond its combinatorial, analytic, and inferential powers it is impotent.

(d) *The Fourth Mode*

So that we may finally reach *epochē* by basing our arguments on each of the senses alone, or even by disregarding the senses, we offer the Fourth Mode. (206: *PH* 1 100, =72E LS [part])

Once more Sextus is by far our fullest source, and provides much supplementary

argument not found in either Diogenes or Philo. Indeed they largely reproduce Sextus's examples, without the articulating argument designed to induce *epochē*, which is thus plausibly thought to be a later addition, grafted onto the body of an earlier scepticism¹⁶ found in Philo, and reported by Diogenes. The Fourth Mode is that concerned with 'circumstances, by which we mean dispositions'.

The 'dispositions' are

states which are natural or unnatural, waking and sleeping, conditions due to age, motion or rest, hatred or love, emptiness or fullness, drunkenness or sobriety, predispositions, confidence, fearfulness, pain and pleasure. Thus according to whether these things are natural or unnatural, objects strike people differently: for those who are delirious or in a divine frenzy seem to hear divine voices, whereas we do not (207: *PH* 1 100–1, =72E LS [part])

The examples Sextus offers are commonplace enough (although factually suspect): honey seems sweet to normal people, bitter to the jaundiced, and so on. And Sextus happily conflates perceptual dispute ('the same wine seems sour to those who have eaten figs, sweet to those who have eaten chickpeas': *ibid.* 110) with evaluative disagreement ('some people detest pork while others find it most enjoyable; lovers think their ugly girlfriends beautiful': *ibid.* 108). The examples are Protagorean in origin (cf. *PH* 1 218–19, *M* 7 61–4; and 54), but are not put to Protagorean use. Sextus utilizes earlier material; and given that the material served Protagorean purposes, Sextus must adduce some further considerations in order to commend the Pyrrhonian conclusion.

First he replies, to those 'who say that it is an intermixture of humours that produces the inappropriate impressions in those who are in an unnatural condition', that

since healthy people also have mixed humours, these humours may equally be making the external underlying objects appear differently to the healthy while they are actually such as they appear to those in a so-called unnatural condition. For to ascribe the power of altering the underlying objects to these powers and not to those is an artificiality. (208: *PH* 1 102–3, =72E LS [part])

Unnatural perceptions, according to the Dogmatists, are caused by unnatural states of the humours (or whatever: the argument plainly does not rely on any particular Dogmatic theory's being true). But then the configuration of the humours in general ought to be responsible for the way things seem, in health as well as in sickness. What warrant do we then have for preferring one avowedly contaminated perception over another? This objection is powerful against a naïve Essential Realist committed to the view that in ideal circumstances we see things the way they really are.

The second argument (*PH* 1 104) has already been considered in the previous chapter (188): dream impressions seem 'real' to the dreamer, even if they seem unreal to us when awake; how then can we privilege those things which only appear real to us when awake over them? Sextus couches his argument in a relativistic vein, and appears to invite the conclusion that dream objects *are* real for the dreamer. But that will not do for a Pyrrhonist—and Sextus prefaces his conclusion with a sceptical 'probably' (*eikotōs*): this

is the natural conclusion for anyone still wedded to a form of Dogmatism, in much the same way as it is they who will have to agree that the conditions of the humours are just as much responsible for normal as they are for abnormal perception. Annas and Barnes (1985, 85–6) rightly distinguish Sextus’s problem here from the ‘dream hypothesis’ of Descartes (*Meditation 1*) and Socrates’ puzzle of *Theaetetus* 158b–c.¹⁷ Descartes and Socrates worry whether evidence can ever conclusively establish that we are awake (the assumption being that *if* we can, we can rely on our perceptual judgements). Sextus, by contrast, adopts a more radical pose—even supposing we can so distinguish them, why imagine one to be more real than the other (cf. Chapter VIII, 148)?¹⁸

Sextus relies on two familiar contentions: that people in a particular condition tend to endorse the impressions peculiar to that condition; and that we cannot without impropriety privilege the condition we happen to be in. But people do not in any case invariably do so—drunks may realize that they are drunk, and hence discount the apparent spinning of the room; and dreamers may know that they are dreaming. In general, it seems that we can be aware of non-standard experiences as being non-standard even while they are in progress; but there is very little corresponding tendency, for the sane at least, to doubt the reality of their standard experiences.

But the Sceptic has two immediate responses. First of all, the answer I just gave excepts certain types of insane experience—but the Sextan Sceptic will say that I have no right to exclude them out of hand. Secondly, even if we allow that the greater stability and apparent dominance of ordinary waking experience justifies us in privileging it over dreams and hallucinations, that tells us nothing about the reality of their objects. It does not rule out the possibility, variously expressed by multifarious mystics, that ‘our life is but a sleep and a forgetting’, that for all its apparent stability and dominance our ordinary perceptual life is a pale shadow of the real perception available in some suitably heightened state of mystical awareness. Such exotic, global considerations are, however, foreign to Sextus’s style.

The ‘Modes from both Judger and Judged’

(a) *The Fifth Mode*

The Fifth Mode is ‘that based on positions, distances, and places’. Under the heading of (a) ‘distances’ (*diastēmmata*) Sextus adduces the colonnade, which seems foreshortened when viewed from one end, but symmetrical when viewed from the middle; the boat which seems small and stationary from a distance, but large and moving close to; and (a standard ancient example) the tower which seems round from afar, but square from nearby (*PH* 1 118).

Under (b) differences of place, Sextus instances lamplight that seems bright at night but dim in sunlight; the oar which seems bent in water but straight in air; eggs which seem soft in the bird, but hard out of it; lyngurion (a kind of amber thought to be formed by congealed lynx-urine), which seems liquid in the lynx but solid outside it; and coral which appears soft under water but hard on dry land (*PH* 1 120).

Depending on (c) positions, Sextus cites the picture which seems flat when laid on its

side, but appears to have projections when viewed from an angle; and doves' necks, whose colour varies depending on which angle they are viewed from (*PH* 1 121).

The examples are heterogeneous. This is a Mode 'from both judger and judged' presumably because it depends on facts of relative positioning: the oppositions can be collected either by altering the observer's position, or the location of the thing observed. But even so, the last three (b) cases seem out of place: surely any reasonable person will say that the egg really is soft in the bird, hard outside it, and similarly with coral and lynx-urine. But the Pyrrhonist can readily reply that the belief that it has changed is itself based on a controversial theory. The *immediate* perceptual data are just as compatible with the view that the object does not change at all, but rather something in its (or our) change of position causes it to be perceived differently.

Diogenes, who offers a different but congruent set of examples (*DL* 9 85–6), concludes that:

since it is not possible to perceive these things apart from places and positions, their real nature is unknown. (**209**: *DL* 9 86)

Sextus's conclusion is subtly different:

since, then, all objects are viewed in a certain place, and from a certain distance, or in a certain position, and each of these produces a great variation in the impression, we shall be compelled by this Mode too to arrive at *epochē*. (**210**: *PH* 1 121)

Sextus presents the conclusion of *epochē* not as a logical consequence of the argument, but simply as something that we are constrained to adopt (cf. *PH* 1 78, 89, 99, 117: we are compelled, or dragged, towards *epochē*); this is of great importance for the proper interpretation of the Sceptical method. But note also how **209** implicitly allows the objects a real nature, while holding that it is not (and perhaps cannot be) known, in the manner of the Cyrenaics (cf. Chapter IV, 56–8); that is, it apparently combines a positive O-dogmatism with a negative E-dogmatism. By contrast, Sextus's conclusion is authentically Sceptical. Again, Diogenes reproduces an older, Aenesidemean, tradition (Chapter VII, 127ff.; Chapter VIII: **182**).

The case of the straight oar seeming bent is a hardy sceptical perennial (Philo invokes it: *Ebr.* 182) and we have already met *trompe l'œil* painting (**203**: above, 167);¹⁹ both were familiar to Plato (*Rep.* 10, 602c–d). The fact that the painting case crops up in two separate Modes prompts the reflection that the straight oar could have been equally at home in the Third Mode too (it looks bent—but run a finger down it, and you will detect no kink at the point of entry into the water): in general, many cases that exhibit divergent appearances to different senses in the same position will yield divergent appearances to the same sense in different positions.

But what philosophical leverage do such examples possess?²⁰ We do not always expect round things to *appear* round:

what is wrong, what is even faintly surprising, in the idea of a stick's being

straight but looking bent sometimes? Does anyone suppose that if something is straight, then it jolly well has to *look* straight at all times and in all circumstances? (Austin, 1962, 29)

Indeed, one might even say that the oar really looks straight, since that is how straight oars look in water. But that introduces a judgemental sense of ‘look’—in a straightforwardly phenomenological way, it still *looks* bent. The Sceptical question reposes itself: what is the warrant for that judgement? We may, with Austin, insist on separating questions of whether *x* seems *F* from those concerning whether *x* seems *to be F*, with the former failing to have any tendency to entail the latter (Austin, 1962, 92). Aristotle employed the distinction: in *De Anima* 3 3, 428b2 ff. (cf. *DL* 9 85), in distinguishing between appearance and judgement, he notes that the sun seems about a foot across—but it does not seem *to be* a foot across. In general, P-seeming does not entail J-seeming (although under certain circumstances a P-seeming is part of our evidence for a judgement); consequently anyone who wants to judge how something is will need to do more than say how it appears.

Similar considerations tell in the case of the square tower seeming round. This was a problem which exercised the Epicureans: if the tower seems round from a distance then something must have happened to the *simulacra*, the wafer-thin laminae streaming from the object’s surface and whose contact with our eyes produces vision.²¹ The Epicureans hold (cf. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 4 353–63) that the hard edges of the *simulacra* get rubbed off in transit, yielding a smoother, rounded contour which is what we actually (directly) perceive—hence our senses do not lie. Thus the Epicureans try to give a scientific account of how the underlying objects’ properties can have caused the appearances, given certain other physical hypotheses. Similarly, anyone familiar with refractive optics will be able to predict how the stick will appear when it is immersed, and a theorist of perspective will be able to explain why the colonnade looks as it does from different angles, and how the picture produces its illusory three-dimensional effect.

The Sceptic, then, is faced not merely with untutored ‘common sense’, against which he can secure some predictable cheap successes; he has to contend with science which purports to show how, given certain real basic qualities, objects can exhibit the phenomenal faces they do. The scientist attempts to carry out a reduction of phenomenal properties to other more basic properties which will account for the phenomena from which they started. This is not a uniquely modern enterprise: Democritus engaged in it (Chapter III, 48). But the Sceptic has one devastating weapon left to deploy: scientific theories, like everything else, conflict—and a brief glance at the history of science should sober anyone in the grip of an unconditional confidence in the truths of contemporary science. For Democritus and the Epicureans were (we now think) wrong. They gave *an* explanation—but not the right one. Here again, Sextus will urge, we are the prisoners of our prejudices, and, in so far as we think modern science to have supplied definitive answers to the reductive questions, no less foolish than our over-optimistic predecessors (cf. Chapter XII, 213ff.).

(b) *The Sixth Mode*

Sixth is the Mode depending on admixtures. According to it we infer that, since none of the underlying objects has an effect by itself, but always with something, while we are perhaps able to state what the mixture is of the external object and that which is seen along with it, we will not be able to say what the external underlying object is like in reality. (211: *PH* 1 124,=72G LS [part])

Sextus groups two distinct sets of considerations under this Mode. First of all, he urges that external conditions affect how things appear (our skin appears differently coloured in cold air and warm); secondly, our own physical make-up forms part of an affecting ‘admixture’ (here apparently a concatenation of background conditions) which will colour—literally—our view of the world. Finally, he concludes that, since our senses cannot ‘grasp with precision the qualities of the external underlying objects’, neither can the intellect, since the latter must rely on the former to be its guides, and since in any case it is plausible to think that admixture affects the mind as much as the senses,

since we observe that there are certain humours present in each of the places which the dogmatists suppose to house the ruling part of the soul. (212: *PH* 1 127–8)

This is important—for the Sixth Mode, more than its predecessors, apparently relies on information more arcane than that available to ordinary observation. But it is not itself *controversial* information—no matter which dogmatic account of the soul’s location you follow, simple dissection will show that its supposed location is full of humours; and it is plausible to think that they will affect the content of one’s mental experience.

But how plausible? No doubt there *are* such physical constituents of the seat of the soul—perhaps they even have a causal role to play in thought. But it does not follow that they affect or contaminate it. If blood (for instance) is the vehicle of thought, does that mean that thought is somehow *affected* by blood, in the sense of being different from the way it would have been without it? If blood is a necessary condition for thought, it is difficult to see how that even makes sense. Sextus relies on the long Greek tradition of psychological materialism; mental facts are, in general, supposed to depend upon (or at least involve) physical ones. Moreover, our mental efficacy is the product of physical constitutive conditions: all of us are sometimes aware that we are not thinking as clearly as we might; and frequently we can assign physio-logical causes for these impediments. But these facts on their own yield no scepticism.

Accordingly, Sextus must emphasize the (Democritean: 59) empiricist claim that since, as the mediaevals put it, ‘there is nothing in the intellect that was not formerly in the senses’, the intellect cannot go beyond what the senses supply it with. But that empiricism, strong though it is, does not rule out a possible criterial role for the intellect—after all, it is by mentally comparing and contrasting the different sense-reports that we determine their mutual coherence, and hence their mutual acceptability (cf. Chapter VI, 107ff.).

Annas and Barnes (1985, 114–15) claim that the Sixth Mode does not collect oppositions (hence it cannot be represented as a particular case of argument-schema [A]); we are supposed to infer from the fact that any perception comes to us ‘admixed’ that we cannot tell how the object of the perception really is. This seems too strong: Sextus *compares* the way our skin seems in hot and cold air, and argues, standardly, that we cannot tell what colour it really is. But it is perhaps correct to say that Sextus does not put so much weight on opposition here—and, as Annas and Barnes note, the force of the scepticism is perhaps even stronger, since we supposedly cannot tell how something even *appears*. But what prevents the intellect from inferring experimentally how, for instance, honey really appears? You taste it raw first, then with bread, then with wine, and so on; and you do comparative taste tests on the other substances singly and together. Finally, armed with a body of comparative data, you infer what honey really tastes like. Presumably Sextus would reply that *no* test can remove all contaminations—hence each test for the contaminating substance is itself contaminated by other substances—and no test will serve to show us how those contaminations may be discounted. There is something to that argument, at least as directed against an Essential Realist; but it will disturb no sophisticated empiricist.

(c) *The Ninth Mode*

I omit the Seventh and Eighth Modes for the time being, the Seventh since it falls into a different class (‘Modes from the thing judged’), the Eighth since it is in some sense special and deserves special treatment.

The Ninth, based on ‘frequency and rarity of occurrence’, requires only a brief discussion. Sextus claims that the extent to which we find things remarkable or mundane is at least a partial function of how regularly we encounter them:

the beauty of the human body excites us the more when it is seen suddenly and for the first time than when we have grown accustomed to the sight (213: *PH* 1 142).

Familiarity, even with the nude human form apparently, breeds contempt. One may allow that this is (partially) true, even though some of Sextus’s examples seem implausible (do people really become blasé about earthquakes?); perhaps (as Sextus suggests: *ibid.* 143) if the streets really were paved with gold, gold would be worthless. But does this really show that ‘we are not able to say what each underlying thing is really like’ (*PH* 1 144)? Here it is surely far more plausible to adopt a negative ontological dogmatism, along with an epistemological relativism. There simply is no fact of the matter as to whether gold is really valuable—it has no intrinsic value.

Still, Sextus has one further reply. *Why* should we think that the move to relativism is appropriate in these cases? And if it is appropriate here, why not uniformly? Furthermore, people surely have believed in the intrinsic value of precious metals: such a delusion precipitated the decline of the Spanish Empire. There is a dispute here. Why is it rational in this case to conclude that relativism is the answer? A partial answer in the precious metals case is that the belief in silver’s intrinsic value was damaging: the Spanish would

not have courted economic disaster had they realized that. Hence they *should* have been relativists. But that argument will impress no Sceptic. For, they will urge, *epochē* regarding the intrinsic value of gold and silver would equally have checked the deranged quest for El Dorado. The damaging belief is the belief that gold really is a precious metal—and the Sceptic does not have that belief. Of course, unlike the relativist, he does not believe that it is *not* really precious either.

The ‘Modes from the Thing Judged’: Quantity and Constitution

Under the general schematism of *PH* 1 38, Sextus lists two Modes as being dependent solely on the state of the external things themselves. One of them, the Tenth, may be left to Chapter XVI, since its concerns are exclusively ethical.

The Seventh Mode is something of a rag-bag. Sextus refers to oppositions derived (a) from the same thing in different quantities (*PH* 1 129–32) and (b) from things mixed in different proportions (ibid. 133). Diogenes (*DL* 9 86), and Philo (*Ebr.* 185) also allude to differences of quality in the perceived objects as being responsible for distinctions in the way they are perceived. Furthermore, even in the case of class (a), Sextus adduces apparently quite distinct considerations. His first group of cases seem straightforwardly perceptual (‘filings of goat-horn are white, the horn itself black’: *PH* 1 129); but later he deals with differences of causal efficacy (‘small amounts of wine strengthen, large amounts debilitate’: ibid. 131); and the two types of case are not obviously connected.

But whatever one makes of that, the arguments have little direct sceptical force. Why not think that the act of filing goat-horn *changes* its colour; or that the effect of toxins is cumulative? In each case a perfectly adequate (indeed obvious) causal explanation can be given for these apparent differences, but one that does nothing to invite a sceptical conclusion. Once again, the Sceptic needs to make more radical moves (in this case casting doubt on causal explanations in general): the Mode itself will not do enough work for him.

Indeed, Sextus’s own conclusions from the Seventh Mode are less radical and more circumspect than usual: at *PH* 1 132, he apparently allows that goat-horn *filings* are white—what we cannot say is whether goat’s horn is so in itself. And, as Annas and Barnes note, his own examples demand this: wine actually is intoxicating in large quantities—and hellebore really does kill you. The most the Mode seems to demand is that, as applied to substance without qualification (‘horn’, ‘hellebore’, ‘wine’), predicates such as ‘is white’, ‘is fatal’, ‘is intoxicating’ must be qualified. That may, I suppose, worry an Essential Realist of such a dogmatic nature as to suppose otherwise; but, in default of further powerful sceptical considerations, it will do no work. It may have been originally intended as part of a sceptical sequence of increasing power—thus the Seventh Mode will show us that we cannot say what goat-horn is like in general, but only specific quantities of it; but then further considerations, drawn from earlier Modes, will undermine even that restricted dogmatism. However, if Sextus did conceive of it in this way, he does not tell us; and he presents the Seventh Mode as if it were capable on its own of inducing *epochē* (although he is more than usually cautious about this result: ‘so it is likely that this mode will bring us to *epochē* as we cannot make any absolute

statement²² concerning the nature of the external underlying objects': *PH* 1 134).

Relativity

Both Diogenes and Philo offer reports of the Relativity Mode that differ from Sextus's: and his is itself complex and confused. The simplest diagnosis of that confusion is that Sextus found in his sources a separate Mode that made use of a certain type of relativity to establish particular sceptical oppositions, while he realized (from the Agrippan presentation: Chapter X, 185) that in a somewhat different sense relativity underlay the argumentative structure of the Modes as a whole.²³ First of all, Sextus's opening statement:

the Eighth Mode is that...by which we infer that since everything is relative we shall suspend judgement as to what things are absolutely and in their own nature. It is essential to note that here, just as in other cases, we employ the expression 'it is' in place of 'it appears'; so that in effect we are saying 'it appears that all things are relative'. (214: *PH* 1 135,=721 LS [part]: includes 3)

The last sentence exhibits typical Pyrrhonian caution (cf. Chapter II: 3). But it also signals that relativity, for the genuine Sceptic, is not to be asserted as the conclusion of the argument: rather *apparent* relativity is one of its premisses; we are to infer from the seeming fact of the relativity of things to *epochē* concerning their real natures.

Sextus distinguishes two ways in which relativity can gain sceptical purchase:

first (a) relative to the judger (since the external underlying object appears and is judged relative to the judger), but in another way (b) relative to things seen along with it (*ta suntheōroumena*), as left is to right. (215: *PH* 1 135,=721 LS [part])

(a) recalls Modes One to Four, and is consistent with the hierarchy described at *PH* 1 38–9, as Sextus points out (*PH* 1 136). However, he glosses (b) by reference to Modes Six, Seven, and Five, in that order, hence confounding what in the preamble he had taken to be two distinct sub-classes of Mode (those 'from both judger and judged', and 'from the judged'). Finally, his classification is not exhaustive (he makes no reference to Modes Nine and Ten, nor, more understandably, to Mode Eight itself). If that were not enough, the text is probably corrupt.²⁴

But the example he gives in 215 of the class of 'the things seen along with', namely left and right, suggests that relativity was originally invoked not as a genus subsuming other modes, but simply as a particular case in its own right. Compare Diogenes' description of the Mode as that

which rests on comparing one thing with another, such as light with heavy, strong with weak, bigger with smaller, up with down. For example, anything on the right is not on the right by nature, but according to its relation to something

else: if that is moved it will no longer be on the right. Equally, both father and brother are relative; day is relative to the sun; and everything is relative to thinking. So things that are relative cannot be known in themselves. (216: *DL* 9 87–8)

Diogenes' conclusion is non-sceptical, albeit perhaps trivially true (if something is intrinsically relative, no doubt it cannot be known 'in itself', there being no 'in itself' to be known). However, it remains to establish that things are relative in this way: and Diogenes does not assert that *everything* is relative. He merely points out, plausibly enough, that some things are—and for them there are no natures to be known. Diogenes' presentation, then, is clearly of a Mode much more obviously on all fours with all the others—and there is no hint in him of relativity's architectonic function. However, his Mode both invites and offers a relativistic conclusion which Sextus could not adopt; and it looks back to an earlier, less developed Pyrrhonism (Chapter VII, 127–8; and cf. 182).

With the exception of the final two examples, which seem to obtrude new considerations, Diogenes' Mode is lucid. He is dealing with a certain type of implicitly relational predicates: 'is large', he suggests, is elliptical for 'is large by comparison with *x*' or 'is large for an *F*' (these do not of course come to the same thing: consider 'that mouse is large'). And, crucially, he suggests that the applicability or otherwise of such a predicate to an object can be affected by things quite extrinsic to the object. In Geach's terminology, they are subject to 'mere Cambridge change'. If I cease to be a brother because all my siblings die, *I* have done nothing. And similarly if I become the youngest Professor on the faculty by systematically poisoning my youthful colleagues, I delude myself if I think that I have become any younger thereby. Since these attributions can be altered without making any changes in the object, they cannot rest on any properties intrinsic to it.

These thoughts go back at least to Plato's *Phaedo*. I disagree with Annas and Barnes (1985, 135) that Diogenes' relativity involves ontological dependence (except possibly in the case of the sun and daytime); the examples seem more appropriate to a semantic interpretation: properly construed the predicates themselves are relational. Of course, that has ontological implications: there is no such thing as being intrinsically to the left of something.

Philo deploys similar material: but his relativity is predominantly epistemic in force. In the case of certain properties, such as small, large, dry, wet, hot, cold (he also invokes evaluative concepts: excellent and defective, beneficial and harmful, noble and base, good and bad), we could not *know* one without knowing the other (*Ebr.* 187). Moreover, these properties can apply to different degrees, and we will make comparative judgements such as

(4) *x* is not really wet, at least by comparison with *y*.

But these differ from cases involving purely relational properties; and the adjectives expressing them do not function purely attributively. That is, one can drop the qualifiers (in some cases) without damaging the truth-value. For (4) entails

(5) *x* is wet;

but clearly we cannot infer from

(6) *x* is large for a mouse

to

(7) x is large.

Wetness is a real property (although we may employ the concept to express relations which are not themselves really properties). In the case of largeness, however, we do not even at the first stage pick out a genuine property.

All of this is no doubt relevant to the proper treatment of relations—but it is not immediately clear where it gets its sceptical leverage. Diogenes presents the Mode modestly: only some things are relative, and they do not have natures. That will disconcert only the most rabid realist; yet philosophical history includes some fairly rabid realists—and one need only recall the contortions Plato goes through in the *Phaedo* to see that the proper analysis of relational predicates posed severe problems for the ancients, as it did for Leibniz: if we succumb to the temptation to make properties out of relations highly unpalatable consequences follow for our general metaphysics.

Philo alleges that what goes for wet/dry, just/unjust and so on is ‘true of everything else in the universe’; and he further claims that on inquiry one would see this claim to be justified (*Ebr.* 187). This does have sceptical implications—but it is grotesquely implausible. Why on earth believe that inquiry would show any such thing? Philo offers no argument—Annas and Barnes (1985, 132–4) helpfully supply one, although admittedly only *exempli gratia*. Speusippus held that knowledge was holistic in structure, and that one could only know an individual fact if one knew every fact. If you want to know what x is you need to know what marks x off; and hence how x differs from everything else; thus you must know everything else. That argument involves both holism and relativity, and it may lie behind Philo’s sweeping claim. But there is no explicit suggestion that it does.

At *PH* 1 137–9, Sextus offers a series of five ‘special arguments’ for the view that all things are relative. All of them turn on establishing that, for any alleged free-standing non-relative individual, there is some relative predicate that attaches to it (this may indeed lie behind Diogenes’ curious claim that ‘everything is relative to thinking’: **216**):

do the absolutely existing things differ from the relatives or not? If they do not differ, then they too will be relatives. But if they do differ, then since each thing which differs does so relatively, since it is said to do so in relation to that from which it differs, the absolutely existing things will be relative too. (**217**: *PH* 1 137, =721 LS [part])

That argument has a spuriously clever air to it: but it is a gross fallacy. It confuses *being* relative with bearing relative attributes. ‘Being relative’, in so far as it means anything at all, presumably applies to the attributes themselves (it is ‘being a father’ that is relational, not the man himself of whom it is predicated). The things which really exist, on the other hand, will be the bearers of attributes. Once that confusion is brought to light, there seems no reason at all why genuinely existing things cannot have some (indeed indefinitely many) relational attributes, without their in some way infecting the status of their bearers.

But, Sextus might argue, in the case of some allegedly non-relative object, there must be some attribute (or set of attributes) which is definitional for it, and hence some designation intrinsically appropriate to it, that says what it is: e.g. of Socrates that he is a

man. But for anything for which 'is a man' is true, 'is a son' will also be true—and the latter is relational. But that gets us no further. In general Sextus relies on the (possibly true) relational principle

(RP1) If x is an F , where ' F ' says what x is, there will always be some relational predicate ' G ' which is such that anything which is an F is also a G ,

conjoined with the much stronger (and false)

(RP2) if G is relational, and everything which is F is G , then F must be relational,

to infer that nothing is what it is non-relatively.

But before dismissing the Sceptical arguments for general relativism, it is worth recalling how Pyrrhonism works. The Sceptic aims at inducing *epochē* by attacking Dogmatic beliefs: it is the *Dogmatist* who is supposed to be affected thus. If, then, some Dogmatists subscribe to RP2, the Sceptics' arguments are well-directed. And the ancients were notoriously bad at handling relations: a brief reflection on the antinomies of the second part of the *Parmenides* (as well as the *Phaedo* discussion) will suffice to show that such views were not the sole property of straw men. Unless and until a decent theory of relations can be elaborated, the Sceptical arguments will, after all, hit their targets; and here, as so frequently, Sceptical argument forces a re-evaluation of certain dogmatic presuppositions (see further Chapters X, XI, 206ff.).

X

The Modes of Agrippa

Sources and Structure

In a cast of shadowy characters none is darker than **Agrippa**. Our sources mention him but once: *DL* 9 88 talks of ‘Agrippa and his associates’, in the context of the Five Modes—and they are thus known as ‘the Modes of Agrippa’. Sextus, however, attributes them only to ‘the more recent sceptics’ (*hoi neōteroi*: *PH* 1 164), to contrast with ‘the older ones’ to whom he ascribes the Ten (*PH* 1 36: Chapter VII, 121). Diogenes’ text may even be corrupt. If Agrippa existed, he must have lived in the two centuries or so separating Aenesidemus and Sextus; and that is all one can say.

The Five Modes are those from Dispute (*diaphōnia*), from Infinite Regress, from Relativity, from Hypothesis, and from Reciprocity (*PH* 1 164; *DL* 9 88). Both Sextus and Diogenes first list the Modes, then briefly characterize them (*PH* 1 165–9; *DL* 9 88–9). Sextus further adjoins a short discussion of their philosophical employment. Sextus’s discussion shows that the Modes were employed in conjunction with one another as part of an all-embracing sceptical strategy—if you manage to evade one battery of Agrippan argument you find yourself under fire from another.

The Modes are broad in scope: ‘that every matter of inquiry can be reduced to these Modes we shall briefly show as follows’ (*PH* 1 169); and in his outline of the Mode from Dispute, he remarks ‘in regard to the matter under discussion, whether it be drawn from ordinary life or from the philosophers, we find ourselves in an undecidable *impasse*’ (ibid. 165; cf. *DL* 9 88). Agrippan Scepticism is not confined to the ‘non-evident objects of scientific inquiry’ (ibid. 1 13:4, Chapter II).

Although Diogenes and Sextus preserve the same ordering (indicating that it was standard), there seems no rationale for it; and it breaks up the modes from Regress, Hypothesis, and Reciprocity, which form a coherent class. Since they are concerned with the formal structure of justification, I call them ‘Formal Modes’. For congruent reasons, I label Dispute and Relativity ‘Material Modes’.

Material Modes

(a) Dispute

The Mode from Dispute is that according to which, in regard to the matter under discussion, whether it be drawn from ordinary life or from the philosophers, we find ourselves in an undecided [or undecidable: *anepikritos*] *impasse*, because of which we cannot accept

something or reject it, and we are led to *epochē*. (218: PH 1 165)

Dispute will arise, supposedly, about just about everything, and furthermore it will be unresolvable (*anepikritos*), or at least unresolved. Greek verbal adjectives with the ‘-tos’ ending may be either modal or non-modal in force;¹ hence Sextus may mean either (a) these disputes are undecided, or (b) they are incapable of resolution; (a) simply reports on its current status, while (b) issues a draft on its future fate. And while commentators generally prefer (b), consistent Sceptics cannot commit themselves to undecidability in any strong sense without violating a basic sceptical principle (in effect, the converse of that which underlies the Micawber Policy).

Furthermore, the Sceptic only really requires the fact of current indecision: a Sceptic reports how things appear—at any time it just seems to him that a dispute is unsettled. Will it always stay that way? He does not know—but he does not care, since its future career does not affect the attitude one should adopt to it now. However, it should be noted that the Micawber Policy itself dictates that in one sense the disputes *will* be undecidable. For suppose, at time *t*, on the basis of all the available evidence, it seems overwhelmingly likely that *p*; even so, Micawber counsels against accepting *p* since we have no idea how *p* will fare against the evidence in the future.² Hence all undecided disputes will, in a sense, be undecidable, since any claim whatever, no matter how uniformly and firmly held, may turn out subsequently to be the object of dispute. In fact there need be no current dispute at all: suppose at *t* absolutely everybody believes that *p*; well, you can fool all of the people some of the time.³

But can potential disagreement drive a sceptical conclusion? Some disputes no doubt seem to be trivial; and some facts established beyond dispute. Should the logical possibility of their later being impugned cause me to suspend judgement? That depends in large part on what *epochē* is supposed to be, and how consistent it is with being weakly inclined in favour of certain propositions (Chapter XVII, 286ff.).

So how does dispute relate to *epochē*? Barnes (1990b, 207) underlines the variability Sextus’s language:

sometimes he talks simply of (i) dispute, sometimes of an (ii) ‘equipollent dispute’ in which the views of the two parties are of equal strength, most often of a (iii) dispute which is undecidable. Again from the fact that there is dispute—or equipollent dispute, or undecidable dispute—on a matter Sextus sometimes infers that the matter is (iv) ‘unclear’,⁴ sometimes that it is (v) unknowable,⁵ and sometimes that we will, or should, or must (vi) suspend judgement on the point.⁶

The Sceptic will employ all of (i)–(iii): the aim is to establish (vi); if (ii) holds, (iii) follows more or less straightforwardly. However, if it seems that considerations favour one side, the mere fact of dispute (i) plus the Micawber Policy, will be enough, Sextus thinks, to induce (vi). Furthermore, reflection on dispute will establish (iv), which will be an interim stage in the induction of (vi); (v) is puzzling, apparently intruding Academic

considerations into Pyrrhonian Scepticism. But the references to *akatalēpsia* may be remnants of an earlier Aenesidemean Pyrrhonism; or they may be read non-modally, claiming only that the matter in question is as yet unapprehended.

The fact that any dispute is potentially serious shows how the Sceptic can treat as equipollent disputes which seem to us at least clearly settled in favour of one side or another; and it helps dispose of a long-standing difficulty in the interpretation of the Sceptical programme. How can the Sceptic, who alleges that considerations are equally balanced on either side of the issue, weigh the balance of reasons at all, much less declare that they are *equally* balanced? What sense can the Sceptic attach to the idea of evidential weight in the first place? He can simply report how the evidence inclines him—and if it also seems to him that any inclining piece of evidence *may* be matched by something that tells as powerfully in the other direction, he will not be swayed by the current evidence.

He will not, for all that, fail to act at all; rather he will do so as the phenomena affect him: it may seem that *p* is the case. But on reflection this will not amount to a genuine belief as to how things really are: for the mere logical possibility that something will turn up on the other side will dissuade him from believing that *p* is really (i.e. uncontrovertibly) true. Thus the Sceptic can say

- (1) it now seems to me overwhelmingly (subjectively) likely that *p*;
but given that
- (2) not-*p* is compatible with absolutely any degree of evidence *E* that *P*,
and hence that
- (3) *E* cannot entail *p*,
then if
- (4) *p* is certain only if not-*p* is not possible,
then
- (5) I cannot be certain that *p*;
hence
- (6) I suspend judgement as to *p*.

(Consequence (6) may (so far) be either a causal or a logical one.) (1)–(6) do not impugn the Sceptic's right to say how things appear. (3) will be true only for the range of properties determined by the Essential Realist. But that fact in no way damages the argument for a Pyrrhonism concerned precisely with the rebuttal of Essential Realism. (4) needs a little elaboration: the 'possible' here is epistemic; not-*p* may be causally, even logically impossible: but *E* cannot show it to be so. The Mode of Dispute is directed against Essential Realist claims ('*x* really is *F*'); and it is potent against them. But Essential Realist claims in this sense need not be the preserve of some arcane science—ordinary people think that honey is really sweet.

(b) *Relativity*

Agrippa (or whoever) clearly appreciated the broad Sceptical scope of the concept of relativity, and discerned relativistic features underlying all of the Modes of Scepticism (consider argument-schema [A]: Chapter IX, 156). Sextus writes:

the Mode based on relativity is, as we have already said, is that in which the

underlying object appears thus and so in relation to the judger and things seen along with it, but we suspend judgement as to how it is in its nature. (219: *PH* 1 167; cf. *DL* 9 89, which however concludes that everything is unknowable)

Relativity is a matter of differential appearances—and relativity of appearances goes to establish the facts of dispute. Relativity, at least in its Agrippan context, should perhaps not be treated as a separate Mode at all. It does no particular work when Sextus develops his strategy for the combined deployment of the Modes at *PH* 1 169–74, simply appending the claim that

it is also clear that all perceivables are relative, since they are relative to the perceivers. (220: *PH* 1 175)

If I think that x is F , and you disagree with me, all either of us can affirm is a statement about the appearances, which are thus relative (epistemically) to us. Thus Dispute grounds Relativity:

intelligibles are relative, for they are so called in relation to the person thinking them, and if they really had been such as they are said to be, there would have been no dispute about them. (221: *PH* 1 177)

The Formal Modes

The Formal Modes are prohibitions on certain types of reasoning. They do not seek to establish that the actual premisses involved in any argument must satisfy certain conditions, as did the Material Modes. Rather, they set out to show that any attempt to resolve a dispute involving such premisses is bound to fall foul of one of these three conditions. Thus, the Formal Modes go to work on the material elaborated according to the Material Modes—it is only when we are assured that there is at least a potential dispute on our hands, and that the parties to the dispute are in possession at best of ‘information’ of a merely relative nature, that we might proceed to try and resolve the dispute. Such a resolution should take the form of showing that one of the disputants is as a matter of fact in possession of information that is non-relatively true. Hence the Formal Modes attempt to block any attempt to establish by further reasoning the rational preferability of one or other of the disputing claims.

All three of them involve appeal to fallacies codified in the Aristotelian tradition. Sextus effectively alleges that there can be no way of grounding a belief that does not either simply beg the question (the Fourth Mode), or involve either Infinite Regress or Reciprocity (the Second and Fifth Modes respectively). Sextus envisions deploying them in concert:

(1) the matter at issue is an object either of sense or of thought, but whatever it is it will be disputed. For some say that only sensibles are true, others only intelligibles, others that some sensibles and some intelligibles are true.⁷ (2) Will

they then say that the controversy is decidable or not? If undecidable, then we hold that we must suspend judgement, since it is not possible to make an assertion concerning things which are irresolubly in dispute. (3) But if it is decidable, then we shall want to know how it is to be judged. For instance, in the case of the sensible...should it be <judged> by a sensible or an intelligible? If by a sensible, then, since we are inquiring about sensibles, that object too will be in need of confirmation; and if that object too is a sensible it will require another for its confirmation, and so on *ad infinitum*. (4) But if the sensible should be judged by an intelligible, then since intelligibles too are matters of dispute, this being an intelligible will need judgement and confirmation. Where will it get its confirmation from? If from an intelligible, it will be subject to a similar regress; (5) but if from a sensible object, since an intelligible was invoked to confirm a sensible, and a sensible to confirm an intelligible, the Mode of Reciprocity comes into play. (6) But if our opponent should seek to avoid these conclusions by holding that something should be assumed as given without demonstration in order to demonstrate the rest, the Hypothetical Mode comes in, from which there is no escape. For if the hypothesizer is credible, we shall be no less credible when we assume the opposite hypothesis. (222: PH 1 170–3)

The Mode of Reciprocity, as succinctly stated by Sextus,

is used whenever what ought to establish the matter under investigation itself requires confirmation from that matter; whence, being unable to assume either in support of the other, we suspend judgement about both of them. (223: PH 1 169; cf DL 9 89)

The Mode is perfectly general. Suppose I assert that p . You ask on what grounds; I reply that q , and q supports p . If you then ask why I hold that q , and I reply because of p , then I shall have argued in a circle. Of course, the circle need not be that small; there may, in principle, be any number of intermediate propositions. Provided I support p_1 by p_2 , p_2 by p_3 , p_3 by p_4 , ..., p_{n-1} by p_n , and p_n by p_1 then no matter how large n is, my argument is circular.

Neither Sextus nor Diogenes generalizes the argument for n propositions; but it is clear both that they need to do so in order for the Modes of Agrippa to be comprehensive, and that they would have found no difficulty in so doing. Indeed, they have a model for just such a generalization in Aristotle, who discusses, and rejects, circular reasoning at *Post. An.* 1 3, 72b25–73a20:⁸ Aristotle explicitly says that, no matter how big the circle, no such reasoning can carry any justificatory weight (contrast some modern coherence-theories).

So, the issue should not be whether one supports an intelligible by a sensible and *vice versa*: rather it should be whether one tries to make propositions mutually supporting, regardless of their epistemic status. However, Diogenes gives an example which helps to explain Sextus's confusing presentation:

for example, if someone, while supporting the claim that there are pores on the

grounds of emanations, were to take this itself as support for the view that there are emanations. (224: *DL* 9 89)

Diogenes employs a classical example of indicative sign-inference (Chapter XI, 204), which infers from something evident ('there exist emanations—i.e. sweating') to something non-evident ('the skin contains invisible pores'). Here, the antecedent in the conditional 'if there is sweating, then the skin has pores', is a perceptible fact; by contrast the consequent makes reference to things that are only intelligible (that is why one needs the sign-inference in the first place). Indeed the pores themselves are frequently said to be 'intelligible' (e.g. *PH* 2 140; *M* 8 306).

The identification, then, of circular argument with argument from sensible to intelligible and back again is perhaps more readily explicable. Circularity was a standard charge against the indicative sign:

so Chrysippus gives us this demonstration, proving each one *via* the other. For he wants to show that everything comes to be from Fate according to divination, while that divination exists he is able to show by no other means than by assuming everything comes about according to Fate. (225: Diogenianus, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 4 3)

The 'evident facts' of divinatory success are invoked to support the arcane hypothesis of determinism; but, Diogenianus alleges, the only support for the claim that divination exists is derived from the hypothesis of determinism in the first place. Chrysippus can be defended here—and the circularity involved (if any) is not vicious.⁹ But clearly if the only reason for believing that some alleged phenomenon *P* actually occurs is an antecedent belief in the very hypothesis that *P* was supposed to support, then the 'phenomenon' is no evidence for the theory. But the antecedent in these conditionals is supposed to be an evident fact: how can it be theory-laden?

One might argue as follows. Take the case of sweating. No-one (presumably) disputes the evident fact that under certain circumstances moisture appears on the skin. But to describe that moisture as an *emanation* is already to beg the question in favour of the invisible-pore theory, since it might equally well be explained as condensation from the surrounding atmosphere. In general, an indicative sign-inference will only be 'certain' if it assumes the very truth it tries to prove (and hence has the status of an analytic truth). Yet indicative sign-inference is supposed to be the empirical basis of Dogmatist theorizing. The Sceptics are on to a good thing here (Chapter XI, 202–9; Chapter XII, 217–18).

Little needs to be said in explication of the Mode of Infinite Regress, 'the most celebrated of all sceptical manoeuvres' (Barnes, 1990b, 209). Aristotle condemned infinitely regressive sequences as having no probative force—we cannot, as a matter of fact, run through an infinite sequence of propositions, hence we could never actually lay out the infinite 'proof. However, as Barnes notes, Aristotle's argument 'appears to gloss over an important distinction' (1990b, 210) which is brought out by a familiar analogy. Consider the sequence of natural numbers. It is infinite, having no upper limit; it is humanly impossible to run through the entire sequence: I cannot name the successor to

every natural number. However, I can name the successor for any number you care to mention: that is just what constitutes my Dedekindian grip on their infinity.

Now, Barnes asks, could there not be a similar state of affairs regarding the justification of each proposition in an infinite sequence? Barnes writes

it is not difficult to dream up infinite sequences of true propositions, each member of which is entailed by its successor. But it is hard—perhaps impossible—to dream up any sequence of this sort which is epistemologically serious. (1990b, 210)

‘ n is not the largest number, since $n+1$ is larger than n ’ is an example of such a sequence. But all such sequences (I think) rest upon the natural number-series: but *that* infinity I can grasp simply by understanding the successor-operation. It is that which underwrites the truth of each proposition in the series, and consequently it is not the case that each proposition in the sequence is justified (in the strong sense) by its successor, although it is clearly entailed by it.

I conclude (with Barnes) that such sequences pose no threat to the Infinite Regress Mode. But even if serious sequences of this sort were to exist, the Sceptic might reply as follows: you allege that, for every proposition p_i in the sequence, p_i is justified by p_{i+1} ; but that simply means there is no justification—for to justify means to found on bedrock; and for this sequence there is no bedrock. Consider a train of infinite length, in which each carriage moves because the one in front of it moves. Even supposing that that fact is an adequate explanation for the motion of each carriage, one is tempted to say, in the absence of a locomotive, that one still has no explanation for the motion of the whole. And that metaphor might aptly be transferred to the case of justification in general.

We have already briefly examined the concept of hypothesis (Timon: Chapter IV, 96). 222(6) briskly dismisses the possibility that a demonstration may begin from an assumed premiss. In the context of geometry, Sextus points out that all sorts of things may follow from assumptions—but unless we know that the assumptions themselves are true, we have no warrant for accepting the derived propositions (*M* 3 11). Sextus observes, correctly, that an assumption on its own can have no persuasive power, since we may equally hypothesize its opposite. Thus it is tempting to see hypothesis as being immediately conducive to an undecidable dispute, a fact which perhaps accounts for the fact that Sextus omits Hypothesis from his discussion of the Two Modes, the ultimate distillation of the sceptical liquor:

(1) They¹⁰ also hand down two other Modes of *epochē*. Since everything grasped is grasped either through itself or through something else, by showing that it is grasped neither by means of itself nor by means of something else,¹¹ they believe that they introduce an *impasse* about everything. (2) That nothing is grasped by means of itself is clear, they say, from the dispute which has arisen among the natural scientists concerning, I imagine, every sensible and intelligible, a dispute which is undecidable since we are unable to make use of either a sensible or an intelligible criterion because everything we might adopt is un-trustworthy because disputed. (3) For this reason they do not allow that

anything can be grasped by means of something else: for if that by means of which something is grasped must itself always be grasped by means of something else, they throw one back either onto the Reciprocal or onto the Infinite Regress Mode. (4) But if on the other hand one should assume that the thing by means of which another thing is grasped is itself grasped, this runs up against the fact that nothing is grasped by means of itself, as we have seen. (226: *PH* 1 178–9)

The Two Modes are a compendium of parts of the Five—and Hypothesis (as well as Relativity) is conspicuously absent.¹² Furthermore, the author of the Two Modes shows himself aware of the need to deal with the possibility of self-supporting propositions (cases where p is invoked in support of p , which are not explicitly dealt with in the Five Modes, although which might be treated as the limiting case of Reciprocity), which form the subject-matter of 226(2). Perhaps Sextus implicitly treats the First of the Two Modes (henceforth the Immediate Mode) as effectively subsuming the Mode from Hypothesis. After all, no Dogmatist should claim that their hypotheses were *mere* hypotheses (cf. *Rep.* 6, 509d–11c, where Plato's objection is not that geometers *use* hypotheses, but rather that they treat mere assumptions as though they were established facts).

The Two Modes, then, attack the view that there can be self-supporting items of knowledge, self-evident truths that rest on no further foundation. Implicitly, then, a Dogmatist will always be offering hypotheses even while claiming not to. By ruling out the possibility of self-supporting first principles in 226(2), the Sceptic is, effectively, accusing the Dogmatist of relying on mere assertion. Sextus never denies that hypotheses can play a useful role in argument—he simply denies that they can, on their own, support conclusions. And in this, with some reservations, he is surely right.¹³

But, Dogmatists will reply, the foundations of their sciences are not mere hypotheses asserted for the sake of argument: they are indubitable First Principles. Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* 1 1–6 offer the classical exposition of such a theory of science,¹⁴ a brief (and unsatisfactory) account of our knowledge of First Principles is given in *Post. An.* 219. The Immediate Mode takes issue with Aristotle's entitlement to his First Principles. We cannot know things immediately because such *soi-disant* items of knowledge are the subject of dispute. Different 'scientists' espouse different First Principles; and they cannot all be right. Furthermore, there is no agreed method (or criterion: Chapter XI, 193ff.) by which the dispute can be settled. It is no good simply *asserting* that one can intuit the First Principles by way of some mysterious intellectual faculty; nor does there seem to be any way of arriving at them by some sort of transcendental argument (*contra* Plato, *Rep.* 6, 511a–e).

In the elaboration of the Immediate Mode, Sextus invokes actual disagreements, and appears to hold, dubiously, that there will be such disagreements wherever First Principles are involved. Barnes (1990b, 219) instances an Aristotelian (and Euclidian) case: 'equals subtracted from equals leave equals'—who has ever doubted that? And if the logical possibility of disagreement is enough, is it even logically possible to dispute that axiom?¹⁵ Perhaps Aristotle is right in this case to insist that there are some principles which no-one could, seriously, dispute.

But the Sceptic is not finished yet. He may concede that we might, actually, arrive at

the First Principles. But can we know we have done so? Consider again the Philonian conditions for knowledge (Chapter VII, 116ff.): perhaps there is some basic proposition p , which is true, and the basis for further derivative truths; I believe that p ; and the fact that p is part of the cause of my belief; i.e. I satisfy Philo's externalist conditions on knowledge. So what? Can I ever know that for sure? Not if Philo is right. Hence, while I might (Philonianly) know p , I can have no warrant (or at least no uncontroversible warrant) for asserting it. Similarly, Aristotle may be right about some First Principles—but can anyone be sure of that fact? After all, consider the history of Euclid's Fifth Postulate (that through a point adjacent to a given line one and only one line may be drawn parallel to it): for millennia it was taken to be self-evident; and it was something of a scandal that its truth could not be demonstrated, until Riemann *et al.* showed it to be a *mere* postulate of the system which could be denied without compromising consistency. Therein surely lies a cautionary tale for anyone over-impressed by the fact of apparently universal consent that a particular proposition is self-evident. The Dogmatist simply has no further criterion to which he can uncontroversially appeal; since every proffered criterion will itself become a matter for dispute (Chapter XI, 194).

Both 222 and 226 clearly indicate that the Modes form a coherent collective sceptical strategy.¹⁶ In conclusion I offer my own version of the sceptical systems. First, the Five Modes. Suppose you make a claim C_1 ; (a) it will be a subject of actual or possible dispute (222(2)). Moreover C_1 will be either perceptual or intellectual in content; but since there is disagreement as to whether perceptions or intellections should be the criterion of truth (rehearsed throughout *M* 7; see Chapter XI, 197–8), there will be dispute as to whether C_1 should be accepted on its own terms or whether it needs further confirmation. Now, that dispute is either (b) decidable or (c) it isn't; if (c), then we should suspend judgement immediately. If (b), then either (d) it is decidable on the basis of some further claim C_2 , or (e) it will simply be assumed to be true. If (e), then the Mode of Hypothesis takes over to induce *epochē*. If (d), then C_2 is either (f) supported or (g) unsupported. If (g), the Mode of Hypothesis is again invoked. If (f), then C_2 is either (h) supported by some further claim C_3 , or (i) supported by C_1 . If (i), the Reciprocal Mode kicks in. If (h), then the procedures from step (d) will repeat, either leading at some point to *epochē* in a similar manner, or continuing indefinitely in an Infinite Regress.

The case of the Two Modes can be similarly constructed. Someone claims to grasp something, G_1 . G_1 is either known (a) by means of itself or (b) by means of something else. If (a), G_1 is either (c) merely assumed or (d) grounded. If (c), it falls foul of the Hypothetical Mode.¹⁷ If (d), then either (e) it is self-grounded, or (f) grounded in some other claim G_2 . If (e), then we refer to the endless controversy concerning the criterion, and induce *epochē* by the Mode of Dispute. If (f), then *contra hypothesem* it is (b) known by means of something else (G_2), in which case either steps (a)–(f) will apply to G_2 , or (g) G_2 will be grounded in G_1 (invoking the Mode of Reciprocity). Finally, these stages may be repeated *ad infinitum* for arbitrary G_n —which brings in Infinite Regress.

These reconstructions leave some questions unanswered—and Sextus might have been more explicit about the interrelation between the Five and the Two Modes, and clearer about the role of the Hypothetical and Relativity Modes in the overall structure. Furthermore, the bare remarks about the unavailability of a criterion for deciding which propositions are indeed basic and not in need of further justification need filling out. But

that the ‘more recent sceptics’ have produced a coherent and powerful sceptical strategy, one that is deeply serious and should engage any serious student of epistemology, is indisputable; witness the philosophical longevity of problems of justification.

These later Modes are explicitly directed towards the induction of *epochē*, as the Ten Modes were not, at least originally. Do the Sceptics then actually *argue* for the rational necessity of *epochē*? And if so, does that compromise the coherence of their own Scepticism? In a sense yes—and no. The later Modes are presented as arguments for a conclusion, and *epochē* is represented as more than merely their psychological outcome. But the conceptions of rationality in play, according to which (if the Modes go through) a Dogmatist will be compelled to suspend judgement, are the Dogmatists’ own; the argument can be interpreted entirely dialectically. Sceptics do not *endorse* the logic by which *epochē* is induced, since they doubt its validity (Chapter XI, 209ff.). As the Sceptic commits himself to nothing, he is not vulnerable to charges of operational self-refutation. Rather it is the Dogmatist who, according to his own canons, is being forced to concede that *epochē* is the only rational solution. After arriving there he will, no doubt, cease to think of it as being rational, since the notion of rationality itself will have lost its grip on him, and his canons will have been abandoned. But then as a Sceptic, and already suspending judgement, he will have no further need of it.

XI

The Criterion, Signs, and Proof

The reformulation of the Agrippan material into the Two Modes highlighted the problem of the criterion: if propositions are to be accepted on their own recognizance without the support of other propositions, then we need to find some marker of their acceptability, some means of discerning true from false coin. Moreover, this marker should be acceptable to everybody (or at the very least everybody who thinks clearly and rationally about it): for if it is not, the criterion itself will be a matter of doubt, and we shall be attempting to support the doubtful by way of something at least equally doubtful (this latter manoeuvre—which may be considered an extra Formal Mode—is pressed into service at *PH* 2 33, 120; 3 23; *M* 8 66, 180, 285–6).

The Types of Criterion

At the beginning of *PH* 2, Sextus begins his detailed attack on Dogmatic rashness. Following their canonical distinctions, he begins with Logic (broadly construed to include epistemology), continues with Physics, and concludes with Ethics (*PH* 2 13 outlines the scheme; *M* 7–11 follow the same pattern). The treatment of Logic opens with the discussion of the criterion.

Sextus starts by carefully dissecting the various uses of the word *kritēriōn*. First there two basic senses:

(K1) that by which we judge what exists and what does not (or what is true and what is not);

and

(K2) that which we use as a guide to life (*PH* 2 14; cf. *M* 7 29).

We have already glanced at (K2), the practical criterion (*PH* 1 21–4: Chapter II, 8–10; see also Chapter XVIII; and cf. Chapters V, 86ff., VI, 109ff.). (K1), ‘the so-called criterion of truth’,¹ falls into three categories: the general (K1a), the particular (K1b), and the most particular (K1c) (*PH* 2 15; *M* 7 31). (K1a) includes ‘every standard of apprehension, and in this sense we even speak of natural criteria, such as sight’ (*PH* 1 15; cf. Chapter VIII: 192). (K1b), by contrast, consists of ‘technical criteria’ (here measuring devices, such as the rule and the compass: cf. Plato, *Phil.* 55d–6c). Finally (K1c) contains those ‘logical’ criteria used in the apprehension of non-evident objects (*PH* 2 15; *M* 7 33). Sextus treats (K1c) first, subdividing it further into three sub-species:

(K1ci) that by which, or the agent ('e.g. a human being');

(K1cii) that by means of which, or the instrument ('e.g. perception or intellect');

and

(K1ciii) that in accordance with which, 'or the application of an impression'.

(*PH* 2 16; *M* 7 34–7)

Sextus begins by noting (*PH* 2 18; *M* 7 46–8) that it is disputed whether there is such a thing as a criterion at all. Since such a dispute will itself need a criterion to settle it (i.e. we will need some independent means of judging whether or not it is possible to judge things), and since no such meta-criterion is available (on pain of infinite regress or circularity: *PH* 2 20), the Sceptic case for *epochē* is already made. But Sextus will not rest there:

we suppose that these considerations are sufficient to point out the rashness (*propeteia*) of the Dogmatists concerning their account of the criterion; but in order to refute them in detail, it will not be absurd to dwell on the issue. (227: *PH* 2 21)

227 embodies a standard feature of Sceptical argument. Suppose you hold *p* on the basis of *q*, *q* on the basis of *r*, *r* on the basis of *s*. The Sceptic will first aim to establish that you have no title to *s*. But even if *s* survives, he will say, *r* is still dubious; and even if *r* is conceded, none the less *q* does not follow; and so on. Sextus frequently uses the language of concession, *sunchōrein* and its cognates—and I shall call this strategy the Concessive Method. It is nowhere more in evidence than in the treatment of the criterion.

The Criterion of the Agent

Sextus begins his detailed refutation (in *PH*) with (K1ci), the criterion of the agent. However, rather than arguing directly that human beings have no greater claim than any other animals to criterial status (for which the First Mode has already provided the material), or pointing to the undecidable disputes that arise between human beings as proof that man cannot be the measure of all things except on pain of contradiction (as the Second Mode has it), Sextus first busies himself trying to show that we do not even know what 'Man', the alleged criterion, really is; and his argument takes the familiar form of pointing to differences, indeed incompatibilities, between the competing Dogmatic definitions (*PH* 2 23–8; *M* 7 263–82) in order to show that Man is not even conceivable.

It is difficult to construe this argument in such a way as to give it much force: we can surely recognize individuals as falling under groups before we can say why we so recognize them, and certainly before we can even begin to give a proper account of what makes them members of the same natural kind. But Socrates, famously, thought that you

could not know something unless you could accurately define it; Sextus's target here is no straw man. In any case, Sextus immediately allows 'by way of concession' that you can form such a conception (*PH* 2 29: this application of the Concessive Method does not amount to an endorsement of any Dogmatic view).² But even if you can, it will not be apprehensible, since Man is presumably either a compound of soul and body, or one of them singly, neither of which is apprehensible.

Sextus deals with body first (*PH* 2 30; cf. *M* 7 293–300). At best, he says, we can apprehend the properties of things: but properties and the things of which they are properties are categorially distinct—and hence we cannot apprehend things in themselves (Sextus explicitly rejects the 'bundle theory' on the grounds that properties must have something in which to inhere: *M* 7 278, 295; and he anticipates Berkeley's argument for the inconceivability of Lockean substance: *Principles*, Int., §§ 6–20). The soul is more briskly discussed: some people, like Dicaearchus the Messenian (*PH* 2 31),³ have denied its existence altogether; but if it does exist, how will it be apprehended? Not by the senses, since it is a purely intellectual object; but if by the intellect itself, since the latter is 'the least evident part of the soul' (*PH* 2 32) we are in even greater difficulties, attempting to clarify the obscure by way of the even more obscure.

Ingenuous though some of this is, it seems beside the point, as Sextus perhaps realizes:

but even let us grant that man is apprehended, it would never be possible to show that things ought to be determined by him. For he who says that things ought to be determined by man will say this either with or without proof (*apodeixis*). Not with proof since it must itself be true and determined, and for this reason it must be determined by something. But since we are unable to agree concerning that by which the proof itself should be determined (since we are investigating the criterion by which), we shall be unable to judge the proof, and hence be unable to prove the criterion which is the matter at issue. But if it be said without proof that things should be determined by man, it will be without credibility. (228: *PH* 2 34–5; cf. *M* 7 314–16)

This argument is more impressive. The scope of the criterion is, by hypothesis, universal—yet if that is so, criterial questions must be applicable to the notion of the criterion itself. More precisely, any reasonable claim concerning the criterion will involve a proof, or at the very least an argument: mere assertion will carry no weight. But as the criteria for a successful argument are themselves part of what is at issue, we cannot appeal to supposedly valid proofs in order to settle criterial questions, since their very validity is itself a criterial question.

Having established this, Sextus, again in concessive fashion, allows the Dogmatists the claim that man should be the criterion of things—and then proceeds to ask the question 'which man?' (*PH* 2 37):

for if they say that the Sage is to be believed, we shall ask them 'which Sage? The Sage of Epicurus or the Stoics, the Cyrenaics or the Cynics?' (229: *PH* 2 38)

Contrariwise, if we abandon technicalities and simply agree to follow the wisest, chronic

dispute will arise as to who that is (ibid. 39); while even if we can agree on this, we cannot know that someone yet more brilliant might not turn up in the future (ibid. 40–1: another Micawberish manoeuvre). Moreover, even supposing our estimation to be correct, our Sage may well be deceiving us ‘since it is the clever above all who like to defend rotten doctrines and make them appear sound and true’ (ibid. 42).

Finally Sextus refutes the view that we should attend to the consensus of the majority (cf. **196(3)**: Chapter IX), since most people are stupid (and hence what most people believe is unlikely to be true); because for any particular criterion there are always more opposed than in favour (*PH* 2 43); and most interestingly because all who are in agreement about a particular criterion are in a similar condition: hence ‘as regards the dispositions in which we find ourselves, there is no difference of numbers’ (ibid. 44). Each view, no matter how popular, is correlated with just one disposition. But there is no reason to prefer one type of disposition over any other (Chapter IX, 169–71; *M* 7 407; cf. Cicero *Acad.* 2 89–90). The problem is essentially Anacharsian: we need already to be experts in order to recognize expertise in others (Chapter III, 35; cf. Chapter VIII: **194**).

Two things are striking, and quite typical, about the arguments with which Sextus seeks to discredit the criterion ‘by which’. First of all, they differ greatly in quality: some are powerful and well-directed challenges to Dogmatism that require taking seriously; others appear feeble and pointless. This is not simply due to a lack of discrimination on Sextus’s part, but is in fact central to the Sceptical strategy (Chapter XVII, 300–1). Secondly, the Concessive Method is constantly in evidence: if one argument is found unconvincing, the Sceptic will retreat to a higher redoubt and start the campaign again.

The Instrumental Criterion

At *PH* 2 48 (and *M* 7 343) Sextus turns to the instrumental criterion (K1cii); this development is itself concessive. If we allow that man is the criterion (or some man, or the majority of men), we may still ask how they determine true from false, real from unreal. The strategy is simple: Sextus sets out to show that neither singly nor in combination can the senses or the intellect function as a criterion. There is evident disagreement about the status of objects of sense: some hold that no sense-experience is strictly veridical (Democritus, Parmenides); others that all of it is (Protagoras, Epicurus); others that some is and some isn’t (Peripatetics, Stoics, most Platonists): *PH* 1 49. We cannot judge which of these positions is right by appeal to sense-perceptions themselves, since it is their reliability that is at issue (ibid. 49–50). But even conceding that some sense-impressions are apprehensive, the Fourth Mode will sap our confidence in individual sense-reports; while appeal to ‘natural conditions’ is question-begging (ibid. 51–4). And even in the allegedly privileged natural conditions, an observer may none the less receive conflicting sense-reports (ibid. 55–6; Chapter IX, 169ff.). (Here one might wonder how Sextus individuates conditions. If x seems F to O in position p and not- F to O in position p^* , why not take that as evidence that O is in a different condition at p from that at p^* ? The Sceptic cannot help himself to the common-sense view that nothing in the perceiver has been altered by the change of position. But the argument can be read dialectically, as aimed against opponents who do in fact hold that view. And if the

opponent does try to claim that *O*'s condition changes with his position, then the Sceptic will ask how he can privilege either condition over the other.)

But given that there are apparently divergent sense-reports, cannot the intellect decide between them? Sextus first briskly dismisses the possibility that intellect alone and unaided might furnish a criterion by claiming that intellect itself is inapprehensible (ibid. 57–62; cf. *M* 7 348–53). There is dispute as to whether there is any such thing as the intellect in the first place; but if there is, the deliverances of different people's intellects are different, and we have no criterion for deciding whose to trust. This position should be assessed in the light of both Cartesianism and Empiricism. For if Descartes showed that there was a range of facts that impressed themselves indubitably upon the intellect alone, Humean Empiricism emphasized how restricted that range was: if Sextus is concerned with the status of external objects and their properties, a little Humeanism will suffice to show that the intellect unaided can get no grip upon them. At one point (*M* 7 353) Sextus hints at such an argument—but it is not followed through.

Finally, one might look to a combination of sense and intellect to supply the criterion: reason, operating on the material supplied by the senses, will tell us what really exists and what does not. Here Sextus, rehearsing some familiar considerations (cf. 222: Chapter X), argues that such combined tactics must take one of the following forms:

- (a) the senses judge both senses and intellect;
- (b) the intellect judges both senses and intellect;
- (c) senses judge senses and intellect intellect;
- or
- (d) senses judge intellect and intellect senses (*PH* 2 66).

(a) and (b) have already effectively been dealt with (since anyone upholding either is in effect proposing that one of them alone should be the criterion); but (c) involves *petitio principii* (*PH* 2 67: perhaps treated as a species of the Hypothetical Mode), while (d) falls foul of the Reciprocal Mode (ibid. 68), at least in its generic form (Chapter X, 187). It should be noted that Sextus does not allow for the eventuality that in some way the senses and the intellect may be progressively used to refine judgement—but he would no doubt consider it a violation of the Reciprocal Mode. Timon too had rejected that possibility (Chapter IV, nn. 40, 49–50), on what grounds we do not know. But one might well argue that the mere convergence between the deliverances of sense and those of the intellect could have no tendency to confirm their veracity concerning any world independent of them.

The Criterion 'According to Which': Rules

This encompasses the Stoic cataleptic impression—and much of the sceptical argument against that has been rehearsed already (Chapters V and VI). Sextus does, however, introduce some new considerations. First, suppose we allow that we can know what an impression is (Sextus has been arguing that the concept of an apprehensive impression is itself non-apprehensible: *PH* 2 70–1): even then

things cannot be determined in accordance with it. For the intellect does not, as they say, make contact with and form impressions of external objects by means of itself, but by means of the senses, and the senses do not apprehend the external objects, but only, if anything, their own affections. So the impression will be that of the affection of the sense, which differs from the external object. For honey is not the same as being sweetened, nor absinthe as being embittered, but they differ from them. If this affection differs from the external object, the impression will not be of the external object but of something different from it. (230: *PH* 2 72–3; cf. *M* 7 354–8)

Sextus rejects naïve realism: all our experience of the world is mediated by the senses—we are ‘directly given in experience’ not the world itself, but a sequence of affections. We have no right to imagine that we are really seeing things in the world. But if that is right, we err if we judge the contents of the world according to our impressions.

This is too quick—as Sextus realizes. The fact that we do not directly perceive objects does not show that we do not perceive them ‘as they are’; nor does it show (*contra* Berkeley) that all we perceive are ideas.⁴ So Sextus continues:

but neither is it possible to say this, namely that the soul apprehends external objects by means of sense-affections because the affections are similar to the external objects. For how will the intellect know if the affections of the senses are similar to the sensible objects, since it has not itself directly encountered the externals, and since the senses do not make clear to it their natures but only their own affections? (231: *PH* 2 74)

Once we allow that we do not have direct access to the external world, we have no warrant for thinking that our senses even give us accurate likenesses of the way the world is, since we cannot check the impression against the object which gave rise to it.

Arguments of this sort are powerful against the naïve realist—and most people are, pre-reflectively, naïve realists. We do tend to assume that the world is the way it seems to be. And yet, as Sceptical argument shows, there are severe difficulties with that position. First of all, the apparent colour of objects changes according to changes in circumstances—a red wall does not look red under all circumstances. So what colour is it really? A standard reply is that it is red if it seems red when viewed under normal conditions: but the Ten Modes have already shown that the task of specifying those conditions is by no means unproblematic.

Still, the sceptical argument can be evaded by reconstruing the properties in question as being dispositional. Thus for an object *x* to have a perceptual property *P* is simply for *x* to seem *P* to a competent observer under normal conditions—and that move, since it effectively makes real properties causal, ought to remove any puzzlement as to whether an object is *really* the way it seems, since for it really to be that way is simply for it to possess a dispositional, causal property. Here, as so often, the sting can be drawn from a sceptical argument (at least one of limited scope) by retreating a little way from robust realism into a more sophisticated position: Sextus’s argument is not as fatal as he thinks.

Nevertheless, concessively, Sextus grants that impressions may allow us to judge

objects (*PH* 2 76): but then either all impressions must be true or only some—and if we are to accept some rather than others, we will need a further criterion, and another for that—and so on (*ibid.* 77–8). Sextus might have invoked the Mode of Dispute: all impressions cannot be accepted in the light of their evident incompatibility. But in fact he takes a different line:

if we are to believe every impression, it is clear that we shall believe that of Xeniasdes [Chapter III: 19] according to which he said that all impressions were untrustworthy: and our argument will be turned around (*peritrapēsetai*) to say that it is not the case that all impressions are such that objects can be judged according to them. (232: *PH* 2 76)

Sextus's attempted *peritropē* (Chapter III, 45) is only doubtfully successful, since it conflates P-seeming with J-seeming: Xeniasdes' view that all impressions are not true is not itself an impression in the same sense. Furthermore, Sextus does not need Xeniasdes' absurdly strong view to engender the *peritropē*: it works, if it does at all, if anybody thinks that any impression is false. Perhaps Sextus has in fact here conflated two separate *peritropai*, the second being of Xeniasdes' own position. (Does it appear to Xeniasdes that no appearance is true? Then that meta-appearance is, if true, false—and Xeniasdes' position self-refutes; of course, this second *peritropē* too assimilates P- to J-seeming; cf. *M* 7 399.)

Truth

Having demolished, as he sees it, the notion of the criterion, Sextus turns his guns upon the conception of truth, his principal targets being the Stoics. First, Sextus notes that the matter is disputed, and hence that any stand on the issue must be backed up by proof if it is to have any credibility. But, Sextus argues, that proof must be held to be either true or false; if false, it is not a proof—but if true

he becomes involved in reciprocal argument and will be required to show proof of the real truth of his proof, and another proof of that proof, and so on ad infinitum. (233: *PH* 2 85)

Sextus does not handle the objection well—and he seems to confuse the Mode of Reciprocity with that of Infinite Regress (perhaps he construes it as the extreme case of generic Reciprocity). Moreover, it is not clear how either of them is meant to apply here. Sextus apparently means that, if I claim that some proposition is true, and do so on the basis of an argument, I shall need to claim further that that argument is sound; but I cannot do that without begging the question of what truth (and proof) is in the first place.

A little later, Sextus offers yet another division: things which are true are either all apparent, or all non-evident, or some are one and some the other. Furthermore, each category can be further subdivided: are all, or merely some, of its members true? The passage in which Sextus develops this argument (*PH* 2 88–94) is more notable for the

doggedness with which Sextus pursues his pattern of division than for its probative force. However, Sextus attacks the claims of both the apparent and the non-evident to truth—yet elsewhere he insists that the Sceptics do not abolish the appearances (*PH* 1 19–20). Is this inconsistent? It cannot simply be an oversight on his part, since he is anxious to emphasize the breadth of his conclusion:

since a criterion of truth appears to be hopeless, it is no longer possible to make firm claims about things which seem to be evident (*enargē*), at least as far as what the Dogmatists say,⁵ or about those which are non-evident; for since the Dogmatists think that we apprehend the latter by way of things evident, if we are compelled to suspend judgement about the things called evident, how can we be rash enough to venture assertions about the non-evident? (**234**: *PH* 2 95)

It is tempting to distinguish the apparent (*phainomenon*) from the evident (*enarges*); it is only the former that the Sceptics ‘do not abolish’. The latter, on the other hand, *seem* to be evident (and by implication they may not be) in a way that mere *phainomena* are not. Sextus, then, argues as follows: the Dogmatists suppose the antecedents in their sign-conditionals which are supposed to serve to reveal their hidden truth to be *phainomena*—but they can only do so if they are, as a matter of fact, already *adēla* themselves, and hence themselves doubtful. This argument (glanced at in Chapter X: **224**), takes us squarely into the issue of sign-inference.

The Nature of the Sign

Of matters, then, according to the Dogmatists, some are (a) pre-evident (*prodēlon*), some (b) non-evident (*adēlon*); and of the non-evident, some are (i) totally (*kathapax*) non-evident, some (ii) temporarily (*pros kairon*) non-evident, and some (iii) naturally (*phusei*) non-evident. Pre-evident are those which come to our knowledge from themselves, e.g. that it is day; totally non-evident are those which are not of a nature to fall under our knowledge, such as that the number of the stars is even; temporarily non-evident are those which, although they possess an evident nature, are now not evident to us because of certain external circumstances, as the city of Athens is to me now; while the naturally non-evident are those which do not possess a nature such as to fall under our evidentness, such as the intelligible pores. (**235**: *PH* 2 97–8)⁶

Signs fall into two classes, since

the pre-evidents do not, they say, need a sign, since they are apprehended of themselves. Nor too do the totally non-evident, since they are at bottom inapprehensible. But things which are either temporarily or naturally non-evident are apprehended by means of signs, not of course the same ones, but the

temporarily non-evident by way of commemorative signs and the naturally non-evident by way of indicative signs. (236: *PH* 2 99)

According to the Dogmatists, class (a) *ex hypothesi* have no need of signs; class (b1) are absolutely unknowable; but (bii) may be apprehended *via* commemorative signs, (biii) through indicative signs. Commemorative sign-inferences move from one evident object to another which is temporarily obscure, but not naturally so—hence, in the classic example, smoke is a commemorative sign (hereafter CS) of fire: even though the fire itself is not directly visible to me, I know that, since there's no smoke without fire, there will be fire there somewhere—and I can confirm the validity of that inference by going to inspect matters more closely. By contrast, an indicative sign (IS)

is an antecedent proposition in a sound conditional, which is revelatory of the consequent (237: *PH* 2 101)

The definition is Stoic; and it has provoked much comment and analysis.⁷ Its precise details may be controversial, but its general thrust is not. An IS brings to light a hidden fact, one which could not have been discovered by mere observation. Thus sweating is an IS of the existence of invisible pores in the skin (Chapter X, 187). Sextus continues:

there being, as we have said, two different types of signs, we do not argue against all types, but only against the indicative sign, as it seems to have been elaborated by the Dogmatists. For the commemorative sign is relied upon in ordinary life (*bios*), since when someone sees smoke fire is signified, and when a scar he says that a wound has occurred. (238: *PH* 2 102)

The Sceptic, Sextus repeatedly affirms, does not quarrel with ordinary life: he takes issue only with Dogmatic pretensions to have discovered hidden truths by way of IS inferences; he will happily accept Commemorative Signs. Even so, as is often remarked, many of his arguments work if they work at all against any sign-inference, CS included.⁸ But let us for the moment take at face value Sextus's claim that the Sceptic quarrels only with IS inference; for, as Sextus well knows, a successful attack on the IS has devastating consequences—it will undermine the notion of proof (since proof is a species of sign: *PH* 2 134; cf. *M* 8 299), and in general all claims to arcane knowledge of any kind.

The Nature of Conditional Inference

A sign-inference is a form of conditional inference; one infers from a general proposition of the form 'if *p* then *q*' and the antecedent '*p*' that *q* is true. But the truth-conditions for the conditional were if anything even more controversial in the ancient world than they are now. Sextus reports four different accounts:

Philo⁹ says that a sound conditional is (a) that which does not begin with a truth and have a false consequent, as for instance, supposing it is day and I am

conversing, ‘if it is day, I converse’. Diodorus¹⁰ however says it is (b) that which neither admits nor has admitted of beginning with a truth and concluding to a falsehood: so that on his view the conditional mentioned will be false, since there was a time when it was day but I was silent...while ‘if there are no atomic elements of things there are atomic elements of things’ is true, since it will always begin with the false ‘there are no atomic elements of things’ and conclude to a truth (on his view),¹¹ namely ‘there are atomic elements of things’. And those¹² who introduce connectedness (*sunartēsis*) say that the conditional is sound (c) whenever the negation of the consequent conflicts with the antecedent,¹³ so that on their account the conditionals mentioned will be unsound, while ‘if it is day, it is day’ is true. And those who judge by ‘reflection’ (*emphasis*) say that a conditional is true of which (d) the consequent is potentially contained within the antecedent: on their view ‘if it is day, it is day’ and all such duplicated conditionals will probably be false, since it is impossible for anything to be contained within itself. (239: *PH* 2 110–12; cf. *M* 8 112–17)

(a) corresponds to the modern truth-functional material conditional, (b) involves considerations both of tense and modality, and is problematic—but clearly its antecedent and consequent are more than merely materially linked, (c), the so-called ‘Chrysippean conditional’ expresses the standard Stoic view, which also rejects mere material implication as a suitable model for conditional inference (or rather for demonstrative conditional inference). The precise interpretation of ‘conflict’ is controversial (see n. 13); but again the basic point is clear: mere contingent connections are not enough to ground genuine conditional inferences.

Sextus’s initial purpose in 239 is simply to establish the existence of a dispute, this time concerning the proper interpretation of conditionals: if there is such a dispute, and sign-inference relies on conditionals, then (provided the dispute is undecidable) we can have no secure grip on the notion of signs. Note first of all that even CS are formulated in terms of conditionals: and so if Sextus’s argument has any force, it seems to work against precisely the type of sign he claims he is prepared to allow (238). But Sextus can be defended: he merely allows CS as they are employed in ordinary life, that is to say unreflectingly: we do as a matter of fact infer from signs—but such a practice is quite unmythical, and does not rest upon any fine analysis of the validity of inference. It is simply something we all do—and Sextus has no desire to stop us from doing what comes naturally.

The dispute is undecidable for familiar reasons: if it is to be settled, it will be so on the basis of a proof; but proof is itself a species of valid argument, the structure of which is precisely what is at issue (*PH* 2 114). Sextus then offers an argument that turns on the epistemic status of the consequent, the thing signified: either it is pre-evident (*prodēlon*: the force of the ‘pro-’, or ‘pre-’, is presumably at least in part that it is evident in advance of any inference or reasoning), or it isn’t; if the former it has no need of a sign—but if the latter it will be non-apprehensible ‘since there is an undecidable dispute concerning non-evident things’ (ibid. 116).

It may be objected that the sense in which the thing signified (in an IS: but the dilemma

offered in *PH* 2 116 is quite general, and attacks CS as well) is non-evident is just that it is non-*pre*-evident—that is, it cannot be known simply in and of itself. But that does show that it cannot be *made* known, which is precisely the function of the IS inference. When it is known it is of course in a sense evident: but since its evidence rests upon some other evident truth, it is not free-standingly evident. Take the standard example of the inference to pores on the basis of sweating (Chapter X: 224): when I have performed the inference I know that the skin is perforated with invisible pores; before I had no idea. The fact of sweating, considered as a sign, has shown me that my skin is riddled with holes.

However, Sextus may be defended here. Consider any IS inference: the antecedent is supposed to entail the consequent (since an IS is formulated using a strongly connected conditional). But can it ever do so? Is it simply rationally impossible to doubt the existence of pores once one has marked the fact of sweating? It seems not, for reasons canvassed earlier (Chapter X, 188): sweating might be a form of condensation. If I call sweating ‘emanation’ I beg the question in favour of pores. Of course, I might note that I sweat more copiously after drinking a cold beer, and infer from that that the moisture was coming from within me, or find that after sweating profusely I suffering a raging thirst, and again conclude the same thing. But all of those inferences are defeasible (cf. Chapter XII, 213ff.); hence none of them should inspire our complete confidence. The Dogmatists are indeed rash if they believe that their IS inferences establish hidden truths beyond all possible doubt. Here Sextus may legitimately invoke Dispute: if the IS inferences were so compelling, then no scientists would ever disagree; but that is not of course the case.

Aenesidemus offered an argument against signs (Chapter VII: 173, 174); it is worth repeating the key text here:

Aenesidemus...argues...in much the same way as follows: ‘if apparent things appear alike to all those in a similar condition, and signs are apparent things, then signs appear alike to all those in a similar condition. But signs do not appear alike to all those in a similar condition; and apparent things appear alike to all those in a similar condition; therefore signs are not apparent things’. (240 [=172]: *M* 8 215; cf. 234)

The point is illustrated by a medical example at *M* 8 219–20, where different doctors (Herophilus, Erasistratus, and Asclepiades: see further Chapter XIII) draw radically different conclusions from the same signs. The question at issue is whether signs are apparent—and Sextus has just been arguing (*M* 8 206–14) that the IS is not apparent.

Sextus does not handle the argument well: at times he seems to argue that the signifier, the antecedent, is not evident, on the grounds that perception is fallible; elsewhere it is the sign *inference* that is apparently non-evident. We need to distinguish two theses:

(T1) Sign *S* is in itself non-evident;

and

(T2) *S* is non-evident *qua* sign.

The distinction between (T1) and (T2) brings out clearly the way in which IS inferences such as the sweating-pores inference may beg the relevant question. In that case, (T1) would be true only if you were unaware that there was moisture on the surface of your skin (perhaps because your best friends would not tell you); however, (T1) can be false (you are only too uncomfortably aware of your epidermic dampness) and yet (T2) still be true, since you are not certain of the explanation of that embarrassing fact. The sign is, then, in a sense evident: but it is not evident *that* it is a sign, or *what* it is a sign of.

Aenesidemus's argument, as Sextus presents it, turns precisely on that distinction. People 'in a natural state' (*M* 8 218) perceive things similarly—but they do not necessarily make the same inferences on the basis of their perceptions. Doctors may agree on the raw characterization of the fever-patient's symptoms, yet disagree violently as to what that indicates (*ibid.* 219–20). There is something to that argument—it is easy to slide from the negation of (T1) to the negation of (T2), and conclude that, because the signifiers are evident, it is evident what they signify. But that slide is fallacious; and Aenesidemus has a powerful argument against an over-sanguine Dogmatism.

Whether, however, the argument will work against a weaker IS claim is less certain. A modest scientist may make use of the mutual coherence of a set of related IS inferences such as those mentioned in connection with the sweating argument; taken as a set, a system of interrelated inferences may have more persuasive power than each taken singly (and it is a pervasive feature of the Sceptical strategy to focus on each individual belief or position piecemeal, for obvious reasons). Once the Dogmatists' pretensions to certain knowledge have been relaxed in favour of something like (defeasible) rational warrant or justification, the Sceptical arguments have far less bite.

Finally, let us return to the structure of the sign-inference itself. The Dogmatists¹⁴ hold that, in a valid IS inference the antecedent 'serves to reveal the consequent' (**237**: *PH* 2 101, 104, 106); that is, an epistemic relation is supposed to hold between signified and signifier. This fact undermines a possible Dogmatic riposte: a valid IS inference is valid because of the way the world is; that is, the connection between antecedent and consequent represents something like a natural necessity. This being so, in the case of true conditionals in IS inferences, that the one entails the other is a metaphysical fact about the world. And any number of such conditionals may be true independently of anyone knowing or uttering their truth. That may be true—but the whole point of an IS is to increase our knowledge. Its function is semiotic; and a Sceptic can perfectly well concede that there may be some such valid inferences: he might even, in Philonian vein, think it probable that from time to time we utter one. But if we cannot know *which* are valid and hence *when* we validly utter them, we are epistemically no better off. If the IS does 'serve to reveal' its consequent, then it had better do so *to us*. And that, precisely, is what the Sceptic denies they can do (see further Chapter XII, 218ff.).

The Relativity of Signs

It [i.e. the sign] will not be capable of revealing the consequent if the signified is relative to the sign and is for this reason apprehended along with it. For relatives are apprehended along with each other; and just as

right cannot be apprehended before left as right of left, or the other way round (and similarly for all other relative terms), so it will not be possible for the sign to be grasped before the thing signified *qua* thing signified. And if the sign is not apprehended before the thing signified nor can it be revelatory of that which is apprehended along with and at the same time as it. (241: *PH* 2 117–18)

Sextus's argument proceeds from a perfectly general claim about relative terms, namely:

(1) if A and B are correlative, then A cannot be apprehended before B.

But since

(2) the sign and what it signifies are correlative,
then

(3) a sign cannot be apprehended before what it signifies.

Thus, on the Dogmatists' own views,

the sign is inconceivable. For they say that it is both relative and revelatory of the thing signified, in relation to which they say it is. So if it is relative to the thing signified, it should at any rate be apprehended along with the thing signified.... But if it is revelatory of the thing signified, it should at all events be apprehended before it, so that, being known before, it may lead us to a conception of the thing which is known from it. (242: *PH* 2 119–20)

So we can add to (1)

(4) if A is revelatory of B, then A must precede B;
hence

(5) if a sign is revelatory of the thing signified, it must precede it. Hence, by (3) and (5), a sign cannot precede what it signifies—and yet at the same time it must do so. Sextus validly infers that a sign is thus inconceivable.

A Dogmatist wishing to save the concept of a sign must reject either (3) or (5); and if he is to reject (3), he had better do so by at the very least modifying (1). In support of (1) Sextus instances relative predicates such as 'to the left of' and 'to the right of'. Clearly, an object cannot be on the left unless there is something it is to the left of—and that something will be on its right. Lefts and rights go together. This can be expressed formally. 'Left of' and 'right of' are converse relations: A is to the left of B if and only if B is to the right of A (and similarly for the other relations).

Sextus's talk of relational *things* is confusing here (cf. Chapter IX, 180): we should rather speak of objects standing in relations. But then, in the case of converse relations, there are not *two* facts, A's being to the left of B, and B's being to the right of A, but simply two different ways of expressing the *same* fact. Equally 'A signifies B' means the same as 'B is signified by A'. But what implications, if any, does that have for the relative dating of A and B? On the face of it, none whatsoever. If A is the parent of B, then B is the child of A; but it cannot follow that parents and children must share lifespans. One might argue that A only *is* the parent of B *while* B is the child of A: but

even if that is true it has nothing at all to do with the relative careers of A and B.

(1) derives its specious plausibility from confusing (T1) with (T2). The giveaways are expressions like ‘*qua* thing signified’ (241): for they indicate that it is the status of the relational *facts* that link A and B, rather than their individual existences, which is at issue. The fact that some relational properties attach to an object does not make the object itself intrinsically relational (as RP2 has it: Chapter IX, 181).

But even so, A only exists *qua* parent as long as B exists as a child. Perhaps (3) may still be rescued, since, given that being a sign and being signified are converse relations, whenever you have one you have the other—there is only one fact, indifferently expressed by either relation. So if A is a sign of B, A cannot be apprehended *qua* sign of B before B is apprehended *qua* signified by A. That is true: but note the form of (5). In order to generate a contradiction, and hence condemn the notion of a sign to incoherence, (5) would need to be interpreted as

(5a) if a sign is revelatory of the thing signified, it must precede it *qua* sign;

and there seems no reason whatever to accept (5a).

Indeed, there is no real reason to accept even (5), since a relation of dependence might hold between sign and signified even if they are simultaneous (as can be the case with causes and their effects: cf. Chapter XII, 218ff.). As soon as you see the sign you know the thing signified exists—but since your knowledge of the signified’s existence depends on the sign, the proper revelatory relation is preserved. Epistemic priority need not entail temporal priority, even *qua* sign.

Similar considerations will defuse another, similar Sceptical argument:

if all signs are apparent, then since the sign is relative to the thing signified and relatives are apprehended together, the things allegedly signified (since they are apprehended along with things apparent) will themselves be apparent.... And if the thing signified is apparent it will not even be signified, since it does not need anything to signify and reveal it. (243: *PH* 2 125–6)

Of course the sign may *make* what it signifies apparent—without the sign it would remain hidden; its very apparentness is dependent upon the sign, and not something intrinsic to the object. This argument is part of a dilemma (ibid. 124): signs are either apparent or non-evident—they cannot be the latter for obvious reasons, but nor, if the argument of 243 goes through, can they be apparent either. But 243 fails—and with it the dilemma.

The Dogmatists, however, have a two-pronged counter-argument. First, they urge, either the Sceptics’ pronouncements against signs are significant or they are not. If they are not, then they are not worth taking seriously. But if they are, then they must themselves be signs, because articulate speech is a form of sign (ibid. 2 130). The second argument is meatier: if the Sceptics argue against signs, they either offer a proof of their non-existence or they don’t. If they don’t, they are once more not worth serious consideration. But if they do, then their position is incoherent, since proof is a species of sign (ibid. 2 131). To the latter argument, Sextus produces a garbled and quite unconvincing reply, which essentially consists of repeating the earlier arguments against

signs in telegraphic form (132). However, explicitly in response to the first argument (although it can be adapted to answer the second), Sextus writes:

concerning the pronouncements in favour of the sign, let the Dogmatists themselves reply as to whether they signify something or nothing. If they signify nothing, that there is a sign is not supported. But if they do signify something, then the signified follows from them—and what follows is that there is no sign, because of the about-turn (*peritropē*) of the argument. (244: *PH* 2 133)

Two can play at the game of generating incoherence: for suppose that the Sceptics' arguments against signs really are arguments. If so, say the Dogmatists, then the position is operationally self-refuting. However, if they *are* arguments (and if they are sound) they entail their conclusions—and their conclusions are that there are no signs. We have on our hands not merely a case of self-refutation, but a full-blown paradox. Crucial to generating it, however, is the parenthetic 'if the arguments are sound': the mere fact that they are *arguments* will not entail the non-existence of signs. And they are not sound.

Sextus might, however, argue as follows: 'I (the Sceptic) make no claims about the soundness of my reasoning nor (perhaps) about the significance of my words, since I make no claims at all. However you (the Dogmatist) must take these forms of words seriously: you are committed to so doing by your own accounts of logic and grammar. If, then, the argument seems sound to you, accept its conclusion, and abandon logic and grammar for suspension. I, of course, need suffer no such reversal, since I have abandoned any such pretensions long ago.' There is more to be said about this defence of the Sceptical 'position'; but that must wait awhile (Chapter XVII).

Proof

Sextus devotes more discussion, in *M* as well as *PH*, to proof than to signs; but much of it is technical, and directed specifically against Stoic (and to a lesser extent Peripatetic) logical theory. The specific arguments against proof occupy *PH* 2 134–92, although, as he says, if sign has been abolished then proof, being a species of sign, will be destroyed too.

Proof, for the Stoics, was a method of discovery (*PH* 2 141–2):

a proof ought to be an argument which is concludent (*sunaktikos*) and true and has a non-evident conclusion discovered by the power of the premisses. (245: *PH* 2 143; cf. *M* 8 314)

That is, proofs will in general formulate IS inferences. Sextus first produces the following argument:

an argument is put together out of propositions (*axiōmata*); but a compound thing cannot exist unless the things out of which it is compounded exist

together, as is pre-evident in the case of beds and similar things. But the parts of an argument do not exist together. For when we state the first premiss, the second premiss and the conclusion do not yet exist. And when we assert the second premiss, the first no longer exists, while the conclusion does not yet exist. And when we derive the conclusion, its premisses no longer exist. So the parts of an argument do not exist together, whence it will appear that the argument does not exist. (246: *PH* 2 144)

Although that is, as it stands, fairly feeble, it interestingly anticipates later sceptical concerns. Descartes worried that chains of reasoning might become so long that, even though each sub-section had been sufficiently broken down to become self-evident, one might somehow lose one's grip on the whole (*Discourse* 1); and similar difficulties have exercised Kripke's rule-sceptical Wittgenstein (Kripke, 1982).

More substantially, Sextus attacks the coherence of the Stoics' own notion of proof.¹⁵ For the Stoics, a valid argument must be neither (a) disconnected, (b) deficient, (c) propounded in a bad form, or (d) redundant (*PH* 2 145). Cases of (a) are those in which the premisses of the 'argument' stand in no logical relation to the conclusion; arguments of type (b) miss one or more premisses; those of (c) are simple fallacies (Sextus cites the case of affirming the consequent: *ibid.* 147). The interesting case, from Sextus's point of view, is (d). The precise formulation of the Stoic notion of redundancy is problematic—but intuitively the idea is clear enough. An argument is redundant if and only if it contains superfluous premisses, ones that do no work in the argument. Stoic logic was, in effect, a relevance logic (cf. their analysis of implication: above, 202–3). An argument is sound if and only if the conditional which has the conjunction of the premisses as antecedent and the conclusion as consequent was true: call that the Principle of Conditionalization (PC). Now consider the most basic Stoic argument form, the First Indemonstrable (*PH* 2 157):

[B] (1) if p then q

(2) p ;

so

(3) q .

For the argument to be valid, on the Stoic view (and hence be a candidate proof) (1) must be a true conditional. But (1) will be true, by PC, just in case the following argument

[C] (2) p ;

so

(3) q

is sound. But in that case [B] is redundant (since (1) may be dropped), and hence by the Stoics' own criteria invalid. Moves can be made on the Stoics' behalf (one might insist that [B] was the minimal *formally* valid inference; or one might relax the notion of redundancy involved so that [B] did not fall foul of it); but Sextus has clearly exposed a potentially fatal weakness at the heart of their logical theory. And there is one further consequence; only if we already know that q follows from P are we in a position to assert 'if p then q ': but then, far from driving the inference, the conditional will be a consequence of it, and hence cannot serve to reveal anything, and cannot be part of the method of discovery (cf. *PH* 2 198–203).

Sextus applies a similar argument to Peripatetic categorical syllogistic at *PH* 2 193–7. Consider the argument ‘every man is an animal; Socrates is a man; so Socrates is an animal’ (ibid. 196):

the premiss ‘every man is an animal’ is established inductively (*epagōgikōs*) from the particular instances; for from the fact that Socrates, as a man, is also an animal, and similarly Plato and Dion and all of the particular instances, it seems to be possible to establish that all men are animals. (247: *PH* 2 195)

Epagōgē does not always signal induction in the technical modern sense of an *inference* from particulars to universal. However, Sextus’s treatment of *epagōgē* at *PH* 2 204 is best interpreted as being an attack on inductive inference:

when they propose to establish the universal from the particulars by way of induction, they will do so either by going through all the particulars or only some. If only some, the induction will be insecure, since some of the particulars passed over in the induction may conflict with the universal. But if all of them, they will toil at the impossible since the particulars are limitless and without boundary. Consequently from either direction, I think, it turns out that induction totters. (248: *PH* 2 204)

Moreover, categorical syllogistic lacks any probative power:

they fall into the Mode of Reciprocity, since they establish the universal inductively by way of each of the particulars and the particular deductively by way of the universal. (249: *PH* 2 197)

249 recalls 225 (Chapter X, 187–8); and it is susceptible of similar replies. For, as Sextus notes, the relation that links particulars to universal is distinct from that which links universal to particular. Only if they were the same would there be a clear case of reciprocity. The universal, if true, *explains* the particulars; each of the particulars *lends support* to the claim that the universal is true. On the other hand, Sextus is right to point to the fragility of inductive inference; and his argument shows that deduction itself cannot be a means of discovery.¹⁶

Two further types of argument require consideration. The Sceptic argues that the notion of proof is unfounded: how can one establish the validity of proofs otherwise than by *proving* they are valid? But such a ‘proof begs the question at issue. Equally, a Dogmatist may reply that the Sceptic’s argument itself presupposes the validity of proof. Both types of argument are found in Sextus. Now, some Dogmatists (Sextus suggests that they were Epicureans: *M* 8 337, 348) attempted to argue that the general validity of proof could be secured by instancing a single example of successful proof (Sextus attributes this manoeuvre to Demetrius of Laconia: *M* 8 348). Sextus rejects this claim on the grounds that for the particular proof actually to be a proof, the generic notion of proof must already have been established—and he cites the dispute among the various proponents of proof as to its nature, and as to the soundness of particular proofs (*PH* 2

171–4; *M* 8 348–56).

Sextus has a point here: unless we have a general criterion of the correctness of proof we will not know that the alleged particular proof really is a proof. There is no such easy route to the establishment of the meta-concept. But there may be something to be said for a modified version of Demetrius's position. For, while a particular 'proof is epistemically impotent to ground the general notion, none the less the idea that there is such a thing as proof and that proof is a sound inferential practice no doubt will gain inductive plausibility from the apparent success of individual tokens of the procedure. Again no circularity is involved; and while, being inductive, the support rendered to the whole is not indefeasible, it is a good deal better than nothing.

In the contexts of both signs and proof, Sextus considers a Dogmatist argument-pattern: '(a) if proof exists, proof exists; (b) if proof does not exist, proof exists; (c) but proof either exists or does not exist; therefore (d) proof exists' (*PH* 2 186; cf. *M* 8 466–9; for signs, see *PH* 2 131; *M* 8 280–5, 292–5). This argument anticipates the mediaeval *lex clavia*: if a proposition follows from its own negation then it is necessarily true. At *M* 8 292–5, Sextus claims that the argument may be redundant (presumably on the grounds that any constructive dilemma has to derive the same conclusion twice by two different routes; but of course the disjuncts in the dilemma, although assumed in the course of the argument, are not premisses of it).

At *PH* 2 189–92, however, Sextus mounts a more powerful objection: (b) cannot be a sound conditional on the Stoics' own account (above, 203), since its antecedent 'proof does not exist' does not conflict with the negation of its consequent 'it is not the case that proof exists'. It disputed whether the Stoics either held or were committed to this view:¹⁷ it may be Sextus's own invention or distortion. But the argument is interesting, and shows how easy it is to end up committed to unacceptable principles if one is not scrupulously careful about the foundations of one's logic.

But even if one decides that Sextus's formal criticism of the Stoics' argument fails (at least against the Stoics), how successful is the peritropic argument? That question turns on the (material) acceptability of (b). The Dogmatists allege that the Sceptics have, in effect, provided a proof for the non-existence of proof. But the existence of that meta-proof itself proves that proof exists. First, the Sceptics could say that they have produced not a proof as such, but some weaker species of argument. But secondly, and more devastatingly, they may insist on construing all of the argument dialectically. They make use of Stoic material to refute a Stoic position, in a manner familiar since Arcesilaus (see Chapter V, 75ff.); but they do not thereby commit themselves to the acceptability of the material or methods. Regarding that, they maintain an unimpeachable Sceptical *epochē*.

XII Causes and Explanation

Aenesidemus ‘enumerated some modes’ against the aetiologists (Chapter VII: **159**): and attacks on aetiology are central to the Sceptical enterprise. After all, the Dogmatists ‘think a great deal of these things’ (*PH* 1 180) in their project of penetrating to the hidden heart of things, to a level of reality which will explain the structure of the phenomenal world. Democritus said he would rather discover a single *aitiologia*, or causal explanation, than be the King of Persia (68 118 DK). Sextus saw that attacking the notion of cause jeopardized many other central Dogmatic concepts, such as those of body, motion and alteration (*PH* 3 38, 67–8, 103; see Barnes, 1983, 149, 154).

The Eight Modes Against the Aetiologists

Of these the first is the mode according to which, he says, aetiology in general, being concerned with non-apparent things, has no consistent confirmation (*epimarturēsis*) from the appearances. (**250**: *PH* 1 181,=LS 72M [part])

The First Mode raises a fundamental problem for the Dogmatists: as their hidden ‘reality’ is by hypothesis unobservable, they have no way of testing the validity of their inferences to it. This matters only if there is more than one consistent ‘explanation’ for any particular set of phenomena: but

the Second Mode shows that frequently when there is an abundance of ways of assigning an explanation to what is under investigation, some of them account for it in one way only. (**251**: *PH* 1 181,=LS 72M [part])

251 anticipates the Duhem-Quine thesis of the under-determination of theory by data. No matter how large a data-set you accumulate (for a non-finite domain), there will always be more than one way of integrating it into a coherent whole. The data cannot entail or determine theory-choice, which is thus in a certain sense arbitrary. Taken together the first two Modes constitute a powerful challenge to Dogmatic pretensions. Lying behind them is the Mode from Dispute—differing Dogmatic theories disagree; and there is no principled way to settle that disagreement.

Dogmatists might respond in two ways. First, while the reality may now be hidden, it is at least conceivable that, with the development of more sophisticated tools and technology, we may one day actually be able to enhance our perceptions in order to be

able to reveal what is now hidden. Take for instance the paradigm inference involving sweating pores considered in the previous two chapters. In the ancient world, the pores could not be seen. But with the invention of the microscope in the seventeenth century, they became visible—and the inference was confirmed by the appearances.

It is not clear how one should react to this taxonomically: were the pores temporarily non-evident, or should we invent a fourth category of things immediately non-evident? Sceptics may legitimately press the claims of the latter categorization: what characterizes things temporarily non-evident is that they will, given a suitable change in place or time, become straightforwardly perceptible to the ordinary unaided senses. But the pores are not like that. Our knowledge of their existence depends upon the veridicality of special instruments. But even if we allow that there have been improvements in instrumentation undreamt of by the ancients, that fact, if it is one, will not draw the Sceptic's sting. We need to do far more by way of underwriting the claims of our theories to give us accurate and precise information about the world; and in order to do that we need to refute, or at the very least circumvent, the challenge posed by the first two Modes.

The second Dogmatist response takes a different tack. Granted that we cannot ever directly confirm with sensory experience the truth or otherwise of our theoretical substructure, may we not infer from the successes of the theory as a predictive model that it has at least a high probability of being more or less right? This strategy is isomorphic with those which attempt to move from facts of coherence to the establishment of substantial realist claims (cf. Chapters V–VII); and it will faze no Sceptic.

The use of the Epicurean technical term '*epimarturēsis*' in 250 suggests that Aenesidemus had the atomists in mind when constructing the Eight Modes. Confirmation, for the Epicureans, is a matter of corroborating weak or inadequate sense-reports by finding firmer, less equivocal ones. If from a distance the tower might be either round or square, I must approach more closely and see what it looks like from a better visual vantage-point. The Sceptics have objections to raise against the presumptions of such a theory in ordinary perceptual contexts; but as regards fundamental entities the situation is far worse, since *no* improvement in circumstances will ever allow us any *epimarturēsis* at all.¹ Nevertheless, even if they are principally directed against atomist targets, it should be emphasized that the Modes are a serious challenge to any account of science that involves entity-realism.

The Third Mode is that

according to which they assign to orderly comings-to-be (*ginomenōn*)² causes exhibiting no order. (252: *PH* 1 182, =72M LS [part])

It is not enough in the case of the hugely complex and iterative processes that make up the natural world simply to assign some putative atomic cause to each event taken individually: what needs explaining is the stability and orderliness of the structure as a whole. The point is perfectly general: Aristotle notes (discussing coincidence) that even if one has an explanation of *p* and an explanation of *q*, it does not follow that one has an explanation for the conjunction *p* and *q* (*Metaph.* 5 30, 6 2–3; *Phys.* 2 4–6; see Sorabji, 1980a, ch. 1). Ancient mechanistic theories, Aenesidemus rightly points out, are not up to the task of general explanation.

The Fourth Mode is

that according to which, having seen how the appearances come to be, they imagine that they have also got a grip on the way things non-apparent come to be; and while perhaps the non-apparent are brought about in the same way as what is apparent, perhaps on the other hand they are not, but come to be in their own peculiar fashion. (253: *PH* 1 182,=72M LS [part])

Sextus's compressed report invites expansion and reconstruction. 253 might be construed as an attack on a naïve realism which presupposes an identity between the observable phenomenal properties of things and their real properties (cf. Chapter IX, 158); however, the language suggests a rather different interpretation, one which again is well directed (although not exclusively) against the atomists.

The Epicureans try to account for every event in the world as being a macroscopic phenomenal consequence of microscopic atomic events. Atoms have two basic properties: weight, which accounts for their natural, continuous free-fall through absolute space; and solidity, which makes them bounce off one another when they collide (Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 43–4, 54; Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 2 184 ff., 333 ff.).

Moreover, they have shapes, some having protuberances which allow them to intertwine and form larger agglomerations, while others, being smooth (such as those of fire), cannot do so. Every macroscopic event and object is the result of these initially random collisions and intertwining. The Fourth Mode exposes another crucial atomist assumption: the sorts of properties (resistance, weight, solidity) they take to be basic to the microscopic elements are extensions of their macro-world analogues. But why cannot the micro-world's properties be utterly different from anything we encounter in the world around us? Aenesidemus is right to fasten on this arbitrary atomist assumption.

They might reply that we could form no conception of properties utterly distinct from any of which we have direct experience, and hence the only sort of causal property we can understand must be one with macroscopic analogues. But that does not justify our ascribing these properties to the hidden world, even if there is one. The appropriate response is a Sceptical *epochē*. The Epicurean might appeal to the explanatory success of the theory, to its ability to subsume all observable phenomena under its explanatorily prior atomic hypotheses. But even if the theory can aspire to such explanatory adequacy (as it is doubtful whether atomism can; cf. the trouble Epicureans have explaining magnetism: Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 6 906–1089; cf. Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* II 45, 47–51), the Sceptic need only invoke the Second Mode.

At this juncture, let us in disorderly fashion turn to the Sixth Mode, according to which

they frequently allow only such facts as are consistent with their hypotheses, while passing over those which conflict with them, even though they possess an equal persuasiveness. (254: *PH* 1 183,=72M LS [part])

Theories generate anomalies; the Dogmatists ignore them, and concentrate on only those facts which they can 'explain'. Perhaps this is true—and there is certainly some sceptical

mileage to be got from reflecting upon scientists' curiously selective attitudes towards evidence. But even so, the Sixth Mode is modest in scope—it does not allege that such selective blindness to uncomfortable facts is even endemic in science, much less incurably so.

Equally restricted in its claims is the Fifth Mode:

virtually all of them assign causes on the basis of their own hypotheses about the elements, and not on the basis of commonly agreed methods. (255: *PH* 1 183,=72M LS [part])

This too is a complaint about actual scientific practices. Epicureans believe in minimal atomic particles; Stoics and Peripatetics hold that the ultimate constituents of the world are the four elemental stuffs, or the four properties which make them up; Platonists and Pythagoreans create the world from numbers, lines, and planes. But how can we adjudicate between such theories? They are at bottom incommensurable. Only if we can devise some crucial experiment that will enable us to decide between competing basic conceptions of matter will such a dispute be resolvable—but this could not be done uncontroversially, since the criteria for the experiment would themselves be controversial. This, presumably, is the sense in which they do not rely on 'commonly agreed methods'.

It remains briefly to examine the final two Modes:

the Seventh is that according to which they often give causes which are not only in conflict with the appearances but also with their own theories. The Eighth is that according to which, when things are frequently equally doubtful in regard to both those things which seem to be apparent and those under investigation, they construct their exposition concerning things equally doubtful from things equally doubtful. (256: *PH* 1 184,=72M LS [part])

The Seventh Mode is simply an extension of the Sixth. The Eighth may be interpreted in the light of the sweating-pores inference (Chapter XI, 187). Things which only 'seem to be apparent' are interpretations of phenomena which are already loaded in favour of a certain type of explanation (e.g. 'there are emanations from the skin'). Only by assuming such 'equally doubtful' antecedents can the Dogmatists infer to the 'equally doubtful' consequents. But such an inference is built on sand.

The Conceivability of Causes

If the Aenesidemean Modes are explicitly restricted to scientific and cosmological theorizing, in his general attack on the concept of causation Sextus casts his net much wider. His treatment begins in familiar style:

as far as what is said by the Dogmatists is concerned, no-one could even form a conception of cause, since as well as offering dissonant and incompatible

conceptions of cause, they have made its instantiation undiscoverable by their dispute about it. For some say that cause is corporeal, others that it is incorporeal. But it would seem that in its general sense a cause is that because of which the result comes about. (257: PH 3 13–14)

That ‘general sense’ is a Hellenistic commonplace; and it is worth stressing the weight it places on agency (by contrast with Aristotle’s far wider-ranging usage).³ Nevertheless, at this point the limited agreement ends, and there is a dispute as to whether objects (‘the sun’) or their properties (‘the sun’s heat’) are appropriately to be described as causes, as well as about whether effects are properly to be characterized as noun-phrases (‘the melting of the wax’) or predicates (‘that the wax is melted’): PH 3 14 (see Barnes, 1983, 170–5; and 220, below).

Sextus has more to say about the alleged inconceivability of causes:

it is impossible to form a conception of the cause before apprehending its effect as its effect, since we only know that it is a cause of that effect when we apprehend it as an effect. But neither can we apprehend the effect of the cause as its effect if we have not apprehended the cause of the effect as its cause, since we seem to know that it is its effect only when we apprehend its cause as its cause. If, then, in order to conceive the cause we must first know the effect, while in order to know the effect we must first know the cause, the Reciprocal Mode will show both to be inconceivable. (258: PH 3 20–2)

Similar considerations to those in the case of signs (Chapter XI, 207–8) apply here; and a similar confusion can be diagnosed. Nothing in what Sextus says tells against the possibility that we conceive of cause and effect at the same time—and as they are elements in the same relation, that is precisely what one would expect to be the case. It is not that there are two things at issue, A’s being the cause of B and B’s being the effect of A, where each is illegitimately invoked in support of the other—rather there are merely two different ways of saying the same thing.

Sextus makes peritropic moves in this case too. The opponent of causes will either oppose them on no grounds, in which case he will not carry conviction, or he will do so for some cause, in which case he refutes himself (PH 3 19). Sextus conflates cause and reason—but as Barnes (1983, 178–80) argues, this does not matter; the Sceptic can simply broaden the scope of the argument to include reasons in general, or any proposition containing a ‘because’, to evade the charge of *ignoratio elenchi*. As Barnes notes, this surely shows that the practice of giving reasons cannot itself be directly justified by argument—although that in itself will not convict our reason-giving practices of irrationality.

The Relational Nature of Causing

For Sextus’s purposes, causes fall naturally into two main classes: those which are concurrent with their effects (‘containing causes’, or *aitia sunektika*, and their various

concomitants), and those which precede them ('antecedent causes', *aitia prokatartika* (*PH* 3 15–16)). An example of the former is the noose which causes strangling; of the latter the exposure to sunlight which causes fever.

Any remotely adequate account of causation must involve both types of cause—we sometimes speak of causes preceding their effects, sometimes of causes as concurrent with them.⁴ If we had no use for the former, it is difficult to see how we could make sense of causal continuity or of a 'causal chain'; yet, as the strangulation example makes clear, we also need to account for causal contemporaneity. Even so, some reject antecedent causes,

since the cause is a relative existent, and relative to the effect, it cannot precede it as cause. (259: *PH* 3 16)

This objection, which is isomorphic with the argument against the temporal priority of signs (Chapter XI, 206), is taken up a little later:

either the cause produces the effect as already being and subsisting, or as not being a cause. Certainly not as not being; but if as being, the cause must previously exist and come to be, and then brings about the effect which is said to be effected by it as already being a cause. But since cause is relative, and relative to the effect, it is clear that it cannot pre-exist as its cause. (260: *PH* 3 25)

This argument is backed up by a further similar consideration:

the cause must either (a) co-subsist with its effect, or (b) precede it, or (c) come after it. But to say that a cause comes into existence after its own effect is laughable. But neither can it precede its effect, since it is said to be conceived along with it, and relative things, so they say, in so far as they are relative, co-exist and are co-conceived along with one another. Nor can it co-exist with its effect, since if it is effective of it, and what comes to be must do so as a result of something already existing, the cause must come to be earlier and then as such produce its effect. (261: *PH* 3 26–7; cf. *M* 9 232–6)

Sextus offers a trilemma: causes must either succeed, be contemporaneous with, or precede their effects. But none of these are possible; hence causes do not exist (Galen (*On Antecedent Causes* xvi 199–201,=T 59a VS) attributes this argument to Herophilus: see Chapter XIII, 226). Option (c) that effects may precede their causes, is simply ruled out as obviously absurd. Some modern philosophers (notably Dummett, 1954, 1964) have been less sure: but the concept certainly has its difficulties, and may even be incoherent (see Mackie, 1974, ch. 7)—and in any case the arguments against causal precedence that Sextus offers will work (if they work at all) just as well against the possibility of causal subsequence.

The argument against (a) recalls that used in the case of signs (Chapter XI, 206ff.)—cause and effect, no less than sign and signified, are correlatives: but correlatives must

co-exist. Crucial is the rider ‘as its cause’ of 259: nothing is apparently objectionable about supposing that the agent exists prior to acting—but, it is alleged, it cannot exist *qua* agent unless it is doing something. It is worth considering the different ways of analysing causes and effects that Sextus mentions earlier (*PH* 3 14): while an agent may pre-exist any activity, what happens if we identify the cause with some actual property of the agent? Surely if it is the fact that *a* is *F* that makes *b* *F*, then *a*’s *F*-ness should be operative all the time *a* has it. But then *b*’s *F*-ness should exist at all and only at the times that *a*’s *F*-ness does. But even in those cases where it does make sense to view causation as the transfer of a property from agent to patient, the transfer is not immediate. The stove warms the pan of water—but it does not do so instantaneously. The stove’s being warm precedes the water’s being warmed.

So when is it doing the causing? If the cause is actually acting as the cause, then (causes and effects being relative) the effect should be there at the same time. And yet it is a basic feature of our concept of cause that it is temporally asymmetrical. Sextus’s argument concerning the relational status of causes and effects has more going for it than its equivalent in the case of signs, since it does not rely on the alleged ontological co-dependence of relational items. Rather, causation is a physical relation, the bringing about of one thing by another, and if *x* actually *is* bringing about *y* there ought to be something to show for it. So if *x* brings about *y*, and yet precedes it, when does it do it?

Barnes (1983, 180–7) has argued that such questions are misguided: causing is a dyadic relation linking two events, each of which can be treated as having the form ‘ Fx_t ’; thus the full analysis of a causal sentence will look like this:

$$(1) C\langle Fx_{t1}, Gy_{t2} \rangle.$$

Each of the ordered pair is datable; but the relation between them, not itself being an event, is not.

But this seems unsatisfactory. We do seem to want to ask when a cause is exercising its causal powers. Furthermore, we can speak of processes tending towards some conclusion being in progress—and here the language of action in time seems appropriate. If I have been sitting in the sun for an hour, I may say ‘the sun is making me feverish’, even though I do not yet have a fever. I may not even yet be conscious of fever’s immediate incipience. I can rather sense the process which leads to a fever being in train. Provided, then, that one distinguishes between events and the processes which culminate in them, we may rescue both aspects of ordinary causal talk which Sextus argues to be incompatible: *x* acts as a cause of *y*’s being *F* as soon as it sets in train the process leading ultimately to *y*’s *F*-ness. And it seems perfectly natural to speak of it exercising this power throughout the process. As soon as I put the pan on the stove it is making the water in the pan hot, even when it is still stone cold; but the effect, the water’s actually being hot, is only present at the end of the process.

In general, antecedent causes are causes of events or states, and are temporally remote from them; containing causes, on the other hand, tend to be causes of processes, and are concurrent with them. Thus it is not surprising that they stand in different temporal relations to their effects. That story is compressed, and does not do justice to the complexity of the notions involved; but the complexities are not themselves relevant. So,

pace Sextus, there is a sense in which causes both do and do not precede their effects; and, again to borrow an earlier distinction which Sextus puts down to the confusion of the Dogmatists, they precede their effects in so far as their effects are expressed by predicates ('that the wax is melted'), and are contemporary with them in so far as they are expressed by noun-phrases ('the melting of the wax').

Agents and patients

Sextus's arsenal is not yet exhausted, however. At *M* 9 237–51, he rehearses a sequence of arguments designed to show that the distinction between what acts and what is affected is an incoherent one:

(1) Furthermore, if a cause exists, it is the cause of something either autonomously and using only its own power, or else it requires assistance to this end from the matter affected, so that the effect is conceived of according to their mutual combination. (2) But if it is naturally able to produce something autonomously and using its own power, it should, since it is always in possession of itself and its own power, always produce the effect, and not be productive towards some things and not towards others. (3) But if, as some of the Dogmatists say, cause is not one of the absolute and independent things, but is rather among the relatives, since it is conceived in relation to the patient and the patient in relation to it, something even worse will come to light. For if each is conceived in relation to the other, and of these one is productive and the other passive, there will be one conception but they will happen to have two names, of producer and the patient. And for this reason the efficient power will no more reside in it than in what is said to be affected.... (4) For example...if fire is the cause of burning, either it is productive of burning autonomously and using only its own power, or it requires assistance to this end from the burning material. (5) And if it produces the burning autonomously, relying only on its own nature, it should, since it has always had its nature, always have been burning. But it does not invariably burn, but burns some things and not others; therefore it does not burn autonomously using its own nature. (6) But if it does so because of the suitability of the burning wood, how will we be able to say that it, rather than the suitability of the wood, is the cause of burning? For just as when it is absent there is no burning, equally in the absence of the suitability of the wood, no fire takes place. (262: *M* 9 236–43,=[part] 72N LS)

This passage is not lucid, and is susceptible of construals of varying power. One may distinguish between

(T1) if x is genuinely productive of F -ness it should always produce F ness in what it is in contact with;

and

(T2) if x is genuinely productive of F -ness it should be constantly F producing.

The second sentence of 262(5) suggests (T1); elsewhere the language seems to favour (T2). In any case (T1) may collapse into (T2), at least on the basis of the reasons given for either thesis, since the notion of cause at issue is a strongly non-relational one—but surely even being in contact with something else is a relational property. At all events, it is clear that (T1), though the weaker of the two, is still extremely strong—and no candidate for causal status could meet its requirements, at least if causes are construed as agents (as the passage seems to require).

We know a little about the history of this argument. It is owed ultimately to Herophilus's Alexandrian colleague **Erasistratus** (fl. c. 260 BC), and is reported in Galen's *On Antecedent Causes*, a treatise largely devoted to rebuttal of his views. In the technical vocabulary of the Greek medical schools, an antecedent cause does not merely precede its effect; it must also be external to the thing affected, not persist through the effect, and (most importantly) not be a sufficient condition for its effect.⁵ Erasistratus has no objection to allowing temporal causal sequences, although he was apparently loath to label any but the proximate cause in the sequence to an effect as the cause of that effect (Galen, *On Antecedent Causes* xiv 174–6). What he objects to is non-sufficient causes:

they [i.e. causes] ought, if indeed they act from their own nature and have their effectiveness from themselves, to affect not merely weakened bodies but always to appear to be effective; (263: Galen, *On Antecedent Causes* i 10; cf. vi 47–8)

which is precisely the objection Sextus canvasses in 262(5) (263 apparently favours (T1)). Galen subscribes to a pathology according to which some external factor acting in concert with a suitably disposed body will cause the disease. The external factor, or antecedent cause, triggers an already primed mechanism—but if the mechanism is not properly primed, nothing will happen: antecedent causes are (at most) necessary conditions of their effects. Erasistratus, on the other hand, refuses to allow any merely necessary condition the status of a cause.

Erasistratus cites an example: of a thousand people who visit the theatre on a hot day, only four suffer discomfort, and of them only one develops a full-blooded fever—it is thus absurd to hold the excessive heat responsible for the fever (*On Antecedent Causes* ii 11; x 126–30). Equally

if chilling were the cause of fever, then those chilled the more would suffer greater fever. (264: Erasistratus, in Galen, *On Antecedent Causes* xiii 167)

Galen responds that the consequent of 264 follows only if the word 'only' is supplied before 'cause': but then the antecedent is false. In fact, any degree of heat and cold is compatible with any degree of adverse effect according to the several constitutions of the patients in question (*On Antecedent Causes* viii 107–13).⁶

Thus Galen explicitly embraces that option which Sextus claims will cause 'something even worse to come to light': 262(3). Sextus's contention that, if we allow such co-

operative accounts of causing, we will not be able to distinguish between the causal contributions of the fire and of the wood's suitability, has some, limited, force: but it has no tendency to render the notion of cause incoherent. No doubt we do tend to pick on one factor among many which are jointly responsible for some event and label it *the* cause of that event.⁷ But if we are alive to that fact no harm need result. Furthermore, if we deny that items which are merely causal factors are causes at all in the Erasistratean manner, we will be liable to make factual mistakes regarding the causal structure of the world—for example, we will wrongly think that antecedent heating has no part in the complex aetiology of fevers. Sextus's argument shows, then, not that ordinary causal talk is incoherent, but rather that at best it captures a partial truth about the causal structure of events. Once again, a sceptical argument has made us re-evaluate and sophisticate our notions: but it has not forced us to abandon them.

Entirely congruent considerations will take care of Sextus's next argument, which is in effect an extension of the last:

moreover, if there is a cause, it either has one effective power or many.... It has not one power, since if it had one power it ought to affect all things alike and not differently. For example, the sun burns the Ethiopian regions, warms us, but only illumines the Hyperboreans; it dries mud, but melts wax; it whitens clothes but blackens our skin ...Consequently, if it had one power it ought to produce the same thing in all things. But it does not produce the same thing in all things. Therefore it does not have one power. But it cannot have many, since then it should effect all of them in everything, burning and melting and fixing everything, for example. (265: *M* 9 246–8)

But 265 merits one further comment. It invokes the concept of a thing's nature, which has been in one way and another central to the whole discussion. We saw in earlier chapters how the Sceptics attempt to derive their unpalatable conclusions by relying on an extremely strong construe of what it is for something to have some property by nature, expressed by way of principles like (P2) of Chapter VII:

(P2) x is F by nature if and only if x is F non-relatively.

Sextus effectively construes the possession of a power as involving having a certain nature; hence by (P2), if x genuinely possesses a causal power it must do so non-relatively. But then the disposition of objects extraneous to x should have no impact whatsoever on x 's having that power (hence (T1) collapses into (T2)). So x should exercise its powers all the time and in respect of absolutely everything.

That is of course absurd—and we may easily diagnose wherein the absurdity lies. We may construe powers as being dispositional in structure; but that fact does not in itself compromise the legitimacy of the ascription of the power itself directly to the object, indeed to its nature. Fire has a caustic nature—but that does not mean it has any tendency to consume asbestos, say, on the sea-bed. As Aristotle saw, to have a power is not necessarily always to exercise it (*Metaph.* 9 3, 1046b29–1047a10). But that lesson was badly learned in antiquity, and left the Sceptics room to exploit to their own purposes

unacceptably strong construals of the notions of nature and causal power.

In fact, a version of (P2) can now be defended. Consider

(P2*) x has P by nature if and only if x has P non-relatively.

(P2) is ambiguous, since it may be the properties themselves that are supposed to be non-relative; (P2*) has the advantage of making it explicit that it is the *holding* of the properties by the object that must be non-relative; the properties *themselves* may be intrinsically relational (the ability of fire *to burn wood*, for example). Now, that of course raises further questions—the Sceptic may legitimately wonder on what grounds we attribute such relativized properties directly to objects—and whether we can rescue any coherent notion of essence at all once the retreat to dispositions has been made. If all (or at any rate the vast majority) of properties, including allegedly essential ones, become relational in structure, how may we differentiate in a principled fashion between essential and merely accidental properties? Such questions are deep and complex, ones in which linguistic and epistemological issues tend to intertwine with metaphysical problems. Most of them can, I think, be given a satisfactory answer—but here is not the place to attempt it.

XIII

Scepticism in the Medical Schools

Sextus was a doctor, and the author of medical treatises (*M* 7 202, *M* 1 61); indeed, he paints the Sceptical programme as being essentially therapeutic in nature (Chapter XVIII, 300ff.), and the connections between medicine and philosophy in the ancient world run deep. Plato thought that philosophy was the medicine of the soul; Philo of Larissa made a detailed comparison between the job of the doctor and that of the sceptical philosopher (Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 262). And we have seen how the physicians Herophilus and Erasistratus nourished the sceptical tradition.

But we may begin with a fragment of the Sicilian **Diocles of Carystus**:

(1) those who think that one should state a cause in every case do not appear to understand first that it is not always necessary to do so from a practical point of view, and second that many things which exist are somehow by their nature akin to principles, so that they cannot be given a causal account. (2) Furthermore, they sometimes err in assuming what is unknown, disputed, and implausible, thinking that they have adequately given the cause. (3) You should disregard people who aetiologize in this manner, and who think that one should state cause for everything; (4) you should rather rely upon things which have been excogitated over a long period on the basis of experience (*empeiria*); (5) and you should seek a cause for contingent things when that is likely to make what you say about them more understandable and more believable. (266: Diocles, in Galen, *On the Powers of Foodstuffs* VI 455–6, =Fr. 112W)

Diocles was a contemporary of Aristotle's; and 266 displays Aristotelian concerns. At the beginning of *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle stresses that the first principles of a science cannot be demonstrated (*Post. An.* 1 2, 71b26 ff.; 1 3, 72b19 ff.); indeed, explanation must terminate (cf. *Metaph.* 4 4, 1006a6 ff.) in prior and unexplainable premisses in order to avoid infinite regress or circularity (*Post. An.* 1 3; cf. Chapter X, 186ff.).

Diocles echoes that Aristotelian view (266(1), (3)); but his concerns are not merely theoretical. He does not say that the things to be left unexplained actually *are* first principles, only that they are akin to them. He is offering a practical epistemology for medicine; and some things must be accepted as basic, even if they may not in fact be so. 266(2) anticipates the Five Modes (Chapter X). Equally, 266(4) invokes a type of empiricism reminiscent of *On Ancient Medicine* (Chapter III, 34). Finally 266(5) hints that aetiology is often only of rhetorical use.

The Alexandrians

Herophilus's tentative attitude to the business of causal theorizing is summarized in two fragments:

whether or not there is a cause is by nature undiscoverable; but in my opinion I believe I am chilled, warmed, and filled with food and drink (267: Herophilus, in Galen *On Antecedent Causes* xvi 198,=T 59a VS)

some, such as Herophilus, accept causes 'on the basis of a hypothesis'; (268: *ibid.*, xiii 162,=T 58 VS)

267 is evidently sceptical in tone;¹ while 268 suggests that Herophilus offers causal explanations not as being certain, or even probable, but simply as offering a rationally satisfying heuristic reconstruction of the physical world.

Compare one more fragment:

let the *phainomena* be said [to be] first (*prōta*: perhaps 'primary'), even if they are not first. (269: Herophilus, in Anonymus Londinensis, *Iatrica Menonia* 21.22,²=T 50a VS; cf. T 50b VS).³

Whatever the obscurities of this, Herophilus clearly advocates, in Dioclean fashion, as a *modus operandi* a procedure which he admits may not capture the way things really are. Our epistemological limitations demand that our ambitions be modest—and practical medicine requires no more.

The Empiricists

Herophilus was not himself an Empiricist; the school is supposed to have been founded by one of his pupils, **Serapion** (*fl.* c. 225 BC). Of course, empiricist (with a small 'e') tendencies in medicine stretch back to the Hippocratic *Ancient Medicine* and beyond. But it is with the development of the Empiricist school that they become entrenched to form part of a coherent scientific epistemology, one which may reasonably be described as sceptical. It is no accident that several of the members of Diogenes' list of Pyrrhonians (*DL* 9 115–16) are known to have been Empiricist doctors (Menodotus of Nicomedia, and Theodas of Laodicea, Sextus himself, Saturninus), while others probably were (Heraclides, the teacher of Aenesidemus is probably the Empiricist Heraclides of Tarentum; Zeuxis 'cruikshank' may well be the Empiricist of that name).⁴

Empiricism was no codified orthodoxy; it developed and altered, and there was lively internal debate about the status of its methodological principles,⁵ in particular concerning the legitimacy of a certain form of analogical reasoning called 'Transition to the Similar' (*hē tou homoiou metabasis*), by which all but the most hard-line Empiricists sought to extend the range of their empirically acquired knowledge. However, the Empiricists consistently refused to let their theorizing take them beyond the realm of immediate experience and into the arcana of things by nature obscure. That is, they reject IS inference (which they call *analogismos*: see Galen, *Outline of Empiricism* 1,=Fr. 10b 43 Dr; cf. Chapter XI, 202). However, congruently with the official Pyrrhonist position,

they make use of Commemorative Signs (or *epilogismos*).

Galen is our principal source for Empiricism, in particular the three texts translated in Frede, 1985. These are his brief sketch of sectarian division for beginning students *On Sects* (I 64–105 Kühn; Helmreich, 1893, 1–32);⁶ an *Outline of Empiricism*;⁷ and the very early *On Medical Experience*.⁸ Crudely, the Empiricist account of scientific discovery is the following. We can see that affections (*pathē*) arise in people, sometimes for no obvious cause (such as nose bleeds), sometimes for some evident reason (as when wounds cause bleeding). Furthermore, we may observe that sometimes further intervention produces (or is followed by) beneficial results. Sometimes we are naturally driven to try something, sometimes it happens by chance; and sometimes we simply improvise in the hope that it may chance to be efficacious. Having observed something beneficial occur following one or other of these types of reaction, we may try it again in similar circumstances:

an imitative experience is one where something which has proved to be beneficial...is tried out again for the same complaint. It is this kind of experience which has contributed most to the art: for when they have imitated, not two or three but very many times, what has turned out to be beneficial on earlier occasions, and when they then find out that, for the most part, it has the same effect in the case of the same diseases, then they call such a recollection a theorem. (270: Galen, *On Sects* 3 H)

Thus the Empiricist collects instances where certain things are seen to follow certain others—if enough of them occur, they may ground a general rule, or theorem. Furthermore, the relations need not be universal and positive; the Empiricists outlined a fivefold typology of connection and disjunction according to whether things went together always, for the most part, half the time, rarely, or never (*Outline* 2, 6,=Fr. 10b 45–6, 58 Dr); all of them are of value in discriminating appropriate therapies and rejecting others.

Nor was personal experience, *autopsia*, the only valid route to empirical knowledge. One should scrutinize the reports of others, *historia*, in arriving at a determination of therapy, although not uncritically. The Empiricists contrived an elaborate system for assessing the value of particular items of *historia*, dependent on, among other things, the demonstrated reliability of the source on previous occasions, and its agreement with other sources. But they are careful not to make any Dogmatic claim regarding the intrinsic likelihood or otherwise of any particular report. Thus they do not hold that agreement among authorities is some kind of natural sign that what they say is really true (cf. 194: Chapter IX); rather, it is a Commemorative Sign: in the past, when there has been such agreement, acting in accordance with it has tended to be beneficial: and so it is reasonable to act upon it in this case (*Outline* 8,=Fr. 10b 68–9 Dr).

No claims are made about any alleged underlying features or dispositions of the patients in virtue of which these empirically-derived cures are efficacious. The Empiricist bypasses such causal speculation as being un-determinable and therapeutically useless. All the epistemological work is done for the Empiricists at the level of the *phainomena*: the connections which ground their therapeutics are evident connections of repeated

event-types. They characterize ‘experience’ (*empeiria*), or the understanding that such connections have held, as

the memory of what one has seen to happen often and in the same way. (271: Galen, *Outline of Empiricism* 4,=Fr. 10b 50 Dr)

All an Empiricist doctor is required to do is to remember the way things have happened in the past.⁹

Here, however, they are vulnerable to Dogmatist attack. First, their method of building up an experience explicitly relies upon their being able to recognize similarities between different cases. But, as Galen’s Dogmatist points out in *On Medical Experience*,¹⁰ each case differs from all others in some respects, while unrelated cases share irrelevant features. How, in the absence of theory, are we supposed to determine what are the salient features in virtue of which they may be declared to be relevantly similar (*Med. Exp.* 3–6, 88–93 W)?

Furthermore, even if the Empiricist can furnish an account of relevant similarity which will allow him to say that he has observed the same thing many times, how many times is many? Galen’s Dogmatist deploys a soritical argument to undermine the coherence of the Empiricist’s concept of an experience: one observation is not enough—but if one isn’t two can’t be, and if two aren’t, three can’t be, and so on ‘until I reach a very high number’ (*Med. Exp.* 7 96 W).¹¹ If one observation cannot constitute an appearance, then the addition of one observation to an already existing set cannot either.

Various responses are open to the Empiricist. As regards similarity, the Empiricist says he needs no criterion: he makes no Dogmatic claims about what such similarities rest upon, or the real nature of fundamental likeness. He merely acts on the basis of what appear to him as similarities—an ailment observed today will recall one he saw last week—indeed, he may well be able to say why. But that is all. Equally, in the case of the sorites (*Med. Exp.* 16–18, 114–20 W), an Empiricist will not say how many times makes many; that will vary from individual to individual, from case to case. The building up of experience is not inferential—it just happens that, after a number of individual experiences, the Empiricist comes to perceive a general pattern. Now that pattern might prove misleading: but experience itself suggests that it will not.

But if the building of an experience for the Empiricists is not properly to be construed as involving inference, what about the analogical procedure of ‘Transition to the Similar’? Transition is not a means of generating knowledge, but rather a useful way of throwing up new testable hypotheses on the basis of apparent similarities. Having treated sprained ankles but not wrists, when faced with a case of the latter the Empiricist will essay the ankle treatment on the grounds that wrists resemble ankles. Transition thus supplements pure improvisation:

in the case of transference of one remedy from one ailment to another similar to it one has a greater or smaller basis for expectation of success in proportion to the increase or decrease in similarity of the ailment, whether or not *historia* is involved. And the same goes for the transference from one part of the body to another. (272: Galen, *Outline of Empiricism* 9,=Fr. 10b 74 Dr)

Transition commands greater confidence the more affinities there are between the tested and the proposed cases: but this is not to make any metaphysical assumptions about the regularity of the universe of the type that Hume thought vitiated induction (*Enquiry* IV). It is provisional only: the Empiricist, unlike the Dogmatist, will not be greatly surprised in any particular case if the results are disappointing.

The Empiricists explicitly distinguish their practice from the superficially similar procedure of the Dogmatists:

Logical (i.e. Dogmatic) Transition based on the nature of things lays hold of knowledge by means of indication (*endeixis*).¹² But the Empirical variety relies on what is discovered by experience,¹³ not because it is persuasive or plausible that the similar should be productive of something similar, or require similar things, or undergo similar things; it is not on the basis of this, or anything else of this sort, that they think it justifiable to make the Transition, but on the basis of the fact that they have discovered by experience that things behave this way. (273: Galen, *Outline of Empiricism* 9, =Fr. 10b 70 Dr)

The empirical success of the past applications of Transition to the Similar itself justifies the application of the procedure to new cases.¹⁴

Empiricism, Signs and Inference

Transition is clearly a potentially powerful tool. But the more extensively it is used, the more it might seem to compromise Empiricism's purity. Both the applicability and the proper characterization of Transition were disputed by the Empiricists themselves:

the question has been raised whether Serapion also believes that Transition to the Similar is a third constitutive part of medicine as a whole. Menodotus thought that it was not, but that the Empiricist merely makes use of Transition to the Similar—and it is not the same thing to make use of something as to treat it as a part. Cassius the Pyrrhonian, furthermore, tried to show that the Empiricist does not even make use of Transition of this sort; indeed he has written an entire book on the subject. Theodas did better when he held that Transition to the Similar constituted reasonable experience. Yet others, though, have claimed that Transition to the Similar is more like an instrument. (274: Galen, *Outline of Empiricism* 4, =Fr. 10b 49–50 Dr)

Whether Transition is a proper part of Empirical medicine, or whether Empiricism simply makes use of it, turns on the degree of warranted confidence one may have in the outcome of any particular application of the method, and in its general effectiveness. The more genuinely Sceptical the Empirical doctor, the less he will be likely to admit that Transition has an official part in Empiricist practice—although he may acknowledge that he uses it.

Cassius is presumably the 'Cassius the sceptic' said by Diogenes (*DL* 7 32) to have

attacked Zeno's moral and political philosophy. His renunciation of Transition in any form represents an attempt to purify Empiricism from unwarranted Dogmatic accretions by rejecting anything that smacked of inference. For these tougher Empiricists, Empiricism is simply practice. To admit inferential procedures at all would tend to blur the distinction between them and the Dogmatists, and undermine the coherence of their attack on theoretical reasoning.¹⁵ Thus some Empiricists tried heroically to attribute the discovery of complex drugs simply to trial and error (Galen, *On the Therapeutic Method* X 163 Kühn). Conversely, while Galen allows that Empiricists may become good doctors (*On Sects* 4, 7–9 H), he refuses to admit that complex remedies, or technical instruments such as the cuppingglass, could have been discovered by mere improvisation (*On the Affected Parts* VIII 154–5 Kühn).

274 suggests that by Galen's time Empiricists themselves were unclear as to whether Serapion employed Transition, which in turn suggests that nothing of him survived to indicate that he did. And it is plausible to suppose that the Empiricists gradually relaxed their initial hard line in response to Dogmatic objections (in a manner parallel to the convergence of Stoa and Academy: Chapter VI, 108–10). And then, just as Aenesidemus reacted against the dilution of scepticism to the point of insipidity, so Cassius fought against the syncretist tide by re-inventing a genuine Empiricism.

Two questions arise:

(1) what was the nature of this hardline Empiricism?

And

(2) what could revisionist Empiricists do in order to make clear the difference between themselves and the Dogmatists?

It is important first to get clear about what reason involves for the ancients.¹⁶ At least since Aristotle, theorists tended to conceptualize reason as a power or faculty in the soul by which one could go beyond the immediate data of experience and form general conclusions (cf. *Post. An.* 2 19; *Metaph.* 1 3).

Here Sceptical objections can gain purchase—the gap between experience and rationally derived ‘knowledge’ can never conclusively be bridged. The Empiricists here adopt the Sceptical vocabulary of undecided or undecidable dispute (276, below). Moreover, the Empiricists attack the Dogmatic concept of proof:¹⁷

they do not grant that there is such a thing as indication (*endeixis*) or that one thing can be known on the basis of something else, for one has to know everything on the basis of itself. Nor do they allow that there is such a thing as a sign of something which by its very nature is non-evident. Furthermore they argue that no art (*technē*) has any need of logic.... Then they talk about the fallacious modes of proof which the Dogmatists are accustomed to use and in particular about the class of analogisms.... Epilogism, on the other hand, which they describe as reasoning solely in terms of what is apparent, is of use in the discovery of things which are temporarily non-evident. For this is how they themselves call things which are by genus perceptible but which have not yet become apparent. (275: Galen, *On Sects* 5 10–11 H)

The Empiricists deny that collections of evident phenomena can ever justify an inference

to some hidden condition, since if such inferences were logically watertight, then there should be no disagreement about them: but in medicine, in particular, no sign-inference is secure or uncontroversial (Chapter XI: 240).

Indeed, the Empiricists say that

inapprehensibility (*akatalēpsia*) is the cause of the undecidable dispute (*diaphōnia anepikritos*), while the dispute is in turn a sign of the inapprehensibility. And they note that it is the dispute concerning non-evident matters which cannot be decided, not the dispute concerning evident matters. For in the latter case everything, once it is apparent what it is like, confirms those who are right and refutes those who are wrong. (276: Galen, *On Sects* 5 11–12 H)

These passages reflect the Empiricism in Galen's time, namely that of Menodotus. These Empiricists will admit reasoning, but only such as is capable of empirical confirmation.¹⁸ This answers question (2). Empiricists, like moderate Sextan Sceptics, will insist that CS, unlike IS, 'inferences' are acceptable because potentially verifiable. That last claim is of course vulnerable to Humean attack, as perhaps Cassius the Sceptic realized.

At all events, the earliest Empiricists justified their position in severely commonsensical terms. 'Knowledge' simply involved possessing a body of apparently reliable general beliefs caused by a sequence of perceptions stored in the memory, to be accessed under the stimulus of an appropriately similar condition. But in saying this, the Empiricists make no Dogmatic claims about how things really are—rather they merely describe certain features of their psychological life, a further fact of which is that the doctor who proceeds on memorist lines will frequently be seen to make the right decision: his intervention will be followed by the patient's recovery. Can he claim the credit for that? Might not the patient simply have recovered spontaneously? Do we not need a theory of medical aetiology to justify the belief that it was the doctor's intervention that was efficacious and not some extraneous factor? Maybe—but that will not worry the Empiricist. He will simply go on behaving on the basis of his (limited) beliefs. If they start to guide him in the wrong direction, then he will alter them (indeed, he will do so the more readily, not being committed to their truth; compare the Pyrrhonian attitude: Chapter XVII, 286ff.). This sort of Empiricist may utilize commemorative signs (as Frede, 1990, 247, notes, the very term suggests an origin in Empiricist 'Memorism', as he calls it)—but he will not sanction any theory of them. Hence even at the level of the basic CS inference, it is open to the Empiricist to distinguish between endorsing a procedure and merely using it (cf. 274 above, on Transition).

That is a sketch of a hardline Empiricism which rejects all reasoning (at least *as* reasoning). But, as 274 shows, Empiricists quarrelled about reason's role, an impression confirmed by the final chapters of Galen's *Outline*. In Chapter 11 (Fr. 10b 80–6 Dr) Galen accuses Empiricists like Menodotus of revelling in argument and controversy inconsistently with Empiricism's professed ideals—rather they should be judged by their deeds alone. **Menodotus** (*fl.* second century AD), indeed, is accused of lapsing into Dogmatism: he wrote a book purporting to show that all of Asclepiades' views were false

in spite of the fact that on innumerable occasions he has said that one should approach everything non-evident as if it perhaps is, and perhaps is not true. (277: Galen, *Outline of Empiricism* 11, Fr. 10b 84 Dr)

Menodotus was a negative dogmatist, Galen charges, in spite of his avowed scepticism. However, Galen may misconstrue Menodotus's purpose—**Asclepiades** (*fl.* c. 125 BC) had mounted a serious attack upon the foundations of Empirical practice (substantially reproduced in *On Medical Experience*). Menodotus's 'refutation' should perhaps be taken purely dialectically, not as demonstrating Asclepiades' views to be false, but rather pointing to the vulnerability of his arguments, in unimpeachably Pyrrhonian fashion. Still, Sextus writes, presumably with Menodotus in mind, that

Empiricism positively affirms the non-apprehensibility of the nonevident. (278: *PH* 1 236)

We also know from Sextus (*PH* 1 222) that Menodotus was among those (with Aenesidemus: Chapter VII, 127) who read Plato as a sceptic: his interests clearly ranged well beyond the confines of Empiricist practice. Thus Menodotus follows Aenesidemus in advocating an *akatalēpsia* based on a sceptical interpretation of Plato. Sextus, however, detects in Menodotan Empiricism an unpalatable streak of negative dogmatism; this view gains support from 275, where *akatalēpsia* is allegedly the *cause* of irresoluble *diaphōnia*, a claim which appears to go well beyond the appearances. However, everything turns, once more, on the interpretation of *akatalēpsia* and *anepikritos*: if they are non-modal in force, and simply report a current state of affairs (things are as a matter of fact not grasped, since if they were there would be no dispute—and the dispute is as a matter of fact undecided), then they can be given a perfectly respectable Sceptical reading. I am inclined to think that that is how Menodotan Empiricism should be interpreted; the impression of negative dogmatism is unconfirmed.

Even so, Menodotus's Empiricism was more accommodating than that of the hardliners:

Menodotus frequently introduces a third thing in addition to perception and memory, which he calls 'epilogism'; sometimes, however, he does not posit anything in addition to memory except perception. (279: Galen, *Outline of Empiricism* 12, =Fr. 10b 87–8 Dr)

It is not clear how to interpret this: Frede (1990, 248–9) canvasses a variety of unsatisfactory alternatives (Menodotus changed his mind; he was inconsistent; he saw no difference between the two positions) before outlining his preferred explanation: Menodotus allowed both memoristic and epilogistic accounts, but accorded them different statuses. Memorism, the 'theory' which eschews all reasoning, was elaborated to show that there is an alternative to the Dogmatists' view of the necessity of reasoning; while epilogism simply reports, without endorsing, the actual practice of the Empirical doctor.

That account has the virtue of exhibiting a close connection between Empiricism and a Pyrrhonism which criticizes and refutes Dogmatic positions and yet lays out a Pyrrhonian way of life (in undogmatic terms) as well. If this is right, Galen's criticism of Menodotus for engaging in argument is as misguided as those Dogmatic contentions that Pyrrhonian argument against argument self-refutes (Chapter XVII, 280ff.); and a thoroughly sceptical Menodotus emerges from the thickets of misinterpretation.

Both Sceptic and Empiricist, then, will make use of Commemorative Signs; but they do so undogmatically, untheoretically, and with no commitment to the correctness of the procedure. That does not mean that the Empirical doctors' dispute about reason is chimerical, since some Empiricists (perhaps first of all Heraclides of Tarentum, *fl.* c. 70 BC: see *Outline of Empiricism*= Fr 106 8 87) apparently allowed, in a quasi-Dogmatic manner, the existence and utility of human reasoning powers. But not even they will have embraced IS inference.

Causes, Explanation, and Ontology

The third major Hellenistic medical tradition, that of the Methodists, arose in the first century BC. Its origins are obscure,¹⁹ but it appears to have been developed from Asclepiadean corpuscularian physiology, first by Themison of Laodicea in the latter part of the first century BC, and then by his pupil **Thessalus**, the first genuine Methodist.²⁰ The Methodists rejected as therapeutically irrelevant anything to do with the aetiology of disease,

claiming that the indication as to what is beneficial, derived directly from the affections themselves, is enough for them, and not even these taken as specific particulars, but taking them to be common and universal. Thus they also call these affections which pervade all particulars 'communalities'...which they call restriction and relaxation, and they say that each disease is either constricted, relaxed, or a mixture of the two. (280: Galen, *On Sects* 6 12–13 H)

There are basically two pathological conditions: the relaxed, in which 'the bodily fluids flow too freely', and the constricted, in which they do not flow freely enough. The physician's sole job is to diagnose these states, which he should be able to do without difficulty, after a little practice.

Sextus, in a puzzling passage, actually takes Methodism to be closer than Empiricism (in his view a form of negative Dogmatism: 278) to the Pyrrhonian position, since

the Methodist speaks of 'communality' and 'pervade' and the like in a non-committal way. Thus also he uses the term 'indication' undogmatically to denote the guidance derived from the apparent affections or symptoms, both natural and unnatural, for the discovery of the apparently appropriate remedies. (281: *PH* 1 240)

Furthermore, the Methodist, like the Sceptic, is guided by the 'compulsion of the

affections' to seeking allopathic remedies. Methodism, on Sextus's account, does not even involve memory—one does not need long experience to appreciate the communalities—rather, one will simply come to *see* them. So, to the extent to which Empiricism is committed to the importance of memory, it is perhaps fair to say, with Sextus, that Methodism involves even less theoretical commitment.²¹

Furthermore, Methodism involves no sign-*inference* of any kind:

Thessalus and his sect...argue thus: 'if there were sure and inevitable signs of future events, such as the onset of phrenitis, all who manifested them would necessarily develop phrenitis. But some of those who show these symptoms do not develop phrenitis.' (282: Caelius Aurelianus, *On Acute Diseases* 1 22)

Moreover,

every sign is understood in relation to what is signified, since signs belong in the category of relations. But can anything be called a sign if the thing signified is not only not present now, but in some cases never will be? (283: Caelius Aurelianus, *On Acute Diseases* 1 29; cf. Aenesidemus's attack on signs: 173, 174, 240)

None the less, the Methodists employ the notion of indication, even if Sextus is right that they do so undogmatically—and Galen takes this to distinguish them from the Empiricists:

however much they occupy themselves with what is apparent, they are distinguished from the Empiricists by their use of indication (*endeixis*).... And the Empiricists, they say, will have nothing to do with anything non-evident, claiming it is unknowable, while they themselves will have nothing to do with anything non-evident since it is useless. Furthermore, the Empiricists derive observation from the apparent, while they derive indication from it. (284: Galen, *On Sects* 6 14 H)

The precise force of the last sentence is unclear—but it suggests a level of theoretical commitment on the Methodists' part not shared by the Empiricists. However that may be, the most important feature of Methodism is its utter disregard for the antecedent history of a complaint.

The Empiricists happily speak of antecedent circumstances (*On Sects* 7 H); for instance, in the case of rabies (*ibid.* 18 H) the Empiricist will note that, in the past, the dog's condition has been of paramount importance in determining the outcome of the case. By contrast Methodists will simply treat any dog-bite as a simple wound, regardless of the dog's state (*ibid.* 19 H). Dogmatists will take note of the same facts as the Empiricists, but will go further, constructing a theory to connect the dog's madness and the ensuing hydrophobia.

Here it becomes important to resolve an apparent inconsistency in the Empiricist position. Galen says that Empiricists 'do not hesitate to ask for the so-called antecedent

cause' (ibid. 8 H; cf. *On Medical experience* 24, 133 W; Celsus, *On Medicine* Pr. 27); however, elsewhere he remarks that the Empiricists 'doubt whether there are causes or not' (*On Antecedent Causes* xiii 162), and that

even those doctors from the Empirical school, who above all others proclaim things in accordance with common sense, were so overcome by the sophism as to be moved to doubt concerning antecedent causes. (285: Galen, *On Antecedent Causes* xiii 170)²²

These texts are not, however, really in conflict. The Empiricist, unlike the Dogmatist, offers no account of *how* the dog's bite causes rabies; rather he simply thinks that rabies follows bites of that sort. Dogmatist and Empiricist do not disagree about the evident facts; they part company over their proper interpretation. The Empiricist rejects antecedent causal theory, while accepting the therapeutic relevance of the items in question.²³

Thus in a certain sense, Dogmatist and Empiricist need not differ over the facts; and Galen for one allows that adept Empiricists frequently offer the same prescriptions as competent Dogmatists. Indeed, he can explain this practical convergence:

the same things from which the Dogmatists derive the indication of what is beneficial form the basis of the Empiricist's observation. For the collection of symptoms in the case of the person who has a fever, which they are accustomed to call the 'syndrome' suggests evacuation to a Dogmatist, but to an Empiricist the recollection of his observation.... And in general the Dogmatists and the Empiricists draw on the same medicines for the same affections. What they disagree about is the way these remedies are discovered. For, given the same apparent bodily symptoms, the Dogmatists derive from them an indication of the cause, and on the basis of this cause they find a treatment, whereas the Empiricists are reminded by them of what has happened often in the same way. (286: Galen, *On Sects* 4 7 H)

But while the Dogmatist is led 'by the nature of the matter', the Empiricist is not.

Furthermore, the Dogmatist thinks that the 'nature of the matter', the underlying physical structures of things, plus a theory of their interactions, will explain why the therapies work in particular cases. For the Empiricist, all explanation will be epistemic rather than ontological. He can say why he adopts a certain practice and what gives him (limited) confidence in it; but he will have no views as to the fundamental facts (if any) in virtue of which his procedures work (if they do). He has no commitment to any ontology whatever—and in this sense he is an Essential Sceptic.²⁴

XIV

Sceptical Physics and Metaphysics

M 9–10 (sometimes called *Against the Physicists*) and the first half of *PH* 3 are devoted to issues in theology, cosmology, mathematics, and physics. In addition, three of the essays in *M* 1–6 (3 and 4 on geometry and arithmetic, 5 on astrology) cover similar ground. Such concepts as God, cause, body, place, time, motion and rest, generation and destruction, and change are investigated; the discordant positions of the various Dogmatists are laid out, their inconcinnities noted, their divergences from common sense remarked, all as a means of inducing *epochē* (the arguments concerning causes have been examined already; and some of the positions of *M* 3–5 will be considered in Chapter XV).

Theology

Let us begin with the arguments concerning principles (*archai*). Since most agree that some principles are material, while others are efficient, let us make the beginning (*archē*) of the argument with the efficient ones, since they say that these are more important than the material ones. And since most have declared that God is the most efficient cause, let us first inquire into God, making it clear beforehand that, while following ordinary life undogmatically saying that there are gods, and honouring them, and saying that they have foreknowledge, we none the less say the following things against the rashness of the Dogmatists. (287: *PH* 3 1–2; cf. *M* 9 4–12)

The distinction between efficient and material principles is indeed a Greek philosophical commonplace. It is drawn in Plato's *Phaedo* (98–9) and *Timaeus* (44–6); and it is clearly visible in Aristotle's differentiation between material, and formal and efficient, causes (e.g. *Phys.* 2 3, 194b16–195a3). But Sextus has the Stoics most immediately in view:

moreover the Stoics too say that there are two principles, God and formless matter, of which they suppose God to do the making, and the matter to undergo alteration and change. (288: *M* 9 11, = *SVF* II 301; cf. *SVF* I 85, 493; II 299–303)

The attack on theology is part and parcel of the general assault on Dogmatic physics. Sceptics

say undogmatically that the gods exist, and we reverence them, and say that they have foreknowledge; (289: *PH* 3 2)

but they dispute the Dogmatists' account of them. First of all, Sextus charges that Dogmatists have no clear, agreed, and unequivocal conception of God's essence and form (ibid. 3). But if they claim that they agree at least about the basic properties of imperishability and blessedness (although in fact they quarrel over these too: 4–5), whether anything exists instantiating them is still an open question which cannot be settled by appealing to evident facts (6–9). Then there is the Problem of Evil:

he who says God exists either says that he has providence for the things in the world or that he does not, and if the former then either for all or only some things. But if he had providence for all, there would be neither evil nor vice in the world: yet they say that everything is full of vice, and consequently he cannot have providence for all. But if only for some, why has he providence for some and not others? For either (a) he both wishes and is able to have providence for all, or (b) he wishes to but is unable, or (c) he is able but doesn't wish it, or (d) he neither wishes it nor is able. (290: *PH* 3 9–10)

Sextus characteristically examines (a)–(d) in turn, (a) is ruled out as being inconsistent with the evident evil in the world, (b) derogates from God's supposedly infinite power; (c) from his goodness, and (d) from both—all of which are unacceptable to orthodox theology. Thus there cannot exist a benevolent, all-powerful God—hence we cannot infer his existence from immanent signs of benevolence (ibid. 11–12), on the basis of some Argument from Design (as did Plato, the Stoics, and Galen).¹ Furthermore, the rejection of God's providence is central to the sceptical attack on divination (XV, 256ff. below).

Sextus's argument does not touch the disengaged divinities of Aristotle or the Epicureans—it troubles only those committed to a God who has concern for his creatures. Moreover the charge is of less moment against the deities of Plato and Galen, who are constrained by material factors—they do not literally *create* the world and all its denizens: they merely mould matter into the best forms possible. All the same, Sextus's exhaustive disjunction of possibilities must embarrass any theist who is committed to God's supreme goodness but who is sufficiently clear-eyed to recognize that evil patently exists. Sextus's argument emphasizes the attractions of Manicheanism.

Sextus leaves the matter there in *PH* and turns to other physical issues; however, *M* 9 deploys a further battery of anti-theistic arguments. *M* 9 opens with a doxography of comparative theology to reinforce the point of *PH* 3 2–5 that there is no commonly-shared conception of the divine (*M* 9 13–74). At 75–137, Sextus marshals an array of specific, largely Stoic, arguments in favour of there existing a divine principle. They invoke causal considerations ('material substance must be organized and set in motion by some cause; structures require designers and artificers; hence God exists': 75–86; cf. 111–18), a *priori* reasoning ('there must be some best nature; man is not the best nature; hence there must be some nature better than man, i.e. God'—attributed to Cleanthes: 88–91; Zeno: 104–7), as well as standard Arguments from Design (92–4).

Many of these arguments are paralleled in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* (*ND*) 2, where

the material is treated under four heads (*ND* 2 3). Balbus (Cicero's Stoic spokesman) undertakes to prove (i) that gods exist (*ND* 2 4–44; cf. *M* 9 61–74); (ii) what their nature is (45–72); (iii) that they govern the world (73–153; cf. *M* 9 75–122); and (iv) that they do so for the benefit of humanity (154–67).² These are systematically rebutted by Cotta on behalf of Academic scepticism. The 'facts' of divination which supposedly entail the gods' existence (cf. *M* 9 132) are mere hearsay and superstition (3 14: see further Chapter XV, 257). Regarding (ii), Cotta fastens directly on peculiarities of the Stoic account: the world may be beautiful, but that has no tendency to show that it is wise (21–2). Here Balbus considers 'the famous old syllogism' (22) of Zeno:

'(a) that which is rational is better than that which is not rational; but (b) nothing is better than the world; therefore (c) the world is rational': if this satisfies you, you will prove that the world is best able to read a book, since in Zeno's footsteps by this mode of reasoning you can infer: '(a*) that which is literate is better than that which is not literate; but (b); therefore (c*) the world is literate'. By this mode of reasoning the world will also be an orator, a mathematician even, a musician, indeed something versed in every discipline: in short, a philosopher. (291: Cicero, *ND* 3 22–3; cf. *M* 9 108)³

Sextus attributes the counter-argument to Alexinus, a Megarian follower of Eubulides; and the Stoics replied as follows:

whereas Zeno has chosen what is absolutely better, i.e. the rational than the non-rational, the intelligent than the non-intelligent, the animate than the inanimate, Alexinus has not: for the poetic is not absolutely better than the non-poetic, nor the grammatical than the non-grammatical... poetic Archilochus is not better than non-poetic Socrates, nor grammatical Aristarchus⁴ than non-grammatical Plato. (292: *M* 9 109–10)

The Stoics have a point. They need not be committed to thinking that if A is better than B *qua* F, it must be better than B *qua* G for any G. But they do need to show that both (a) and (b) are true in a non-relative sense—and that, as the Sceptics will point out, they are very far from being able to do. Furthermore, Cotta argues that the mere orderliness of the universe will not suffice to show that it is governed by reason, since there are orderly phenomena (e.g. the tides) that not even the Stoics ascribe directly to a divinity (*ND* 3 24–5).

Cotta's refutation of (iii) is lost; but as regards (iv), the world's providential organization for mankind's benefit, he argues first that reason may not be an unalloyed gift (cf. Favorinus: Chapter XV: 307): wicked people may use it to evil ends, as tragedy (66–72) and the law-courts (74–5) both show. It is not enough to blame men for abusing their gifts (as Descartes does: *Meditations* 4), since providence ought to have foreseen the abuse, and not bestowed them in the first place (76–8). Finally, Cotta points to the fact that evil sometimes prospers as it should not if there were a benevolent, providential God (79–93).

The Sceptics' purpose is not to promote atheism, but simply to create a sceptical

diaphōnia about the nature and existence of the gods (Cotta is himself a priest and a believer of a non-dogmatic sort: *ND* 1 61; 3 5, 15). They employ the arguments of famous atheists like Diagoras of Melos (*M* 9 51–3), but without endorsing them. Sextus also contends that atheism has absurd consequences, explicitly borrowing from the Stoics ('if gods do not exist, neither will piety, since piety is the knowledge of service to the gods; but piety does exist; so, too, do the gods': *M* 9 123). And he happily plays off Epicurean arguments against those of more conventional theists. The Epicureans believed in gods of such a peculiar sort that their belief amounts to a rejection of traditional theism (and hence supports the contention that there is no universally-held conception of the divine). Moreover, the Epicurean mechanistic model of the universe can be set against Stoic providentialism. Sceptics can get all the *diaphōnia* they need simply by juxtaposing the claims of the theists.

The Concept of the Divine

But for all the purportedly all-embracing nature of the sceptical arguments, the principal target of both Academic and Pyrrhonian alike is the Stoics. Epicurean theology, even if genuine, was too 'minimalist'⁵ to present much of a sceptical target. Sextus relies for his general strategy, and for much of his particular argument, on Academic models, as becomes apparent by comparing his eighteen arguments directed against Stoic theology (*M* 9 138–81) with the relevant sections of Cicero's *ND* (especially 3 29–34, 43–52):

Zeno propounded this argument as well: '(a) it is rational to honour the gods; but (b) it is not rational to honour the non-existent; so (c) gods exist'. But some oppose to this argument a parallel one: '(a*) it is rational to honour the wise; but (b); therefore (c*) wise men exist'. (293: *M* 9 133,=54DLS [part])

But (c*) is not a proposition that the Stoics accept. **Diogenes of Babylon** (fl. mid-second century BC) refined the argument:

in reply to the counter-example, Diogenes says that the second premiss of Zeno's argument means effectively '(b*) it is not rational to honour those who are not of such a nature as to exist'; but when taken in this way, it is clear that the gods are of such a nature as to exist. But if so, then they exist. For if they ever did exist, they do now, just as if atoms ever existed they do now. For this sort of thing is ungenerable and incorruptible according to the conception of bodies.... But it is not the case that the wise are of a nature to exist, and hence exist. (294: *M* 9 135,=54DLS [part])

The Stoics' tactic is to argue from the rationality of certain practices to the existence of the gods. But it is unclear why they thought that such practices *were* rational in the first place, since that is, among other things, precisely what an atheistic natural historian of religion will deny—and it is hard to see how to ground (a) and its congeners without begging the question, (a) would be more plausible reformulated as a subjunctive

conditional:

(a*) were gods to exist it would be rational to honour them;

but then it cannot do the work the Stoics require.

294 mounts a different defence. The argument is not well handled—but it can be refurbished. Diogenes needs to read Zeno's (a) in a stronger modal manner:

(a') it is rationally incumbent upon one to honour the gods;

(a'), in conjunction with a similarly strengthened (b*)

(b*') it is not rationally incumbent upon one to honour those who are not of such a nature as to exist,

yields (c). However, Diogenes clearly saw that to have any genuine force, the bulk of the argumentative work needed to be done by (b*'): (a') on its own shows nothing. That is why he introduces the Anselmian considerations of the gods' necessary existence, in order to give independent grounds for an even stronger version of (b*'). Consider (b*') reformulated as a conditional:

(b*") (x)(honour of x is rationally demanded only if x is of such a nature as to exist);

then given (a'), it follows that the gods are of such a nature as to exist, and hence that they exist. But Diogenes rather invokes the converse of (b*") to argue from

(d) the gods are of such a nature as to exist

to

(e) it is rationally incumbent upon one to honour the gods,

and then to give reasons for (d). No doubt Academic pressure forced the Stoics to provide independent support for (a), which they had previously simply assumed.

Premiss (d) recalls the basic claim of the ontological argument. Sextus remarks elsewhere (*M* 9 49) that 'not everything conceived has a share in existence' (cf. 123–5: there can be no science of hippocentaurs). Diogenes apparently holds that the conception of the divine entails its existence;⁶ he may have reasoned as follows:

(1) it is possible that gods exist;

hence

(2) at some time the gods exist.⁷

But

(3) the gods are indestructible and ungenerable,

hence, given (2)

(4) the gods exist for ever.

That argument makes moves similar to Plantinga's (1974, ch. 10) in his modal version of the Ontological Argument; and it is suspect at the same point. No sense of 'possible' in which (1) seems uncontroversially true will be strong enough to support the subsequent argument—conversely, any sense in which it is begs the question.⁸

The Carneadean Inheritance

I have dealt with that argument at some length, not because we have any detailed extant sceptical riposte to it, but because in its reconstruction we can see clearly how the originally Zenonian syllogism was modified under sceptical fire—and crucially how Diogenes' argument makes use of (3), the ungenerability and indestructibility of the gods. For, as Long (1990) shows, (3) was not an original Stoic thesis. In early Stoicism the gods were extremely long-lived: but they, like everything else, perished in the great conflagrations which punctuate each cosmic cycle.⁹ Diogenes began the process of modifying the theory of world-conflagration which led to its eventual abandonment.¹⁰ Moreover, as Long (1990, 282–5) notes, immortality does not play a role in any of the standard Stoic arguments in *ND* 2.

None the less, it seems that the Stoics were forced to adopt the view that the gods were indeed immortal: which is where Carneades comes in. From *M* 9 138–81, Sextus rehearses eighteen arguments, six of which are indubitably Carneadean.¹¹ All of them seek to infer God's perishability from properties attributed to him by the Stoics. Hence forcing them to accept (3) is an integral part of the overall Academic strategy. The fourth argument goes as follows:

(5) if God is sentient, then he is altered (since perception consists in alteration);

(6) if altered, he is susceptible of change;

(7) if susceptible of change, then he is susceptible of change for the worse;

(8) if susceptible of change for the worse, he is perishable. (*M* 9 146–7; cf. *ND* 3 29, 32, 34; cf. Long, 1990, 283)

Carneades infers from one divine attribute (sentience) the negation of another (imperishability), and thus shows the Stoic concept to be incoherent. The parenthesis of (5) is a Greek commonplace; but it may be wondered what role (6) plays in the argument. After all, if we have already established *p*, we do not usually thereafter seek to prove that *p* is possible. Carneades probably here exploits the modal principle that underwrites Diogenes' move from (1) to (2); the fact of God's alterability shows that God is affectible—but if so, in an infinite time, he will be infinitely affected, i.e. he will perish. That argument is not unexceptionable—but it relies on modal principles that were, in all probability, endorsed by the Stoics themselves (cf. n. 7). Equally, (7) is required to show that the infinite change really will be one in the direction of perishing. It makes implicit use of another divine attribute, namely perfection. If God is perfect, then any alteration in him can only derogate from his perfection, hence it must be a change for the worse, i.e. towards annihilation.

Sextus's sixth argument invokes the concept of corporeality:

- (9) if there is something divine, it is either a body or incorporeal;
 but
 (10) it is not incorporeal,
 since
 (11) what is incorporeal is inanimate and insensitive;
 (12) nor is it a body,
 since
 (13) every body is changeable and perishable,
 whereas
 (14) the divine is imperishable;
 consequently
 (15) the divine does not exist. (*M* 9 151; cf. *ND* 3 29, 34)

Parmenidean and Democritean objects are counter-examples to (13): but they are also simple and unaffected—hence Carneades presumably inferred that if the divine was corporeal and affectible it could not be like them.

Finally, let us consider a different type of argument. At *M* 9 182–90, Carneades is credited with a series of ‘soritical’ arguments against the existence of the gods (cf. *ND* 3 43–52). They are soritical only in an extended sense (they do not proceed, as does the classical sorites, by way of minimal quantitative increments);¹² but Carneades seeks to show that, if we accept certain things (the sun, for instance) as gods, we will be driven by gradual steps, each of which taken on its own appears plausible, to conclude that some evidently non-divine things (days, months, years: *M* 9 184) are gods too (since ‘day is nothing other than the sun above the earth’). Here is a sample:

if Zeus is a god, Poseidon (being his brother) will be a god. And if Poseidon is a god, Achelous too will be a god [since they are both bodies of water]; and if Achelous the Nile [since they are both rivers]; and if the Nile, every river as well; and if every river, the streams too will be gods [since streams are small rivers].... But the streams are not gods; therefore Zeus is not a god either. But if anything were a god Zeus would be; hence there are no gods. (295: *M* 9 182–3, =70E LS [part]; cf. *ND* 3 43–4)

Carneades seeks to lure us into an absurd position (‘every rivulet is divine’) by a sequence of stages none of which individually (he thinks) we can resist. The modality of resemblance between each allegedly indiscriminable (in respect of the property in question) pair of objects differs in each case (the modalities are those in the parentheses—all but the first are supplied). But as Burnyeat (1982c, 338) emphasizes, that is not necessarily an argumentative vice: Carneades’ reasoning may serve as a salutary reminder that ‘there is nothing wrong with slippery slope arguments as such’; they must be examined individually on their own merits. The Stoic must either bite the bullet and accept that rivulets are divine—or produce a principled objection to the logical spreading of divine status across one of the parenthetical modalities. This, then, is no mere captiousness: it is a serious challenge to Stoic theology.

Body, Motion, Space, and Time

Having reached an *impasse* on God (and causes), Sextus turns to the rest of traditional philosophical physics, the material principles (*PH* 3 30–7). His arguments are a typical sceptical mixture of the subtly challenging and the crassly sophistical. Sextus's object is, as ever, *epochē*: he seeks not to destroy ordinary beliefs in material objects, but only to show that none of the Dogmatists' accounts of them are satisfactory in their own terms. Consider the arguments concerning body (*PH* 3 38–55; cf. *M* 9 359–440). Sextus first points out that, since body is standardly defined in terms of action and affection, which are causal notions, the arguments against causes will work against bodies as well (*PH* 3 38; *M* 9 366). However, there is a 'mathematical' conception of body as 'the three-dimensional with resistance' (*PH* 3 39, *M* 9 367).¹³

Sextus argues that the notion of dimensionality is incoherent, since nothing can exist without all three dimensions, and yet the 'mathematicians' (he has Plato and the Pythagoreans in mind here) seek to construct bodies out of these non-existent items (*PH* 3 39–42).¹⁴ Next he raises difficulties for the notion of contact: if two surfaces are completely in contact, then there should be no distinction between them, i.e. the two bodies will be continuous and one. Hence we can distinguish them as two bodies only if the contact is imperfect—but then we already require the concept of depth, and hence are no longer dealing with purely two-dimensional entities at all (*PH* 3 42–3; cf. *M* 9 258–65). Elsewhere (*M* 9 368–417; *M* 3 37–64) Sextus multiplies arguments against the conceivability of 'length without breadth' (i.e. of lines) and of geometrical points: such things are literally nothing—hence they can play no role in any explanation.

On the other hand, we cannot simply say that the things we treat as surfaces and lines are really three-dimensional:

if length is a body, it must be decomposable into its three dimensions, and each of these in turn, being a body, will be divided into three other dimensions which will themselves be bodies, and these similarly into others, and so on *ad infinitum*, so that the body comes to be of an infinite size, being divided into an infinity of parts: but this is absurd, and consequently the dimensions are not bodies. But if they are neither bodies, lines, nor surfaces, they cannot be conceived of as existing. (296: *PH* 3 44; cf. *M* 9 435; *M* 3 22–56)

Against Aristotle's argument (Fr. 29 Rose) that we can conceive of a wall's length without perceiving its breadth (or height), Sextus replies that we do not conceive it without height *at all*, only as being without any particular height—and that is not good enough (*M* 9 412–13; *M* 3 57–9). However, Aristotle would reply that, even if it is impossible to form any image of length without breadth, we can still attend to length by abstraction simply by ceasing to take account of the breadth. Hence we can abstract the concept of breadthless length from our ordinary experience (*Metaph.* 13 3).¹⁵ However, that account has been criticized (e.g. by Berkeley: *Principles*, Int., §§ 4–20); and it is not clear who gets the better of the argument.

Sextus's arguments are not conclusive: but they offer a serious challenge to anyone too sanguine about the coherence of basic mathematical and geometrical concepts. And they invite questions about how clearly separated are the mathematical and physical notions of body: for even if the mathematical concept of dimensionality can be made coherent, it is quite another matter to see how such dimensionality can be invested with solidity and resistance (Sextus in any case has arguments against the apprehensibility of these concepts: *PH* 3 45–6). It is one thing to *describe* matter as 'extension endowed with properties'¹⁶—quite another to say how it can be so.

As for motion, **Diodorus Cronus** (*fl.* late fourth century BC) argued that nothing can actually be moving, although it can *have* moved (*M* 10 85; cf. *PH* 2 244–5): there can be no *state* of motion, since a moving thing must move either (a) where it is or (b) where it is not; but not (a), since where it is it is at rest; and not (b) either, since it cannot do anything where it is not; hence there is no motion. But even if there is no motion as such, things may change place by quantum-jumps across a quantized space; Diodorus effectively repeats Zeno's error (cf. Timon and Zeno on motion and time: Chapter IV, 72–3). Sextus (*M* 10 92–5) accuses him of wrongly treating (a) and (b) as jointly exhaustive; and for not distinguishing between the broad and narrow concepts of place (below, 247).¹⁷

The concept of space presented notorious difficulties in antiquity, as did the associated notion of void. Aristotle devoted *Physics* 4 1–9 to these issues, concluding that void could not exist; by contrast, the atomists made it one of their basic categories. The Stoics admit the existence of void, outside the cosmos—but void has no place inside it. The atomists allow both that there is void in ordinary objects (i.e. the world is not a plenum),¹⁸ but also that it remains even when occupied by a body—for void is literally nothing, and hence cannot be destroyed by occupation. By contrast, the Stoics held that void was *empty* space. Aristotle defines place as being the 'limit of what encloses [a body] in so far as it encloses it' (*Phys.* 4 4, 212a2–30; *PH* 3 131; *M* 10 30–6). This renders problematic the notion of the world's place (*Phys.* 4 5, 212a31–b29), a difficulty which Sextus is quick to exploit (*M* 10 31–5).

But there is another problem: how, on Aristotle's account, can things change place? There must be a place into which a thing may come to be—but how is *that* place to be defined, if it is not now occupied by any body (*PH* 3 131)? Sextus clearly has a *diaphōnia* here; but he also mounts a sequence of powerful attacks on the concepts themselves. Here is the brief argument about void:

when the body occupies the void and place comes to be, the void either (a) remains or (b) withdraws or (c) perishes. But if it remains, plenum and void will be the same; but if it withdraws by locomotion, or perishes by change, it will be a body—for these properties are peculiar to bodies. But it is absurd to say either that void and plenum are the same, or that void is a body. Consequently it is absurd to say that the void can be occupied by a body and become place. (297: *PH* 3 129; cf. *M* 10 20–3)

If a void is occupied by a body, what happens to it? It cannot go anywhere, for the only things that can move are bodies. It cannot be destroyed, since prior to that it would have

had to *be* something. Nor yet can it remain where it is, since then it will be identical with the body that occupies the space, and so *be* a body. Sextus does not consider the possibility that (a) might be true without the void and the body being identical, presumably relying on the principle that no two things can occupy the same place, but that principle is plausible only when the things in question are both bodies (or at least belong in the same metaphysical category), as both the Stoics and Locke saw.¹⁹

Nevertheless, problems remain: how, for instance, can we individuate parts of the void? There seems to be nothing there to pick out. Again, how can we say that bodies change place? That implies that their places are left behind them, contrary to the Aristotelian definition (*PH* 3 131). Surely, in a sense, everything takes its own place (strictly conceived) around with it all the time, otherwise sometimes it would not be in its own place? And consider the case of a man walking aftwards on a ship at the same speed as the ship sails forward. Does he move? His place (considered as the surrounding air) stays the same—and yet he is walking (*M* 10 65–7).

Nor will it do simply to distinguish between place strictly so called and place ‘in the loose sense’ in which we say that someone is in the gymnasium or in Alexandria (*M* 10 15, 95; *PH* 3 75, 119). For even if it is true that there is no Diodoran problem with the place where the body moves in the loose sense, the difficulties involved in the strict concept, which is none the less indispensable, remain.²⁰ Finally, if places are somehow to be picked out independently of the bodies which occupy them (as they apparently must be in order to render the concept of motion coherent) places will themselves have places—threatening regress (*M* 10 24–9; cf. *PH* 3 132–3).²¹ None of these objections is fatal (most of them can be resolved by Cartesian coordinate geometry): but they point to deep difficulties with the concept of place, and to the need for a relativized concept of motion (as Galileo was to understand).

Change, Time, Parts and Wholes

Change and motion are intimately linked in Greek thought—Aristotle indeed adopts the general word for movement, *kinēsis*, as a technical term to cover all types of change (*Phys.* 31). And ever since the Eleatics, problems with their coherence had preoccupied philosophy. Sextus, typically, uses them to establish a *diaphōnia* (*PH* 3 63–118; *M* 10 37–350). Sextus deploys the Diodoran argument to show that motion (indeed change in general) is impossible either on atomic or continuous hypotheses:

if it moves in any way, it does so either (a) with the first part first, or (b) by occupying the whole divisible interval...[but neither is possible]; therefore nothing moves in any way. (298: *PH* 3 76; cf. *M* 10 122–68)

(a) is rejected on Zenonian lines: if the object and the interval to be travelled are infinitely divisible, then motion will require the performance of an infinity of tasks—which is impossible (*PH* 3 76); on the other hand the quantized space of (b) renders differences in velocity impossible (77; cf. *M* 10 154). Neither reason is conclusive; but in order to rehabilitate (a) we require a sophisticated grip on the logic of the continuum, while (b)

compels us to give an account of differential speeds in terms of shorter and longer intervals of rest between each instantaneous quantum-motion. At *M* 10 127–30, 137–9, 144–8 Sextus introduces further, subtle, arguments against spatio-temporal quantization:

suppose a distance made up of nine atomic spaces arranged in a row, and let two partless bodies move across it from opposite ends at equal speeds. Since their motions are equally rapid, each will cover four spaces [in the same time]. On arriving at the fifth place, which is in between the other sets of four, either (a) both will stop or (b) one will get there first (so it will have passed through five atomic spaces leaving the other only four), or neither (a) nor (b), but (c) both will come together and each occupy a half of the fifth space. (299: *M* 10 144–5)

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(a) is, as Sextus says, implausible: for what would make them stop before the empty space? (b) is incompatible with the hypothesis that their speeds are equal; while (c) conflicts with the notion that space is quantized (in this way) in the first place (and, since the argument is generalizable, with the idea that space is quantized in any way at all). The stout protagonist of quanta need not, however, collapse at this point: (a) may be implausible only because we are not used to the physics of quantized space (ordinary medium-sized space being to all intents and purposes completely divisible); perhaps there are reasons why no two bodies can have precisely the same velocity, and hence (b) will always occur. But Sextus's arguments (and this is only one of many, abstracted *exempli gratia*) once again have the virtue of stirring the Dogmatist from his slumbers.

Some of these arguments have involved the concept of time—and change ineliminably introduces temporal considerations (*M* 10 169). Unsurprisingly, Sextus, following Timon (Chapter IV, 72ff.), trains his guns on time (*PH* 3 136–50; *M* 10 169–247). Here is a brief decoction of his arguments:

(1) if time exists it is either (a) divisible or (b) indivisible. But not (b), since as they say it is divided into past, present, and future. Yet not (a), since each divisible thing is measured by some part of itself, the measure coinciding with each part of the measured.... But time cannot be measured by any part of itself. If, e.g., the present measures the past, it will coincide with the past, and will therefore be past [and so on].... So then not (a). But if neither (b) nor (a), time does not exist. (2) Time is also said to be tripartite, partly past, partly present, and partly future, of which the past and the future do not exist, for if past and future time existed now, they would be present. Nor yet does the present exist, since if it does it is either indivisible or divisible. It is not indivisible, since what changes is said to change in the present, but nothing can change in a time which is partless.... Hence the present is not indivisible. Nor yet is it divisible, since it cannot be divided into a plurality of presents ...nor yet into past and future. (300: *PH* 3 143–4; cf. *M* 10 193–200)

300(2) resembles Zeno's arrow in structure, and is susceptible to the same refutational manoeuvres (Chapter IV, 73). Crucially, we need to distinguish between

(1) x is changing in the present (instant)

and

(2) x undergoes some change during the present (instant).

(2) is perhaps ruled out by an argument against instantaneous change; but (1) is not, and only (1) is required to save the ordinary intuition that change occurs in the present.

Finally, a brief examination of Sextus's treatment of part and whole:

if a whole exists it is either distinct from its parts or its parts of it *are* the whole.

The whole does not appear to be distinct from its parts, since when the parts are removed nothing remains which would allow us to reckon the whole as something distinct from them. But if the parts themselves are the whole, the whole will be merely a name and an empty designation, and will not have any individual existence, just as a distancing is nothing over and above the things distanced, or a timbering apart from the timbers laid. Therefore there is no whole. (301: *PH* 3 98–99; cf. *M* 9 338–40; *M* 1 134)

Furthermore, Sextus argues that wholes cannot be identical with their parts, since they will be identical either (a) with one part, (b) several parts, or (c) the sum of their parts. Neither (a) nor (b) is as trivially false as it might appear:²³ but (c) is surely the most interesting and mereologically satisfactory possibility.

(c) is simply dismissed in 301 as reducing the concept of a whole to triviality. Modern philosophers here appeal to 'the "is" of constitution' (cf. e.g. Wiggins, 1980, ch. 1). The timbers *constitute* the timbering—but they need not be strictly identical with it, since the timbers, but not the timbering, will survive its dismantling. This does not make the notion of a timbering a purely relational concept (in the manner of Sextus's first example, of the distancing), although relational facts will enter into its proper characterization, in the same way as a (complete) set of engine parts is not necessarily an engine (and indeed an incomplete set can still constitute a functioning engine, provided no essential parts are missing, a truth well known to owners of old Volkswagens).

Thus there is a perfectly good sense in which wholes are more than (merely) the sum of their parts, although if you ask what there is to a whole which is not exhausted by its parts you will (trivially) not be able to find further *parts* which make the whole the whole. What does that is items in different categories (functional relations, positions, and so on).²⁴ Thus the claim that the whole is the sum of its parts is no mere triviality—and should not be interpreted as a straightforward identity-statement.

The concepts of part and whole also relate to numbers: whole numbers greater than 1 are commonly supposed to be, in some sense, 'made up of' units—and that supposition gives rise to notorious difficulties (e.g. Frege, 1953, §§ 29–54; cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 13 3). At *PH* 2 216–17 (cf. 3 87, *M* 9 303), Sextus notes that 9 is a part of 10; but so are 8, 7, etc. 10 is thus made of $9 + 8 + 7 \dots + 1 = 45$; and if 10 is a part of itself, we can add that in as well. So $10 = 55$; which is absurd. Indeed, it is easy to see how, by decomposing 9 in a similar way, and then 8, and so on, we can make 10 even more unwieldy. Therefore 10 cannot consist of the sum of its parts. But that is absurd. The argument is of course fallacious; what it proves is that 10 does not consist of the sum of all possible subsets of itself—but that is uncontroversial, just as much for ordinary objects as it is for numbers. I

have a left leg, a right leg, and a pair of legs—but I am not thereby a quadruped. In each section that sums to the original object, it is important that each genuine part be counted once and only once. That truth may, in a sense, be trivial—but it is not unimportant, and easily lost sight of. And when it is, paradox follows.

XV The Liberal Arts

‘Against the Professors’

The text now standardly referred to as *M* 1–6 is a self-contained treatise. Its subject is the pretensions of the practitioners of six of the seven canonical ‘liberal arts’ (*technai*) that were to form the foundation of the mediaeval curriculum: the ‘trivium’ of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, the ‘quadrivium’ of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music. Sextus himself refers to the ‘general studies’, the *enkuklia mathēmata* (*M* 1 7),¹ and ‘liberal arts’ (*eleutheriai technai*: *M* 2 57). Logic is omitted, perhaps because it was dealt with in *PH* 2 and *M* 8.²

M 1–6 is also usually assumed, following Janáček’s linguistic studies,³ to be Sextus’s latest surviving work (*M* 1 35, 3 116, apparently refer to *M* 9–10); and in both general tone and particular subject-matter it is distinct from the rest of his *œuvre*. For one thing, it is more restricted in scope (see Chapter I, 6). Sextus says at the outset of the longest of the essays (*M* 1: ‘Against the Grammarians’) that his target is not the ordinary Greek grammar of ordinary Greek-speakers (which is useful and uncontroversial without self-contradiction: *M* 1 50–5), but rather the artificial ‘Art of Grammar’ beloved of the professional grammarians (*M* 1 44, 49, 56). This modesty of purpose is characteristic of the other essays in the collection too.

Furthermore, *M* 1–6 report and employ a wealth of arguments attributed to Epicurus and his school:

the refutation of the professors appears to have been set out in a general fashion both by Epicurus’s associates and the followers of Pyrrho, although not from the same motivation. (302: *M* 1 1)

Epicurus, at least ostensibly (Sextus suggests that he may, as an uneducated man, have been jealous of the cultured: *ibid.* 1–4), attacked the Arts on the grounds that they made no contribution to happiness. By contrast

the followers of Pyrrho were not motivated by the view that these subjects made no contribution to wisdom (a dogmatic point of view), nor by any lack of culture.... Nor yet as a result of malice towards anyone (this vice being far removed from their mildness), but because they have experienced the same sort of thing in regard to the Arts as they did in regard to philosophy as a whole. For just as they approached the latter desirous of attaining the truth, but coming up against the equipollent anomaly of the discord in things they suspended judgement, so too in the case of the Arts, having set themselves to master them

in pursuit here too of discovering the truth, they found equivalent difficulties which they did not pass over. Consequently we will follow the same procedure as they do, and will seek without controversialism to present a selection of the things said pertinently against them. (303: *M* 1 5–7)

So, while Sextus makes use of Epicurean material in *M* 1–6, he explicitly does so as a Pyrrhonian.⁴ This makes it difficult to maintain that *M* 1–6 is a ‘mature’ work of a later Sextus less hopelessly addicted to radical scepticism.⁵ Moreover, making use of others’ arguments is integral to the Sceptical method. In any case, on one influential modern interpretation, Pyrrhonism sought only to promote suspension of judgement about theoretical *arcana*—it left ordinary beliefs untouched.⁶ Sextus’s ostensible purpose is, then, merely to reject scientific Dogmatism’s worst theoretical excesses. If there is no *science* of grammar, there are still rules for correct speech (*M* 1 176, 187, 194), which make what we say both intelligible and pleasing. Similarly, *M* 6 attacks musical theory (*M* 6 3), not musical performance (ibid. 1). Some arts, such as medicine and navigation, are acceptable to the Sceptic (*M* 5 2), while the ‘instruction (*didaskalia*) of the arts’ is part of the ‘fourfold observance’ that characterizes the Sceptical life (*PH* 1 23–4; Chapter II, 27ff.; Chapter XVII, 293ff.).

Even so, some of his arguments appear to aim at far more than this modest goal. *M* 2, for example, censures rhetoric in Epicurean style on the grounds that as a theoretical study it is useless (*M* 2 26–42). But elsewhere he says that there is no such thing as ‘speaking well’ at all (*M* 2 48–59: rhetoric is defined as ‘the art or science (*epistēmē*) of speaking well which produces persuasion’ at ibid. 9); hence rhetoric does not exist. Moreover *M* 2 60–88 attack the notion that rhetoric has an end, a *telos* (cf. the Stoic definition of an art as ‘a system of co-exercised apprehensions directed towards some end useful in life’: ibid. 10; cf. *M* 1 75; 7 109, 373; *PH* 3 188, 241, 251). Equally, Sextus will argue that there are no such things as lines, points, and numbers—mathematical ‘sciences’ have no subject-matter (see Chapter XIV, 248–50). It is one thing to say that higher mathematics, for example, is built on sand—quite another to allege that even the ordinary basics of useful calculation, which in other moods Sextus will embrace, are chimerical.

What sort of *didaskalia* is acceptable to the Pyrrhonist? In the Proem to the whole work (*M* 1 31–8), Sextus launches an assault against the possibility of teaching and learning, *mathēsis*, things learned (*mathēmata*), and professional teachers (the *mathēmatikoi* of the standard title). The material is familiar from *PH* 3 252–66 and *M* 11 218–40, and is unimpeachably Pyrrhonist (however, with *M* 1 31–4, compare Anacharsis: Chapter III, 35). But (as Barnes, 1988b, 60–1, notes) the fact that there are no teachers and learners of any subject need not entail (as Sextus thinks: *M* 1 38–9) that there are no subjects, and no expertise. Ever since Plato’s *Meno* the question of how virtue is acquired was central to ethics—and it was recognized that it might be unteachable and yet still humanly attainable (*Meno* 91a–100b, esp. 96c–d, 98d–99c; Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 2 1, 1103a14–b25). Thus Sextus should allow that we may acquire the useful arts without formal instruction—but he does not, and indeed strongly implies that there are no such arts at all. Yet Sextus calls his own work a *didaskalia*, or exposition (*M* 1 7, 4 23, 6 6); and he admits that reading and writing can be taught (*M* 1 53–4).

Barnes (1988b, 61) sketches a way out of the difficulty here. Formal instruction consists of the transmission by a teacher to a learner of a systematic set of propositions which constitute the art in question, belief in which constitutes possession of the art. Informal instruction on the other hand involves no beliefs. The ‘learner’ (a *tiro* Empiricist, as it might be) learns by example, and comes to possess the art through observing it exhibited and by his own trials and errors. But Sextus nowhere makes any such distinction—it has to be supplied on his behalf—and his argumentative practice does not immediately suggest that there is any room for it.⁷

It is important that Sextus invokes the Stoic definition of an art (above, 252), one which (in referring to ‘apprehensions’) clearly makes use of the notion of truth. It is arts on this model which Sextus seeks to undermine, not the empirically-derived abilities which characterize the ordinary practitioner of some skill ‘useful in life’, analogous to the ‘knacks’ (*tribai*) so despised by Plato in the *Gorgias* (462b–5a).⁸ Sextus repeatedly assails the ‘foundations of these Dogmatic pursuits’; concerning music, he writes:

just as in the case of grammar, the refutation is twofold. Some have attempted in a more dogmatic fashion to teach that music is not a subject necessary for happiness, but rather destructive of it, and to show this both by ridiculing the statements of the musicians and by the destruction of their principal doctrines. On the other hand others, avoiding that type of refutation, have thought that in the shaking of the basic assumptions of the musicians, the whole of music is destroyed. (304: *M* 6 4–5)

‘Some’ are Epicureans seeking to undermine the arts’ claims to utility; the ‘others’ are clearly Pyrrhonists. But Sextus does not cram together indiscriminately disparate and ultimately incompatible arguments drawn from diverse sources, in the manner of Diogenes.⁹ He openly acknowledges that some of his sources are Epicurean—and more than once notes that they are different in style, motivation, and object. Thus if the Epicurean and Pyrrhonian goals are not merely distinct but incompatible, we must ask how Sextus thought they could be moulded into a single whole.

Barnes (1988b, 72–7) speaks of the ‘two voices’ to be found in *M* 1–6, the moderate ‘Epicurean’ voice casting doubt on the effectiveness (both moral and utilitarian) of the so-called arts, and the more radical ‘Pyrrhonian’, undermining their very existence, and seeks to reconcile them by insisting on the essentially therapeutic nature of Pyrrhonian argument. A Pyrrhonist is concerned, philanthropically, with curing mankind of Dogmatism (cf. *PH* 3 280–1: Chapter XVIII, 353)—such a cure is to be achieved by argument, construed not as supplying a means to the truth, but simply as seeking to persuade (the Pyrrhonian turns out to be a sort of rhetorician *malgré lui*). Ordinary concerns with consistency do not matter—the treatise is like one of the Empiricists’ complex drugs, in which each of the ingredients has been seen to be effective on some patients with a particular condition—it does not matter how the individual ingredients fit together, or why they work. That line is appealing; and ultimately only some version of it can make sense of the Pyrrhonists’ procedure (see Chapter XVI, 272; Chapter XVIII, 300ff.).

The Attack on Utility and the Attack on Foundations

None the less, there is still disturbing inconcinnity about it. Not only is it intellectually untidy: there remains the residual suspicion that the therapeutic efficacy of the Sceptic's arguments will be diluted, not reinforced, by presenting a plethora of conflicting ones. If the strain between Sextus's Epicurean and Pyrrhonian heritages can be minimized, so much the better.

Sometimes in *M* 1 Sextus attacks only grammatical theory: why heed the word of the grammarians and write 'Zeos' instead of 'Zēnos' (*M* 1 195)? All that matters in language is clarity and felicity, which need no theoretical underpinning. Further, nouns have no 'natural' gender—they are masculine or feminine by convention only (*M* 1 142–53). Equally, language is not 'natural' in any strong sense: if it were, everybody would understand everybody else (*ibid.* 145–7). Sextus here is tilting not at good grammatical practice—which he welcomes—but at theoretical linguistics. Still, his arguments have at least the appearance of a negative dogmatism (as Desbordes, 1990, 169, notes); and they may be of Academic origin. Of course, they may still find a legitimate home (as one arm of a Sceptical *diaphōnia*) in Pyrrhonian discourse—but the fact remains that, despite his occasional protestations, Sextus appears less committed to *isologia* (as he calls *isostheneia* at *M* 1 144) in *M* 1–6 than elsewhere.

But this is part of the 'Epicurean' attack on the arts: the *recherché* arts of the professionals do not help us to live better (see e.g. *M* 1 50, 171, 193, 297; 2 10; 5 47). By contrast, such skills as cobbling (*M* 1 194) are conducive to the better life, while Eudoxan astronomy (useful apparently for weather-forecasting), along with navigation and agriculture, enables us better to predict and hence regulate our activities (*M* 5 2). And, unsurprisingly, medicine (of a suitably non-Dogmatic sort) is never rejected (cf. *M* 11 188). Sextus further distinguishes between genuine arts (such as painting and sculpture) and false ones (astrology and divination: *M* 1 182), and although (as Desbordes emphasizes: 1990, 175) this need not be *in propria persona*, once again *M* 11 188 suggests that these practices are perfectly compatible with an orthodox Pyrrhonian attitude to life.

However, some (such as the Pythagoreans, on behalf of music: *M* 6 4, 27, 34, 36) claim that the theoretical arts produce happiness and wisdom. The most detailed attack on artistic utility occurs in this context:

the main argument against music is that if it is indeed useful, it is so either (a) because the adept at music gets more pleasure from listening to it than the layman; or (b) because it is not possible for people to become good unless educated by them; or (c) because the elements of music are the same as those of philosophical matters...; or (d) because the universe is ordered according to harmony, as the Pythagoreans say, and we need musical theorems to understand the form of the whole; or (e) because certain sorts of tune affect the character of the soul. (305: *M* 6 29–30)

Sextus then, typically, argues against each of (a)–(e) (*M* 6 31–8; cf. 7–28). It is musical analysis, of theoreticians such as Aristoxenus and the Pythagoreans, rather than performance (which he allows may form part of the pleasant life), which comes under his fire. And as long as such considerations are advanced dialectically, they may be purged of the negative dogmatism of their Epicurean ancestors.

Compatibly with this, Sextus's 'Pyrrhonian' attack on the arts seeks to sap the foundations of the alleged disciplines, by arguing both that their fundamental concepts (e.g. syllable in the case of grammar, line and point in geometry, number in arithmetic, note and interval in music) are incoherent, and that the standard divisions employed by their practitioners are unfounded (e.g. *M* 2 89–112 on the 'parts' of rhetoric). Some of these assaults borrow material familiar from other contexts—for instance, Sextus invokes standard Sceptical considerations against the notion of proof (Chapter XI, 209ff.) drawn from *PH* 2 and *M* 8 at the end of *M* 2 against the rhetoricians. But their target is still the practice of arcane theoreticians, not that of ordinary people.

Thus, when Sextus attacks the idea of a number (*M* 4 11–34), he singles out the Pythagoreans (*ibid.* 2–9) and Plato (*ibid.* 11) as progenitors of the extreme view that nature is basically mathematical. He argues against the existence of Number conceived on Pythagorean-Platonic lines, not the ordinary numbers of everyday reckoning. Similarly, the attack on geometry is an attack on *theoretical* geometry.¹⁰ Ordinary concepts of line and body need not be affected by it. In so far as the man in the street needs to use them, he can—he will not be worried by such abstract questions as whether or not a line is made up of points.

Consequently, the inconcinnity between Sextus's 'two voices' may not be as great and troubling as it first appeared. There is no science of number-theory—but that does not mean that there are no ordinary numbers; the non-existence of rhetoric does not show that there is no such thing as persuasive speaking. And arguments that there is not are designed to show that *on the Dogmatists' own principles* there can be no such thing as rhetoric; rhetoric cannot form part of a systematized, axiomatic science whose theorems can be conveyed by a teacher to a pupil in the form of learned proposition. From this perspective, *M* 1–6 is not incompatible with the rest of Sextus's Pyrrhonism. The Dogmatic practitioners of the arts seek to tell us the essence of, e.g., Number. As an Essential Sceptic, Sextus will have none of that. But he can still balance his cheque-book and measure out his martini.

Sextus does not explicitly tell us how he understood the relation between the 'Epicurean' and 'Pyrrhonian' parts of his *didaskalia*, although at *M* 2 72, having completed the Pyrrhonian attack on rhetoric, he introduces the arguments of 'others [sc. non-Pyrrhonians; here Plato and Epicurus]... which anyone can use if they like'. This need not imply, however (as Barnes, 1988b, 75, takes it to), that these arguments are somehow a second-best. Rather this is another example of the Sceptic's Concessive Method. Sextus will first argue that some alleged Art A is ill-founded; but if you are not swayed, he will then contend that A is useless. Either way, you should not (if the arguments have their effect) end up in hot pursuit of A.¹¹

Divination

In the ancient world, divination was a source of both credulity and ridicule. But astrology in particular grew in popularity in Hellenistic times:¹² and it had the Stoics' intellectual *imprimatur*. Their beliefs in universal causal determinism, the mutual interconnection of the entire universe, and in the gods' providence, combine to underwrite a belief in divination (Chapter XIV, 239). Conversely, evidence of alleged divinatory successes tended to confirm the hypothesis of a benevolent God:

if there are no gods, then there can be no divination, since divination is the 'science that observes and interprets the signs given by gods to men', not in any of its forms, inspiration, astrology, hepatoscopy [the examination of the livers of sacrificial victims] or oionoscopy [divination from the flight and cries of birds].
(306: *M* 9 132)

The argument goes roughly as follows:

- (1) the universe is causally determined,
hence
- (2) the future is ineluctably settled.
But if (2), then
- (3) the future is in principle knowable;
so given
- (4) there are gods;
- (5) the gods have concern for human beings;
and
- (6) it would be beneficial for humans to know the future,
then it is likely that
- (7) the gods will enable humans to know the future.

That argument, rehearsed informally by Cicero both at *ND* 2 161–8 and at *On Divination (Div.)* 2 101–2, is not deductively valid. The gods must be sufficiently prescient themselves to know the future (for (7) to be possible; cf. Chapter XIV, 238). Further, (3) does not clearly follow from (2) (depending upon the sense of 'in principle'); while (4) is controversial (Chapter XIV, 237–44), as, if you accept (4), is (5).

Finally, even if you follow the steps from (1) to (5), you may still, like Dicaearchus, deny (6): *Div.* 2 105. Favorinus provides an elegant formulation:

they [i.e. diviners] predict either adverse or good fortune. If they foretell prosperity and are wrong, you will be made miserable by pointless expectation. If they foretell adversity and lie, you will be made miserable by pointless fears. But if they truly predict adverse events, then you will be made miserable by anticipation before you are fated to be so; while if they promise prosperity and it comes to pass, there will clearly be two disadvantages: anticipation of your hope will wear you out with suspense, while your hope will have plucked early the future fruits of your joy. (307: Favorinus, in Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 14 1 36)

Favorinus's discourse against the astrologers (the 'Chaldeans'), summarized by Gellius (*ibid.* 1 2), argues (among other things) that the mere fact that some terrestrial phenomena

(e.g. tides) are apparently influenced by the celestial bodies has no tendency to show that other unrelated activities, such as pleading in the law-courts, are (1 3–4). But even if they are, human lives are too short to gather enough empirical information to ground such correlations (the diviners themselves allowed that the links were not causal in nature).¹³

Favorinus then pointed out that the apparent positions of heavenly bodies differed when viewed from different positions on the earth's surface—does the place of birth then matter as well as the time, and if not why not? But if it does, it will become even more impossible to collect the totality of relevant data (1 8–13), a problem which is exacerbated if diviners insist that every individual's horoscope is distinct and applicable to that individual alone (1 14–21).

Moreover, how can astrologers account for the similar characters and histories of family members (all born under different celestial aspects: 1 22)? Equally, if every event in a man's life is written in the stars, all genuine responsibility and freedom of the will are thereby abolished (1 23). And how are they to determine the exact moment which is relevant to the individual's precise horoscope, which must be extraordinarily fleeting if even twins may turn out on occasion to have widely differing fates (1 26)? Finally, how can they account for the fact that people of quite different backgrounds and ages may all perish in the same disaster (1 27–8)?

Much, if not all, of this attack derives from the Carneadean Academy (although some arguments are owed to the renegade Stoic Panaetius: *Div.* 2 97). Some are commonplaces (for the identical fates of different individuals, see e.g. *M* 5 90; *Div.* 2 97; and cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 2 29, 7 160–5; Augustine, *Confessions* 5 6; *City of God* 5 1–6). Much of this is paralleled in *M* 5. Sextus begins *M* 5 by delimiting its subject-matter—his target is astrology, not mathematics in general, nor mathematical astronomy (*M* 5 1–2). The Chaldeans make use of the notion of cosmic sympathy (*M* 5 4), and assume on the basis of it that

the seven stars [i.e. the sun, moon, and five inner planets] have the role of efficient causes of everything that occurs in life. (308: *M* 5 5)

Sextus offers a brief, confessedly amateur, account of the structure of their system of horoscopes (*M* 5 6–42): they divide the ecliptic into twelve basic signs (some making further subdivisions); and hold that the sign rising at the time of birth effectively rules the individual's life. The positions and relations of the other heavenly bodies at birth are also supposed to be of special significance; and some Chaldeans assert relationships between parts of the signs and specific parts of the human body.

Their 'science' demands accurate time-keeping:

thus is the method according to which they divide the circle of the zodiac into this many allotments. Similar to it appears to be the way according to which they say that they originally observed the horoscope of each birth. For at night, they say, the Chaldean sat on a high peak observing the stars while another sat with the woman in labour until she gave birth, and when she did so, he at once communicated it to the man on the peak with a gong. And when the latter heard it he noted the rising sign as the horoscope. By day, however, he attended to

sundials and the motions of the sun. (309: *M* 5 26–8)

Sextus next turns to counter-argument. Some reject the idea of cosmic sympathy (*M* 5 43–4), some that of fate (45). Others argue that events occur either (a) of necessity, (b) by chance, or (c) through human agency. But if the first, then prophecy is useless (since you can't do anything about it); while chance events, being by their nature irregular, cannot be predictable. Finally, agency requires freedom from external causal influences—and nothing uncaused can be predictable (46–8; cf. Carneades, Chapter VI: 143).

None of these considerations is conclusive. In the case of (a), similar considerations to those which refute the lazy argument apply: even if the outcome is necessitated, it need not be so independently of prediction and the latter's effect on human action. The Stoics had a response to (b): they defined chance as 'a cause obscure to human understanding' (*SVF* 2 965–71); and in that epistemic sense, there is nothing to prevent something's being both determined and a matter of chance. Moreover, there is no logical link between prediction and causal explanation (although there may be a well established contingent one): hence there is no *a priori* argument available to the sceptic here to dismiss the possibility of the prediction of uncaused events.¹⁴

Sextus describes this as 'long-range fire' employed by 'the majority' of the astrologers (*M* 5 49), principally the Academics and the Epicureans. By contrast, he will employ more close-range weaponry, since

having shaken their principles and elements, as it were, we shall find the structure of the other theorems destroyed along with them. (310: *M* 549)

The 'principles' are the methods of establishing horoscopes. Sextus seeks to show that it is impossible to determine the exact state of the heavens at the precise moment of birth, and hence that predictions of the precision pretended by the astrologers are in principle impossible (*M* 5 50–4).

Firstly, the astrologers differ as to whether the crucial event is conception or birth. The time of conception is impossible to fix (*ibid.* 55–64); but birth is a process: what is to count as the moment of its occurrence (65)? Moreover, some births are premature, others late—and these for contingent reasons (66–7), while even if the time of birth could be ascertained precisely, it could not be communicated instantaneously to the astrologer (68–70); and if it could, accuracy would in principle be possible only at night (71); and even then, atmospheric conditions may vitiate observation (72).

Furthermore, there remains the imprecision of the astrologers' own classifications of the signs and their boundaries, as well as the difficulty of accurate timekeeping (73–8). The observation-posts may themselves alter subtly over time, making it impossible to maintain consistency through the immeasurably long period required to collect the necessary empirical correlations (80). Again, individuals' perceptual powers vary, while phenomena such as refraction may result in false readings (*M* 5 81–2). Finally, and 'most conclusively of all', the sky viewed from different parts of the earth is different, as are the angles of rising and setting (83–4).

The majority of the arguments deployed are designed to show that, for a variety of reasons, it is empirically impossible to collect a sufficient quantity of sufficiently accurate

data to ground an empirical astrology. The argument is, then, in a sense *a priori*. We do not find here Cicero's overriding concern in *Div. 2* (deriving from the Academy) with showing that the diviners' practices fail to deliver significant results, that all of their 'successes' can be accounted for by chance and fraud (*Div. 2* 48, 52–3, 66, 99, 121, etc.). Sextus rather makes good his promise to attack the foundations of the 'art', and to show that, independently of whether there are successful diviners, there can be no art of such things established in the manner which they intend. Thus the avowedly Pyrrhonian part of *M 5* seeks to demonstrate that there can be no communicable, propositionally-organized science of the type in question.

Sextus does, however, later turn to empirical matters, in order to show that *unless* the astrologers can accurately compute extraordinarily precise individual parameters, the actual facts will confute them (he adverts to the twins' argument, and its congeners: *M 5* 88–93). Thus the astrologers are trapped between two stools: either their 'art' deals in minutely precise units of time and arc, in which case it is undiscoverable; or it rests content with more vague and general predictions based on ascertainable but quite lengthy intervals of time—in which case it is empirically false:

so it is not reasonable that life is ordered according to the movements of the stars, or if it is so, it is at any rate inapprehensible by us. (311: *M 5* 95)

Sextus concludes *M 5* with a further reflection on the difficulty of establishing the requisite precise correlations:

In general, since they do not say that the stars tell them of the differences in men's lives, but rather that they observe them along with the positions of the stars, I say that if the prediction is to be firm, the same position of the stars must be observed not only once along with one individual's life, but a second time with a second and a third with a third, so that from the similarity of the outcomes of the results in all cases we might learn that when the stars adopt such-and-such a configuration, such-and-such an outcome will result. Just as in medicine we have seen that a wound to the heart is the cause of death¹⁵ having observed it along with not only the death of Dion, but that of Theon and Socrates and many others, so too in astrology: if it is believable that this configuration of the stars is indicative of such-and-such a life, then it will at any rate have been observed not once in one case, but many times in many. So since the same configuration of stars is seen only after long intervals, as they admit, the recurrence of the Great Year¹⁶ being once every 9,977 years, human observation will not traverse such epochs even in the case of one birth. (312: *M 5* 103–5)

That passage stresses that astrology must be empirical. There are resources (theoretically) available to the astrologer to repel this assault. Perhaps it is not after all necessary to observe the entire great year—perhaps we can infer (by transition: see Chapter XIII, 229) from close observation of the relations that hold between distinct and observable parts of it how the rest is likely to pan out. But however that may be, Sextus's attack is surely

successful in practice.

XVI

Sceptical Ethics

Ethics has always been a happy hunting-ground for sceptics and relativists alike. Genuine scepticism is incompatible with relativism, however (Chapter II, 15);¹ and, since relativists and Sceptics both appeal to precisely the same facts in order to ground their different conclusions, it is important not to confound the two stances. This chapter, then, seeks to limn the distinctive outlines of ethical Pyrrhonism. There are three principal texts: the Tenth Mode² of Scepticism, elaborated at *PH* 1 145–63, deferred from Chapter IX; the chapter entitled ‘Concerning things Good, Bad, and Indifferent’ (*PH* 3 168–238); and the parallel passage of *M* 11, 42–167.³

The Tenth Mode

(1) The Tenth Mode, which is particularly concerned with ethical matters, is that to do with ways of life, customs, laws, mythical beliefs and dogmatic suppositions. A way of life is a choice of lifestyle, or of some action, made by one person or many, as for instance by Diogenes or the Spartans. (2) A law is a written agreement between citizens, the transgressor of which is punished. (3) A custom or ordinary usage (*sunetheia*) (there is no difference between them), is the common acceptance by many people of some mode of conduct, the transgressor of which is not invariably punished: for example adultery is illegal, but it is merely the custom among us not to have sex with a woman in public. (4) Mythical belief is the acceptance of things that did not happen and which are fictional, like the stories told of Cronus, among others, which many people are led to believe. (5) Dogmatic supposition is the acceptance of something which seems to be established by analogism, or some demonstration, e.g. that the elements of things are atoms, or homoeomeries, or minimal parts, or something else. (6) We oppose each of these sometimes to itself, sometimes to each of the others. (313: *PH* 1 145–7, =72K LS [part])

Diogenes presents the same list of categories, albeit in more truncated form. Philo mentions only ‘ways of life, traditional customs, and ancient laws’ (*Ebr.* 193; cf. 195); but he refers to ‘discordant dogmas’ in *ibid.* 198, which presumably answers to (5). However, he makes a clear break between (1)–(3) and (5), as though they belonged to separate Modes (Philo does not number them). Moreover, the examples Sextus gives of (5), drawn as they are from natural science (cf. *PH* 1151: ‘some declare there is only one element, others that they are infinite in number’), seem out of place in an Ethical Mode; and one might speculate that the Tenth Mode was originally the home for some of the

material that later became incorporated into the Eight Modes against the Aetiologists.

Sextus adheres closely to the programme of **313**(6). First, items from each category will be set in opposition to one another; then items from different sets will be opposed to each other in an exhaustive fashion, yielding in all fifteen possible opposition-types. He sets about discovering ethical discrepancies with a relish bordering on the salacious: ‘while the Indians have sex with their women in public, most other peoples regard this as shameful’ (*PH* 1 148); and

we oppose custom to other things, e.g. law, when we say that male homosexuality is the custom among the Persians, but is proscribed by law among the Romans; and that while among us adultery is forbidden, amongst the Massagetæ it is customarily regarded as a matter of indifference...and that, while among us sex with one’s mother is forbidden, among the Persians it is the general custom to make such marriages; furthermore, among the Egyptians, they marry their sisters, something forbidden by law among ourselves. And custom is opposed to way of life when most people have sex with their women in private, whereas Crates did it in public with Hipparchia. (**314**: *PH* 1 152–3,=72K LS [part])

Sextus concludes his case as follows:

we might have brought up many other examples of the aforementioned antitheses; but these will suffice for a concise account. Having shown by means of this Mode that so much divergence exists in things, we shall be unable to say how the object is in its nature, but only how it appears in connection with this way of life, or that law, or that custom (and so on with each of the others). And because of this Mode we are forced to suspend judgement about the nature of the external objects. (**315**: *PH* 1 163,=72K DL [part])

Diogenes’ treatment is sketchy—he makes no attempt to collect instances of all fifteen types of dispute, but merely mentions a few of the juicier cases, before concluding, baldly: ‘hence *epochē* as to what is true’ (*DL* 9 84). Philo is rather more interesting. He confines himself to generalities:

depending on country, or nation, or city, indeed even on village or particular home, men, women, and children have different views, for instance what is ignoble to us is noble to others, and similarly with what is becoming and unbecoming, just and unjust, impious and pious, legal and illegal; and further with what is blamed and praised, penalized and rewarded, and with other cases where they hold opposing views. (**316**: Philo, *Ebr.* 193–4)

Indeed, if one were to attempt to compile an exhaustive comparative anthropology of differing ways of life, customs, and laws,

he would waste not just a day or two, or even a month or a year, but his whole

life, even if it were a long one; and even so he would unwittingly leave many matters unexamined, unconsidered, and unmentioned. (317: Philo, *Ebr.* 195)

Moreover,

since among these different people these things are not just slightly different but utterly discordant, so as to compete and conflict, necessarily the appearances experienced will differ and judgements conflict. This being the case, who is so senseless and idiotic as to maintain steadfastly that such-and-such is just, or sensible, or fine, or advantageous? Whatever one person determines to be such will be nullified by someone else whose practice from infancy has been the opposite. (318: Philo, *Ebr.* 196–7)

Philo implicitly adopts the basic argument-form [A] (Chapter XI, 156). But he adds a further argument which shows that he is sensitive to the objection that not all opinions are to be given equal weight. After all, a believer in moral progress might take evaluative disagreement simply to show that some people were more ethically advanced than others. But

I myself am not at all surprised if the unstable and diverse mob... should believe whatever has been handed down to them, or if, having left their minds unexercised, they should come out with assertions and denials which are unexamined and untested. But I am surprised that the majority of the so-called philosophers, who profess to track down the clarity and truth in things, are divided into different armies and camps, and propound dogmas that are discordant...not on some trivial point, but on virtually everything, important or otherwise, with which their investigations are concerned. (319: Philo, *Ebr.* 198)

Disputes and disagreements are only to be expected among the ignorant and unreflective—but when they are endemic even among the alleged experts we may infer that no agreement is possible (or, more modestly, that there is no *current* prospect for agreement). Philo is surely onto something here—if ‘experts’ are at loggerheads even about decision procedures for their disputes, the prospects for arriving at the truth seem dim indeed.

Concerning Things Good, Bad, and Indifferent

The facts of ethical divergence should, for a Sextan Sceptic, lead not to relativism but rather to a Pyrrhonian *epochē* concerning the real nature of moral objects. Towards the end of a repetitious survey of the diversity of social and ethical behaviour, Sextus writes:

and so the Sceptic, seeing so great a diversity in these matters, suspends judgement as to the existence of the good or bad by nature, and exceptionless injunctions and prohibitions, and, rejecting this sort of dogmatic rashness, gets

on with the ordinary business of living. (320: *PH* 3 235)

And *M* 11 144 claims that only someone who suspends judgement about these matters can expect an undisturbed life; while elsewhere Sextus argues that anyone who assumes that some things are good or bad by nature is ‘disquieted in various ways’ (cf. *PH* 3 237; *M* 11 110–40). The mere belief that there are determinate answers to ethical questions is taken to be at the root of human mental disturbance and turmoil, or *tarachē*; consequently the extirpation of such beliefs is a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of *ataraxia*. And crucially it is not just the having of *particular* beliefs about value which is disturbing—it is the second-order belief that there are such true beliefs to be had which does the damage.

One might wonder just how this doubt about the nature of moral facts is supposed to make one feel more comfortable: might it not equally induce unpleasant moral vertigo (see Annas and Barnes, 1985, 167–8; cf. 168–71)? But this view, if strange to us, was not to the Sceptics; it was indeed something of a Hellenistic commonplace (see Chapter XVIII). But even if one allows that a life without evaluative beliefs might be desirable, why should one be a Sceptic? When Lucretius recommends the abandonment of beliefs as to the worth of riches, fame, glory, and so on (3 31–93), he does so as a negative dogmatist: these things are intrinsically unchoiceworthy; the therapeutic dividends are paid not by being in a state of irremediable doubt as to their value, but precisely because one is no longer inclined to think them valuable at all.

Moreover, on the face of it, Sextus adopts the same position at the end of his *M* 11 discussion:

so it will only be possible to avoid this if we can show the person who is disturbed by the avoidance of evil or the pursuit of the good that there is nothing that is either good or bad by nature. (321: *M* 11 140)

There are three possible sceptical positions:

(a) the Pyrrhonian attitude that there might or might not be things genuinely good by nature;

(b) the negative-dogmatist line that nothing is good (or bad) by nature
and

(c) the Epicurean view that many things assumed to be valuable are not.

Thus we should expect a Pyrrhonist to endorse (a); however, our Sceptical texts frequently seem rather to adopt (b). At the start of his discussion of Pyrrhonian ethics, Diogenes writes:

(1) there is nothing good or bad by nature, (322: *DL* 9 101)

apparently opting for (b). However, shortly afterwards he writes:

(2) thus the good by nature is unknowable, (323: *DL* 9 101)

which seems equivocal between

(2a) Whatever is good by nature cannot be known (negative E-dogmatism plus positive O-dogmatism)

and

(2b) It is not possible to know whether there is anything good by nature (negative E-

dogmatism plus genuine O-scepticism);

and neither (2a) nor (2b) amounts to (1), which is anyway un-Pyrrhonian. Diogenes may be confused, or conflating two sources. But, more disturbingly, Sextus too seems to betray a similar negative dogmatism:

(3) therefore there is nothing which is good by nature. (324: *PH* 3 180; cf. *ibid.* 182, 191, 193; *M* 11 71, 77; and 309)

Moreover, this negative dogmatism is sometimes linked with relativism:

(1) and if someone were to say that nothing is by nature more to be chosen than to be avoided, or more to be avoided than to be chosen, since each thing that occurs is a relative disposition and, because of differing times and circumstances is at one time to be chosen, at another to be avoided, he will live happily and tranquilly...freed from the distress caused by the belief that something either good or bad by nature is present. (2) This will accrue to him from his believing of nothing that it is good or bad by nature. (3) Therefore it is not possible to live happily if one supposes that things are good or bad by nature (325: *M* 11 118).

The first sentence, Annas and Barnes note (1985, 164), ‘obtrudes relativism into an otherwise coherently sceptical text’, and they think it should be dismissed as a temporary aberration on Sextus’s part. But it is not clear that the rest of the text *is* coherently Sceptical. Furthermore, 325(2) is ambiguous between (a) and (b); and 325(3), while not semantically ambiguous, is compatible with either: for it says only that positive dogmatism about values precludes the possibility of a happy life. And yet Sextus maintains that Pyrrhonists ‘neither affirm nor deny anything rashly’, and that belief in things naturally good and bad leads to unhappiness; hence one should suspend judgement (*M* 11 111).

The Analysis of Good

Sextus’s strategy is to show that (i) there is no agreement on the content of the notion of goodness; (ii), in default of any such agreement, there can be no criterion for judging which of the conflicting accounts of goodness is to be preferred; and (iii) if there is no criterion for judgement, then no judgement should be made.

But to ground (i) Sextus must dispose of a possible objection: ‘You claim that there is an undecidable disagreement about ethical matters; but that is false. In fact, everyone agrees on the definition of the terms: “good” means what is choiceworthy, “bad” what should be avoided, and “indifferent” what is neither. No-one disagrees with that: consequently there is no dispute, and your sceptical conclusions are unjustified.’⁴

The Sceptic replies that merely equating the good with the choiceworthy does not yield any useful definition of good:

if someone says that the good is what is beneficial, or what is always choiceworthy for its own sake, or what is contributory to happiness, one is not

exhibiting the essence of good, but is rather stating one of its properties. And that is pointless. For the said properties either belong only to the good, or to other things as well. But if they belong to other things as well, they are not characteristic of the good, since their extension is greater; but if they belong only to the good, then it will not be possible for us to know the good by them. For just as someone who does not know what a horse is cannot know what neighing is unless he first comes across a neighing horse, similarly one who is seeking the essence of the good, since he has no knowledge of the good, cannot discern what is peculiar to it only with which he could be able to come to know what good itself was. For he must first learn the nature of the good, and then from this come to understand that it is beneficial, and choiceworthy in itself, and productive of happiness. (326: *PH* 3 173–4: cf. *M* 11 35–9)

The Dogmatist who claims that the good is choiceworthy is committed to either

(4) the good is a proper subset of the class of choiceworthy things

or

(5) the good is identical with the choiceworthy.

If (4), then we will not be able to tell simply from the fact that something is choiceworthy that it is good (because there will be some choiceworthy things which are not good): hence this ‘definition’ cannot help us recognize the good. But (5) simply provides an equivalent of the *definiendum*: unless we can discover independently what is choiceworthy (as Sextus assumes we cannot), (5) is uninformative and useless.

Take someone who does not know what a horse is: how will he be helped by being told that a horse is the only animal that neighs? In order to know what a horse is he must know that neighing is the sort of sound horses make, and to know that in anything more than a trivial analytic sense, that is in order to be able to know the *denotation* of the term ‘neighing animal’, he must already be acquainted with horses (*PH* 3 174). Mere analytic equivalences will not help us to understand the extension of the term—and even if there is agreement about the equivalence, there is widespread disagreement about what falls in that extension. As soon as claims like (4) and (5) acquire the empirical content required for them to be informative, they become controversial.

The Nature of Nature

That analysis demonstrates that there is no simple road to agreement for the Dogmatists. The case now depends on showing that the Dogmatic *diaphōnia* regarding the actual denotation of ‘good’ really is endemic and chronic. And it surely is true that ordinary people subscribe to different beliefs about matters of value; Sextus has less need of the Micawber Policy here than anywhere else. Moreover, as Philo noted (319), even the so-called experts cannot agree.⁵

The basic methodological point is put most clearly by Sextus in a passage from the Second Mode. It bears partial quoting:

since, then, choice and avoidance are located in pleasure and displeasure, and

pleasure and displeasure lie in perception and appearance, then when some choose and others avoid the same things it is logical for us to conclude that they are also affected differently by the same things, since otherwise they would all alike have chosen and avoided the same things. (327: *PH* 1 87=72C LS [part],=201)

327 is couched in terms of what people actually *do*, as opposed to think they *ought to*, pursue; it is about what is *chosen*, not what is *choiceworthy* (as in (5)). Moreover, the objection that ethics is about what people ought to do is misplaced. Ethics is the study of what people value; and we determine what people really value by seeing what they actually pursue. Ethics is descriptive, not normative.

The claim, then, is that we cannot determine what if anything is good or bad by nature, because different people react to things in different ways. But this has metaphysical connotations: for Sextus repeatedly asserts that, if something has an affective property by nature, then it must exercise it without exception. ‘Nature’ is a causal concept: things have natures in so far as they are disposed to act and be acted upon in particular ways; and if any property belongs to something by nature, it does so non-relatively and invariably (cf. Chapter IX, 159: P1–P3; cf. Chapter VII, 129).

Consider some further texts:

if there is anything good or bad by nature, it must be good for all persons alike, just as snow is cold to all. (328: *DL* 9 101)

If, then, there is anything good by nature, or anything bad by nature, this ought to be common to everyone, and to be good or bad for everyone. For just as fire which is warmth-giving by nature warms everyone, and does not warm some and chill others, and just as snow which is naturally chilling does not chill some and warm others, but chills all alike, similarly what is good by nature ought to be good for everyone, and not just good for some but not good for others. (329: *M* 11 69)⁶

Fire which warms by nature appears to all as warming, and snow which chills by nature appears to all as chilling, and all things which affect by nature affect similarly everyone who is in, as they say, a natural condition. But none of the things alleged to be goods affect everyone as being good, as we shall show; so there is nothing which is good by nature. (330: *PH* 3 179)

So if there is anything good by nature, it should be good in relation to everyone, and if there is anything bad by nature, it should be bad in relation to everyone. (331: *M* 11 71)

If, then, things which affect by nature affect everyone similarly, whereas we are not all similarly affected by the things alleged to be goods, then there is nothing good by nature. (332: *PH* 3 182; and cf. *PH* 3 191, 193, 196, 197; *M* 1 147)

327–30 take fire and snow as examples of what it would be to have a natural affective property: Sextus argues that, while it is plausible to attribute to fire the natural capacity to burn (since it does so exceptionlessly), it is not so plausible to attribute any such natural

capacity for goodness to things. But, as Sextus himself notes, the example itself is dubious (*M* 8 197–9): fire does not burn everything it comes into contact with, a fact which is taken to show that fire does *not* burn by nature (Chapter XII: 262). Thus Sextus appears inconsistently both to urge and to deny that fire burns naturally—and when pressing its claims to a caustic nature, he does so precisely in order to diminish by comparison the plausibility of anything in the ethical field’s attaining to a similar status.

We may formalize in general terms the argument of 331 and 332:

(6) if (a) anything has a certain affective property by nature, then (b) it will affect every member of a determinate natural kind in a similar fashion;

(7) nothing affects every member of any determinate natural kind in a similar fashion;
so

(8) nothing has any affective property by nature. (Call the naturally-affective properties ‘ Φ -properties’, and predicates referring to them ‘ Φ -predicates’.)

(7) is (allegedly) an empirical truth, grounded in evident *diaphōnia*; (6) is an *a priori* truth; hence (8).

However, 332 adds a crucial rider to (6a):

(6*) if (a) anything has a certain affective property by nature, then (b) it will affect every member of a determinate natural kind *which is in a suitable condition C* in a similar fashion;

(6*) is a good deal more plausible than (6), which, as it stands, will prevent even fire and snow from having genuine natures. But elsewhere Sextus seeks to do just that. Even if the candidate Φ -predicate is the more general ‘warms’ (rather than ‘burns’), as suggested by 329–30, Sextus will adduce counter-examples such as Demophon (*PH* 1 82: Chapter IX, 166; cf. *M* 1 147). (6), effectively, rules out anything’s being a Φ -proposition. (6*) is more permissive (indeed it seems positively promiscuous): but it lacks the requisite Sceptical leverage. Suppose a Sceptic produces an apparent case of (7) (that is to say, an instance of some member of natural kind not being affected in some way that supposedly it should be), and attempts thus to deny (6*b), the Dogmatist will reply that (7) and (6*b) are quite compatible; and the item in question fails to satisfy the italicized rider; so (6*b) is unthreatened, and nothing follows about (6*a).⁷ In *PH* 3 179–82, Sextus slides between (6) and (6*), seeking to utilize the plausibility of the one and the logical power of the other.⁸ In the parallel *M* 11 68–71, there is no hint of (6*), which makes the argument at least consistent, at the expense of depriving it of its plausibility. It is necessary to define and apply the notion of nature consistently; and Sextus does not always do so.

But for all that, Sextus still has resources at his disposal. The Dogmatist who wishes to fall back on something like (6*), and to use that to avoid the conclusions urged upon him by the Sceptical arguments, must show that the ways of specifying the content of *C* are not merely stipulative. Sextus will hold that no such empirically content-bearing specifications are uncontroversially available to the Dogmatist. But even supposing they are, that fact in itself will not be enough to justify any positive claims about the worth of particular value-judgements, since it will be compatible with any form of relativism. In order to privilege a class of value-judgements over its rivals, the Dogmatist will need further to show why the individual who satisfies condition *C* is in a better position to

judge than those who do not. In other words, the Dogmatist will have to justify some claims to expertise. And it is difficult to see exactly how that can be done.

Conclusions

How are we to reconcile Sextus's ostensibly negatively dogmatic conclusions with the Pyrrhonists' avowedly Sceptical purpose? And what are we to do with the differing claims Sextus makes about the natures of things?

It is easy to mistake the general strategy of a Sceptical argument. Sceptics aim at inducing *epochē* by adducing considerations on both sides of any issue (cf. e.g. *PH* 1 8–10, 12, 31–4). Suppose a Sceptic wants to bring about *epochē* concerning some proposition *p*. He will go about it first by arguing for, or producing grounds for, *p*: and then he will invoke countervailing arguments or reasons why not-*p*. The procedure is dialectical: and each dialectical arm will have the appearance of an argument for a dogmatic conclusion. Thus arguments which apparently have as their conclusion 'nothing is good by nature' and the like are only half the story. They are to be set against the prevailing view of dogmatic humanity that some things *are* good by nature; and the end result is that we can't tell one way or the other.

But does the Sceptic not urge us *not* to believe anything to be good or bad by nature? Indeed: but that does not amount to thinking that nothing as a matter of fact *is* good or bad by nature: not believing *p* is not the same as believing not-*p*. The Sceptic holds that a positive belief in the values of things is harmful. It introduces 'additional beliefs', *prosdoxazomena* (*PH* 1 30, 3 236; *M* 11 158), to the effect that the things we are constrained willy-nilly to pursue are as a matter of objective fact choiceworthy. This additional belief causes us to be strongly committed to the achievement of them, and induces a corresponding sense of loss when they are not attained, which is inimical to the Sceptical goal of *metriopatheia*, moderation in affection (*PH* 1 25–8, 30; 3 235–9; *M* 11 141ff., 161).

We cannot extirpate our affections: they simply press in upon us and compel us to behave in certain ways. But we *can* avoid being committed to their objective truth: and that avoidance pays therapeutic dividends. Sextus holds that observers of a surgical operation are often more distressed by it than the patient (*M* 11 158–9), because of their beliefs that the pain caused by it is naturally evil. Pyrrho himself referred to the difficulty of purging oneself of such additional beliefs after being frightened by the dog (Chapter IV: 85; cf. 86).

Finally, natural properties. In 328–30, the powers of fire and snow are held to be natural; yet 262 denies that fire has a natural caustic power, because it will not burn everything. Which does Sextus really believe? The answer, quite simply, is neither, since he believes nothing beyond his immediate experiences—which do not count as *dogmata*, since *dogmata* carry with them a commitment to the reality of their objects. Sceptical arguments are therapeutic, and directed *ad hominem*. The aim of the Sceptic, outlined at the end of *PH* (3 280–1:353; Chapter XVIII), is to cure people of their Dogmatic rashness. Different patients need different treatments: people only weakly affected by the ailment can be made well by relatively mild therapies; harder cases yield only to more

desperate remedies.⁹ That is why, Sextus says, Sceptics deliberately propound arguments of varying scope and persuasiveness. Some arguments only attack judgements of value: others work, if they work at all, against absolutely anything.

To look for consistency in the ordinary way is to mistake the Sceptical enterprise. When asked ‘what do you seek to make us doubt?’ the proper Sceptical response is ‘as much as turns out to be necessary to effect a cure’. The arguments work not by persuading people of the truth of their conclusions, but by inclining them away from rashness and dogmatism, by compelling them in the manner of the other affections, by *causing* them to abandon their troublesome beliefs. That account is coherent, although whether it can be coherently elaborated from *within* the Pyrrhonian context is another question (Chapter XVII). The apparent equivocation over things’ natures thus evaporates. The arguments form an ordered set, exhibiting once more the Concessive Method (see Chapter XI, 194). If the first fails in its work of dislodging a belief that *p*, then the second will show that, even if *p* is granted, then there is no good reason for holding that *q*; and the third will show that, if you persist in sticking to *q*, none the less even given that, suspension as to *r* is appropriate; and so on.

Thus, if anything has a causal property by nature, it will be something like fire, and certainly not something like a conception of the objective good: but there are reasons for thinking that, as a matter of fact, not even fire has any such discoverable property. So the apparent ontological presuppositions of much of Sextus’s arguments in the theory of values turn out to be harmless. He is *not* committed to thinking that only genuinely causal properties of things will satisfy principles like (5), and consequently if nothing *does* satisfy it, there are no genuinely causal properties. He simply turns the Dogmatists’ presuppositions against themselves. As for himself, he believes nothing whatsoever.

XVII

The Sceptical Attitude

Pyrrhonists themselves describe Scepticism as an *agōgē*, a way of life (*PH* 1 1, 4, 21–2; cf. 17; Chapter II: 9); its goal is *ataraxia*, freedom from mental disturbance (ibid. 25–30), which is also described as the ‘causal origin of the Sceptic way’ (ibid. 12); and it appears to prescribe a method of achieving that end. We are to investigate every non-evident issue, and by means of the Sceptical ability to oppose appearance to appearance, judgement to judgement, etc., such that every non-phenomenal issue will appear to be controverted, and every non-phenomenal claim seem to have precisely as much to be said for it as against it (ibid. 8–11), and this *isostheneia*, or equipollence of argument (ibid. 8, 10, 26), leads us to *epochē*, or suspension of judgement (ibid. 26) upon which *ataraxia* supervenes ‘as a shadow on a body’ (ibid. 29; cf. 26; Chapter II: 12). The Sceptic does not do away with the appearances, as some allege (ibid. 19–20:7): on the contrary, he lives ‘by adhering to them according to an observance of life, undogmatically’ (ibid. 23: 9; cf. 10).

The crucial questions then become: what is the scope and content of the Pyrrhonist’s rejection of dogma? Does it compromise his ability to live an ordinary life (cf. Chapter II: 10)? Will the Sceptic in fact be committed to some beliefs? How if at all will the Sceptic’s mental life differ from that of others? Even if scepticism is coherent, can it be coherently described from the inside? And finally: if such a life is coherent, what if anything is to be said for it?

Belief and Appearance

Pyrrhonists claim to have no beliefs whatsoever—and that claim has usually been taken at its face value. Following Jonathan Barnes (1982b; he is himself following Galen: cf. Chapter VIII, n. 16) I call this ‘rustic Pyrrhonism’. However, Michael Frede (1979) has argued that the Pyrrhonist’s target was *theoretical* beliefs, concerning the real natures of things. In Frede’s view, these are the scientific tenets of the dogmatists—Pyrrhonism then leaves ordinary belief untouched. Again following Barnes, we may call this ‘urbane Scepticism’. Ultimately I think that Sextus is more urbane than rustic—although his urbanity is not, I believe, precisely that of Frede. Fixing the nature of Sextus’s scepticism will be the principal task of the rest of this book.

Let us quote again the key passages:

we say that the Sceptic does not dogmatize, not in that more general sense of ‘dogma’ in which people say that something seems right (*eudokein*) to them (since the Sceptic assents to those affections which are compelled by

impressions so that he would not say e.g. when heated or cooled ‘I do not seem to be heated or cooled’), but we say that he does not dogmatize in the sense of those who say that a dogma is an assent to one of the non-evident objects of scientific inquiry. For the Pyrrhonist assents to nothing that is non-evident (*adēlon*). (333 [= 4]: *PH* 1 13)

When we doubt whether the underlying object is such as it appears, we grant that it does so appear, while we doubt not about the appearance (*phainomenon*) but about what is said about the appearance.... For instance, honey appears to us to be sweet. We allow this, since we are perceptually sweetened. But we doubt if it is sweet as regards its definition (*logos*); this is not the appearance, but something said about the appearance. (334 [= 7]: *PH* 1 19–20)

For the Greeks, a *phainomenon* was not some private mental entity to which individuals have privileged access; it is simply the way that something appears. The phrase I translate ‘as regards its definition’, *hoson epi tōi logōi*, is crucial. Discussing the distinction between Pyrrhonism and Cyrenaicism, Sextus writes:

while we suspend judgement in regard to the essence of external objects, the Cyrenaics assert that they have a nature which is inapprehensible (*akatalēpton*). (335: *PH* 1 215,=71 [part])

Frede, who translates the crucial phrase ‘insofar as it is a matter of reason’,¹ notes

the qualification or restriction is not that the skeptic suspends judgment about how things are but not about how they appear; the restriction, rather, is that the skeptic suspends judgment about how things are in a certain respect. That however implies that there is another respect in which the skeptic does not suspend judgment about how things are. (Frede, 1979, 188)

However, things are not so easily settled. Jacques Brunschwig has recently submitted Sextus’s use of these constructions (which are ubiquitous) to close scrutiny (Brunschwig, 1990), concluding that they are multiply ambiguous both syntactically and semantically. Syntactically, the phrase *hoson epi tōi logōi*, can be either adverbial, qualifying the *manner* in which something is done,² or ‘objective’, qualifying the object, or proposition, under discussion (as Frede and I take it). Secondly it can be either ‘anaphoric’, referring to a previous stretch of argument, or not (as again Frede and I take it).

In the case of 334, Brunschwig (1990, 116–21) rejects the non-anaphoric options since they demand taking *logos* to mean ‘essence’, and he detects no such use in Sextus. But Sextus does sometimes use *logos* to mean ‘definition’ (e.g. *PH* 2 212). A definition, in this sense, is a Lockean real definition—it picks out what it is to be something, or its essence. But even if Brunschwig is right, he allows that his account is indifferent between rustic or urbane Scepticism (1990, 121). The way lies open to interpreting the Sceptics not as rejecting belief in its entirety, but rather certain kinds of belief, those based on reason, and those referring to allegedly real, intrinsic properties of things (which seem to come to the same thing). We need, then, to scrutinize the senses of the word *dogma*.

Barnes (1982b, 6–12) exhaustively documents the history of the term in both philosophical and non-philosophical literature, and concludes that *dogmata* are generally either important beliefs, or those of a practical nature. Now, given that the Sceptics claim that their scepticism is a way of life, their rejection of *dogmata* can hardly be a matter of eschewing practical beliefs rather than any others. However, it may well be construed as involving the abandonment of beliefs carrying a certain (theoretical) weight. The tenth-century Byzantine lexicon the *Suda* has a pithy entry under *dogma*: ‘he dogmatizes; he does theology, is puffed up’.³ Frede, fastening on Sextus’s admission in 333 that *some* concept of belief (namely that according to which one ‘approves’ (*eudokein*) of something) is harmless enough, notes that

eudokein and *eudokesthai* are used in the sense of ‘be content with’, ‘assent to’, ‘agree’, ‘consent to’, ‘recognize’, ‘accept’, or ‘suppose’. (1979, 193)

The question of what the stronger notion of belief eschewed by the Sceptics may be turns on the extent, if any, to which the Sceptics are prepared to allow epistemic appearances; do they restrict themselves exclusively to P-seemings, or will they admit J-seemings as well (cf. Chapter III, 45)?

Myles Burnyeat (1980c, 133 ff.) argues that the case for interpreting Sextus as allowing some cases of J-seeming is not compelling. This must be distinguished from the question (to be examined later) of whether he *can* consistently with Pyrrhonist practice allow such cases, and hence of whether he *should* do so; and of whether such a purely non-epistemic account is even coherent. And it is true that Sextus treats as P-seemings some cases which we should naturally take to be epistemic:

whenever we say, in a sceptical manner, that ‘of existing things some are good, some are bad, and some in between’, we use ‘are’ to indicate not existence but appearance. For while, concerning the existence in its real nature of things good, evil, and neither, we have quite enough dispute with the Dogmatists, we have the habit of calling each appearance of these things good, bad, or indifferent. (336: *M* 11 19–20)

At issue are not beliefs about the qualities of things, but rather the Pappearances they have. And for the Greeks it was perfectly natural to consider the evaluatively relevant features of objects as being just that—properties given in appearance. Burnyeat applies this result to the notion of *dogma*, and concludes that, as a *dogma* is anything which goes beyond the non-epistemic appearances, there is no useful distinction to be found (at least in Sextus) between dogmatic and non-dogmatic belief.

Here he is directly opposed to Frede, who holds that the Sceptics’ response to the ‘lazy argument’ does not commit them to divorcing belief from action (which would amount to Dogmatism: 1979, 183–4), and also that all that is being rejected is beliefs of a certain theoretic density (cf. 333). Frede distinguishes two distinct ways in which appearance may contrast with reality: we may simply change our mind about something, saying that what seemed to be the case turned out not to be; but equally we may hold that in a certain sense what we have accepted as an appearance has no reality, and yet still be prepared to

stick by the appearance *read epistemically*:

suppose, for example, that a particular wine seems quite sweet to me. Someone might explain, it only seems sweet, because I had eaten something sour just before tasting the wine [cf. *PH* 1 110]. If I accept this explanation, I shall no longer think that the wine is sweet; at most, I shall think that the wine only seems to be sweet. Yet, someone might also try to provide a quite different explanation. He might say that there is, in reality, no such thing as sweetness in wine; the wine, rather, has certain chemical properties which, in normal circumstances, make it taste such that we call it sweet. It may even be that I am convinced by an explanation of this sort and come to view how things taste in an entirely new light. Nonetheless, such an explanation might seem rather puzzling, because it is not entirely clear how it is supposed to bear on my claim that the wine is quite sweet. Even if I accept this explanation, the wine will still seem sweet, and I shall still think that it is. Thus, in a sense, it will still be true that it does not merely seem as if the wine is sweet, even if I believe that, in reality, there is no such thing as sweetness. (Frede, 1979, 189–90)

From this subtle thesis⁴ Frede concludes, persuasively, that ‘the contrast between how things really are and how they appear non-epistemically is insufficient’ to do the work required of it.

Greek Scepticism arose, as Frede says, as a reaction to Dogmatic philosophizing. Consider the case of Plato: we cannot, according to Plato, say for any object *x* in the phenomenal world and any property *P* that *x* really has *P*; but for all that locutions of the form ‘*x* has *P*’ may be perfectly harmless, indeed (in a sense) true (cf. Chapter VII, 128). The Sceptical position may differ from that of the Dogmatists, and involve less commitment than it, in at least two ways. First, it may differ in scope, in what is acceptable as a proper object for a certain attitude. Frede effectively construes the Sceptical position so—the Sceptic is allowed to believe things, but not believe that they are really true.⁵ But secondly the distinction may be one of the attitude’s type: the relation that the Sceptic stands in to the objects of propositional attitudes may be distinct from any adopted by the Dogmatist. Is, then, Scepticism defined by scope or attitude, or by some combination of the two?

On the side of the Frede line is the apparent allowability in 333 of a certain sort of acceptance. And if I accept something, must I not at least in some sense believe it? That identification of acceptance with belief is attractive, but not I think ultimately compelling. One can accept something (in the sense of going along with it without demur) without actually believing it: I may hence choose to behave *as if* I believed while remaining agnostic on the matter; and I might find such acceptance actually conducive to my peace of mind. Alternatively, I might decide to behave as if the precepts of ordinary morality were binding even though intellectually I can see no good reason for taking them as such. Here the distinction is not between what I take to be real and what mere appearance, but rather between what makes sense for me as a pragmatic rule and what I take to be metaphysically true. I may, in this case, have no metaphysical views one way or the other: that is, I may, as far as the real basis for acceptability of these precepts is

concerned, be in an unimpeachably Sceptical state of mind. But I can still adopt them as action-guiding principles (compare the status of Descartes' rules: *Discourse 2*).

This, I think, is close to Sextus's actual position (see Stough, 1984). Of course I adopt the precepts only in an etiolated sense: I simply go along with them—I won't stake my life on their truth. In short, I will not be committed to them. Now, such a position has frequently seemed unsatisfactory, particularly to those of a powerfully realist bent. Surely if I am to accept something, even provisionally and undogmatically, I must have some reason for so doing—and that can only take the form of my thinking that something is true. But that is to beg the important question of the connection between belief (or perhaps better here acceptance) and truth. I can accept something without accepting it as true.⁶

Whether we choose to label acceptance in this sense as a form of belief or whether rather we wish to reserve the notion of belief for an attitude which has some direct connection with the concept of truth may begin to seem merely an unimportant terminological issue. Burnyeat writes:

I do not myself think that there is a notion of belief which lacks this connection with truth; (1980c, 137)

that is, all believing is believing *to be true*. We may then decide to subject the notion of truth to scrutiny, and to attempt to elaborate a concept of truth that has nothing to do with any metaphysical realist claims, in any one of a variety of distinct ways (pragmatism, coherentism, intuitionism, 'internal realism'); but such a view (of truth) has no ancient counterparts (*malgré* Groarke, 1990). The Sceptics are not concerned to establish a belief without foundations that is somehow none the less warranted; rather they simply describe a way of life. Thus it seems preferable to agree with Burnyeat (against Frede) that Sextus's Sceptical way is best described (by us) as a life without belief. But, since it is not a life without affective attitudes, all the heavy work remains to be done.

Assent, Assertion, Action, and Avowal

A key feature of the Stoics' action theory is the notion of assent, *sunkatathesis*. Assent is a mental act of inclination to the content of an impression which is propositional in form, and accompanied by an impulse:

they [the Stoics] say that all impulses (*hormai*) are acts of assent (*sunkatathesis*), and the practical impulses also contain motive power. But acts of assent and impulses actually differ in their objects: propositions are the objects of acts of assent, but impulses are directed towards predicates, which are contained in a sense in the propositions. (337: Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 2 88.2–6, =SVF 3 171, =LS 331)⁷

The proposition assented to is normative: 'eating the apple is right for me'; and the impulse is directed towards the predicate 'eating the apple'.

Crucially for the Stoics what differentiates man from the beasts is the interposition of assent between impression and action. They seek to account for the fact that something may seem good to eat on the one hand, and yet it still not seem good to eat it. The object presents itself as something desirable: but the task of the rational individual is to distinguish the genuinely desirable from what merely appears so. In order to do that, the Stoics urge, he must formulate the desire in the form of a normative question ('Is eating the apple right for me?'), to which, after deliberation, he either assents or demurs. The result will be action of one sort or another, either pursuit or avoidance.⁸

As early as Arcesilaus, Sceptics attempted to undermine the complexities of that account. Not that they held that the Stoic view could not provide a working model for human cognitive processes directed towards action (that would have been negative dogmatism). Rather they first disputed whether such a procedure could ever be *justified* (in the Stoics' own terms), and second took issue with the Stoics' response that some such account was necessary to make human action a possibility (cf. Chapters V, 86ff., and VI, 110ff.). Effectively, Sceptics attempt to dissolve the distinction in Stoic theory between human action and that of other animals (Chapter V: 125–7). The Arcesilaan picture of human action resulting directly from impressions, appearances, without the mediation of deliberation and assent, is taken over by Sextus. Not that Sceptics reject the notion of assent altogether (they do not in any case make an issue out of terminology: *PH* 1 195, 207). Sextus says in 333 that 'the Sceptic assents to those affections (*pathē*) which are compelled by impressions (*phantasiai*)'; and elsewhere he writes (discussing Sceptical non-assertion, or *aphasia*) that

aphasia is an affection (*pathos*) of ours as a result of which we say that we neither affirm nor deny anything. Whence it is clear that we adopt *aphasia* not because real things were such as in their nature to induce *aphasia*, but rather showing that we now, when we utter it, are in this condition in respect of these particular objects of inquiry. And it must further be remembered that we say that we neither affirm nor deny anything of the things said dogmatically about non-evident things—for we yield to those things which move us affectively and necessarily to assent. (338: *PH* 1 192–3)

The Sceptic 'says nothing' only in a special sense. He says nothing about the reality of things, but he may perfectly well make avowals, or *apangeliai*:

whenever I say 'to every argument an equal argument is opposed', what I say in effect is 'to every argument investigated by me which establishes something dogmatically there appears to me to be opposed another argument that establishes something dogmatically, equal to the first in credibility and the lack of it', so that the utterance of the slogan is not itself dogmatic, but is rather an avowal of a human affection, which is something which is apparent to the one who is affected. (339: *PH* 1 203; cf. 15, 201)

339 establishes that what appears, and hence the content of an impression, need not be restricted to the merely perceptual.⁹ Avowal is connected directly with affections, things

one undergoes, which here include mental states. **338** further underlines that the attitude of *aphasia* is not the rational result of a reasoned procedure. The Sceptic may indeed, like Gorgias's Helen (Chapter III, n. 22), be 'compelled by argument': but he means that in a severely literal sense. The arguments act upon him so as to cause impressions and affections: the relation between premisses and conclusion of an argument is not one of entailment—rather, under certain circumstances, contemplation of the premisses brings about the conclusion, not as something one assents to (for assent in this sense requires commitment), but as a *pathos*, an affection.

These concepts—assent, affection, avowal, non-assertion—are systematically interrelated. Not to assent is to refuse to commit oneself to the truth or falsity of a particular proposition. Hence in so far as assent consists in assent to a proposition, and thereby in commitment to its truth, the Sceptic will not assent. However the Sceptic will, like everyone else, feel things, both of a narrowly perceptual and a more obviously intellectual nature. Feelings in both senses will slip across his conscious map. What they will not do, on the Sceptics' own recognition, is evoke powerful feelings of commitment or its opposite. Thus there is a sense in which the Sceptic can be said to assent to something—the simple behaviourist sense in which actions of pursuit and avoidance indicate minimally that external things appear in such and such a manner to him.

At this point, the issue of whether the Sceptic should be said to have beliefs or not slips into scholasticism. What matters is not the salubrity or otherwise of applying a particular term to his mental condition, but rather whether or not we can make sense of it, and the extent to which it differs from states that we, non-sceptically, associate with belief. The next task, then, is to delineate as clearly as possible the outlines of the Sceptic's affective, intentional states.

The Unavoidability of Assent

Throughout his works, Sextus is concerned to emphasize the psychologically compulsive aspects of the Sceptic's mental life. In **333** he is 'compelled by impressions' to assent to affections; *epochē* is frequently represented as something forced willy-nilly upon the Sceptic by the *isostheneia* of competing considerations;¹⁰ **338** has him 'yielding' to things which 'affectively and necessarily' move him to (weak) assent. The Stoics insist on the necessity of assent in the strong sense for the rational, and hence the free, life. Our actions are 'up to us' precisely because we can stand back from the contents of our immediate affective impressions and ask whether or not we should act upon them. I cannot choose not to be hungry—but I can choose not to eat.

However, the Sceptics' account of their own mental experiences rejects that sort of freedom as being unnecessary for action. It is worth stressing that the Sceptics' claims about their own experience need not commit them to any kind of dogmatism. It does not matter for this whether or not one agrees with Burnyeat (1980c, and more particularly 1982b, 32) that for the ancients in general (and hence for the Sceptics in particular) private mental states were not considered appropriate objects of knowledge as they have been since the Cartesian revolution.¹¹ What does matter is that the Sceptics do allow

themselves privileged access to their own affections, whether or not it is appropriate to describe them in terms of truth and falsity; and they do not disallow conceptual understanding:

[the Dogmatists] hold that the Sceptic either does or does not apprehend the statements made by the Dogmatists; if he does apprehend, how can he be perplexed about the things he has apprehended? But if he does not apprehend, he will not know how to talk of things he has not apprehended. (340: PH 2 2)

Sextus rightly observes that there is an equivocation on the meaning of ‘apprehend’ here—it can either mean ‘grasp’ in the Stoic sense, with its implications of veridicality, or it can simply denote the grasping of a concept (without any such existential implications).

After having laid out the core of the anti-Dogmatic strategy (that the type of apprehension of real existence which Dogmatists consider indispensable to knowledge is unattainable by them), Sextus writes:

if, on the other hand, they say that it is not this kind of apprehension which they deem essential for inquiry, but simple mental conception, it will not be impossible for those who suspend judgement to make inquiries. For the Sceptic is not, I think, debarred from mental conception which arises from the affective occurrence of clear appearances to the reason itself, but which does not in any way involve the reality of the things conceived. (341: PH 2 10)

Sceptics, then, are allowed conceptual knowledge. It doesn’t matter whether they choose to *call* them beliefs or not. In fact, Sceptics have a legitimate interest in maintaining the connections between truth and (external) reality, since such a connection was a Dogmatic commonplace (Chapter VI, 105ff.). The Sceptics take that alleged link as their principal target—and their Scepticism seeks to undermine beliefs concerning the real natures of the objects that allegedly populate such a reality. Their scepticism is Essential, although its scope is broad: any assertion that an object *really* has a certain property will fall foul of it.

Thus the Sceptic has no qualms about allowing himself to understand, for instance, the content of the Stoic concept of cataleptic impression—all he doubts is whether such a concept is instantiated. Consider 341: Sextus presents the Sceptic’s mental contents as arising in him willy-nilly—there is no trace, deliberately, of the Stoics’ notion of free assent to propositional contents. They are simply there, and determine the Sceptic’s state of mind.

Similarly, in regard to the nature of objects, he is quite happy to accept the *phainomena*:

that we adhere to the appearances is clear from what we say about the criterion of the Sceptical Way of Life (*agōgē*). The word ‘criterion’ is used in two ways, meaning both that which produces justified belief (*pistis*) in the existence and non-existence of things..., and that of action, by adhering to which we do some things in life and not others, and it is of that which we now speak. So we say

that the criterion of the Sceptical Way of Life is the appearance, effectively meaning by this the impression (*phantasia*). For this is not open to inquiry, lying as it does in feeling and involuntary affection. For this reason no-one will presumably dispute as to whether the underlying object presents this or that appearance—but they will inquire as to whether it is of such a kind as it appears to be. (342: *PH* 1 21–2; cf. 333–4)

This criterion is practical, and without normative content—it is what actually guides the Sceptic's life. Even when Sextus, in the succeeding paragraphs, proceeds to outline the benefits, as he sees it, of adopting such a path (*PH* 1 25–30), he nowhere actually *recommends* the life of *ataraxia*: it is simply a consequence of the life without belief.

342 too emphasizes the process's mechanical nature—our assent, such as it is, is involuntary. Things just happen that way. Furthermore, the impression which moves us thus is not open to inquiry, not because (in the modern fashion) it is incorrigible, but simply because the proper subjects for inquiry are the relations that hold between impressions and their supposed objects.

But, one might object, how can we coherently conceive of the Sceptic's state as one without commitment to the truth of certain impressions? Suppose I am a Sceptic. I have an impression that there is a tasty breakfast on the table in front of me. That impression moves me, among other things, to reach towards it with knife and fork. But surely if I do this I *believe* that there is a breakfast in front of me, and that it will be good to eat. If my state is an intentional one, directed, that is, towards something external to me, surely I must have some minimal belief that the appearance is unlikely to be deceptive? And if I do not, can I have any reason to pursue the breakfast-appearance rather than remain indifferent to it?

But that is to attempt to visualize the Sceptic's state in non-sceptical terms. We can certainly imagine the development of intentional systems to which we annex no consciousness, and therefore to which it makes no sense to ascribe beliefs in the ordinary sense: we may even consider thermostats thus. The question then is: can human beings get themselves into such a state?

Myles Burnyeat thinks ultimately they cannot:

when a thing appears in a certain light to him, that no more inclines him to believe it is as it appears than would the fact of its appearing so to someone else [Burnyeat is thinking of the Sceptic's response to the reports of other people's divergent impressions]. It is merely one more impression or appearance to be noted. Thus the withdrawal from truth and real existence becomes, in a certain sense, a detachment from oneself.... With this point we reach, I think, the real point of skepticism as a way of life. So thoroughgoing a detachment from oneself is not easy to understand—indeed, it is here that I would locate the ultimate incoherence of the skeptical philosophy. (Burnyeat, 1980c, 129)

But it is not clear that Scepticism requires this sort of detachment. It is not that the Sceptic finds himself merely a passive spectator of his own affections, taking no more interest in them than he does in those of anyone else—among other things, he does not really know

how other people are affected. Of course he has second-order impressions that other people have certain first-order impressions—but that fact in itself has no tendency to make the Sceptic no more concerned about his own first-order impressions than he is about what he takes to be the contents of other people's, any more than the fact that you dislike anchovies while I adore them has any tendency to make *me* less inclined to eat them. There is, perhaps, a sense in which the Sceptic is detached from the normal linkage between the objects of drives and beliefs about them—but that need not be conceptualized as involving any rupture of the self. It is, after all, what appears *to him* that he follows. Of course, his behaviour may be affected by second-order impressions—if it seems to him that his smoking is offensive to you, he may extinguish his cigarette—but here again the structure of his reactions is precisely isomorphic to those of the equivalent Dogmatist.

In the breakfast case, one further objection needs consideration. I have a breakfast-impression. But I do not, as a Sceptic, believe in the reality of the breakfast any more than the reverse. Once I am reflectively aware of that fact, can I still retain any *nisus* towards it? I am no more inclined to think that it really is breakfast than that it really isn't. In that case, will I not, as Hume thought, simply sink into a slough of apathetic despond? The temptation to think Hume right derives from an insufficiently serious attempt to try to understand the Sceptic's state of mind from the inside. While no doubt we, in our ordinary Dogmatic fashion, would take such an impasse to be paralysing, there is no reason to imagine that the paralysis need infect the Sceptic. We assume that it is rational to do something only if it seems actually to be preferable to do so. But the Sceptic has no such constraints—his rational impasse will simply be the mental froth on the wave of what he actually does, constrained by the appearances.

But suppose the Sceptic has a breakfast-impression, and that he likes breakfast; suppose further that a kindly associate informs him that it has been poisoned by a spiteful Dogmatist. How can the information affect his behaviour, as it should if Scepticism does not compromise ordinary life, without modifying his *beliefs*? While one might allow the Sceptic that the mere sight and smell of breakfast are enough in themselves (other conditions suitably being realized) to cause breakfast-pursuit, it is surely natural to think that when one acts on advice, one takes the information as a *reason* for refraining from doing what comes naturally, rather than simply a further, countervailing cause of non-reasoned behaviour. And for something to count as a reason for my action, I must surely have a set of beliefs—about the plausibility of the information, about the desirability of certain outcomes, and so on.

No doubt any ordinary concept of reason is inextricably linked with belief and truth; and a follower of the Frede line might allow the Sceptic those beliefs, provided always he stops short of believing them to be *really* true. Burnyeat (1980c, 138–40) considers the related case of the Sceptic's relation to argument in general. After all, the Sceptic portrays his condition as one of suspense of judgement achieved after seeing the equally-balanced nature of arguments pro and contra. But how, Burnyeat asks, can we make sense of that without the notions of belief and truth? If I think arguments pro and contra *p* balance precisely, do I not *believe* that there is nothing overwhelming to be said on either side? And do I not think that it is *true* that the arguments balance precisely? Furthermore, what is the basis for my confidence in their so balancing? How does the Sceptic perform

the calculus of reasons? If he is to determine that the arguments do so balance, he must be able to assess their relative weights—but that is surely to have beliefs about their power and plausibility, about their probable relation to the extra-argumentative truth. Sextus certainly appears to talk in this way when he discusses *isostheneia*: the dispute is ‘equally balanced’ (*isosthenē*: *PH* 1 26; cf. 196, and especially 202–6). As Burnyeat puts it, ‘accepting the conclusion that *p* is true on the basis of certain arguments is hardly to be distinguished from coming to *believe* that *p* is *true* with that argument as one’s *reason* (1980c, 138)’.

An obvious interpretative route for someone who does not buy the Frede line of allowing the Sceptic limited beliefs would be to treat even the apparent ‘belief’ that the breakfast has been poisoned as being a non-epistemic P-appearance. But what is doing the seeming—does the breakfast itself have a poisoned appearance as a result of what the Sceptic has been told? That is problematic, since in a perfectly straightforward sense (at least if it has been cleverly poisoned) it will look, taste, and smell just like any other breakfast. Rather we need to be able to construe the words of warning as simply setting up in the Sceptic a train of mental events which affect his behaviour; perhaps as a result the Sceptic will come to derive impressions from the breakfast which do set it apart from ordinary non-toxic cases. He may even perform tests upon it which, from our Dogmatists’ perspective, we would describe as confirming the view that it was poisoned—the important point is that, for such a sequence of behaviour to be action-guiding, the Sceptic need not so represent it to himself. Rather he simply follows out a routine, acting on the basis of commemorative signs, like an Empirical doctor.

Can we make similar moves in the case of argument in general? Burnyeat thinks not. He allows that Sextus frequently couches his talk in terms of plausibility rather than demonstration—and plausibility is simply a matter of being affected in a certain way. Furthermore, arguments function merely as

reminders or suggestions of what can be said against them [i.e. dogmatic views], and through this of the apparently equal strength of opposed positions. (Burnyeat, 1980c, 139; he further cites *PH* 2 103, 130, 177, and *M* 8 289 in this context)

But Burnyeat holds that this defence fails, since Sextus

offers no elucidation whatever of the crucial notion of something’s being said *against* a doctrine or belief but not by way of reasons or evidence against it. (1980c, 139)

This is perhaps true—but Sextus would simply reply that what goes for psychological states in general goes for those induced by argument. Now, inducement is a causal notion (although the Sceptic will have no causal *theory* regarding the conditions of such inducements—he will simply report their occurrence). But if we can make sense of the distinction between (a) beliefs arrived at on the basis of reasoning, and (b) beliefs or attitudes simply induced, why cannot we allow the Sceptic the latter? And furthermore, if we want to restrict the concept of belief to those cases in which the believer has (or

believes he has) reasons for his belief, then we simply coin a new name for the second class of attitude. The Sceptic cannot directly draw such a distinction himself, since it presupposes a dogma—but he need not do so. He simply describes, in non-dogmatic terms, the content of his own experiences. It is up to us, as Dogmatists, to determine whether sense can be made of it; and a Dogmatist can only show that the Sceptical position is incoherent by way of some transcendental argument to the effect that belief and commitment are necessary, irreducible parts of the human mental experience—and I see no prospect for any such successful argument.

We are all perfectly familiar with the distinctions between (a) and (b) involved in the notion of inducement. The Sceptic wants to say that all his mental attitudes are, after Sceptical de-programming, of type (b). This means that the Sceptic can have at that stage no *account* of how these attitudes develop, if by ‘account’ we mean some theory of concept- and attitude-formation. But he does not need one. Just as the hard-line Empiricist doctor has no interest in or need of theories of justification and evidence over and above what he simply reports (see Chapter XIII, 227–8), the Sceptic is under no obligation to provide an account of the causal structure of his psychological condition.

We might, however, describe the Sceptic’s condition purely in terms of conditioned responses. The Sceptic learns on the basis of the sequence of impressions that some courses of action are painful, while others are pleasant—and he will follow, other things being equal, the pleasure-inducing courses. Take the habit of brushing one’s teeth regularly. No doubt all of us can tell a rational story as to why it’s good to do so (it reduces tooth-decay, which cuts down the frequency of painful dental treatment, and so on)—but it is altogether a different question as to whether those rational justifications actually explain, in the strong sense, our actions—we simply go on regularly brushing our teeth as a result of a habit inculcated in us by our parents on the basis of behaviour-modifying stimuli.

The Sceptic, I think, wants to interpret all of his mental life in this light. As I have stressed, he will have no theory of it—he will just report it as such (although he may develop such a theory dialectically, if it seems required). Thus a Sceptic might heed a warning not to eat a poisoned breakfast without its being true that he acts directly upon the semantic content of the warning. The warning affects him—but not, or at least not directly, because it is the warning that it is. Again, comparison with programmed responsive machines is instructive. We can programme machinery to respond in a particular way to commands, admonitions, even warnings—but at no stage in our explanation of such behaviour need we hypothesize any semantic understanding on the part of the machine. Sceptics are automata of the same type.

Of course it is difficult to imagine oneself operating in this way—but that is not to the point. The Sceptic need not claim that his mental restructuring will be easy to effect. Further, we might suppose that, if someone does succeed in getting themselves into a Sceptical state of mind, then mere reflection on that fact will sever the links between advice and admonition on the one hand and action on the other. Suppose again I am a Sceptic. I hear you warn me about an impending precipice. Were I not a Sceptic, I should take you seriously, at least if certain conditions were satisfied (I know that you are not an inveterate practical joker, it is not April 1st, I do not have good reason to believe that I am in Holland, and so forth). But *ex hypothesi* I am a Sceptic, and hence I have no

commitment to the view that you are telling the truth, and hence no disposition to believe what you say. Why, since I am in that second-order situation with regard to the content of what you say, should I have any disposition to act on your advice? On the face of it, it seems I should have no such motivations, since they depend upon my believing what you say.

But that objection makes a fundamental mistake—it views the Sceptic’s mental life from the standpoint of the Dogmatist, and assumes that, even after the Sceptical medicine has taken its effect, the structure of the Sceptic’s assents and dissents will remain largely the same as it was before. In particular it assumes that, in default of having any reason to believe that a particular admonition is trustworthy, I shall have no reason to go along with it, and hence will not. But it is only against a residual background of a belief that some reasons for action really are good ones that an individual is likely to think that it makes no sense to act without any such reason. This is where the crucial decoupling of action from reason occurs. In a sense Burnyeat is right that the Sceptic is disassociated from his rational self—but that disassociation is not of the catastrophically incoherent form that Burnyeat envisages. The Sceptic may indeed still reason—what has gone is any tendency to act on the basis of those reasons *taken as reasons*.

Belief and Commitment

If all of this is at least approximately right, then there is indeed a coherent Sceptical form of mental life, one which can intelligibly be described as a life without belief. Of course, many difficulties of detail still remain. But the fundamental problem of coherence discerned by Burnyeat, namely that the Sceptic, in order to take the process of argument as seriously as he needs to in order to *justify* the position of *epochē*, must willy-nilly be committed to epistemic states which he is officially bound to eschew, is less devastating than first appeared. Of course, there is still work to be done in order properly and non-dogmatically to characterize the Sceptic’s attitude to processes which we would consider to involve reasoned argument and rational response to it.

If Frede is right, the connotations of the term *eudokein*, approve, in the Sceptical usage are negative—any assent involved simply amounts to not reacting contrary to the impression: it is entirely passive in form. This coheres well with the picture that has emerged of the Sceptic’s simply going along with the appearances, and his own second-order attitudes to his condition. Frede, indeed, writes:

there is also the other sense of ‘assent’ [i.e. one which does not involve assent to the truth of an impression]. One might, having considered matters, just acquiesce in the impression one is left with, resign oneself to it, accept the fact that this is the impression one is left with, without taking the step to accept the impression positively by thinking the further thought that the impression is true.... Assent is a purely passive matter. (Frede, 1984, 208)

A little later, Frede writes:

thus the skeptic may have views which account for his behavior. He behaves in exactly the way in which somebody who believed those views to be true would behave. But he insists that there is no need to assume that action, in addition to the appropriate kind of impression, requires the additional belief that the impression is true. (1984, 209)

That analysis (which is neutral with regard to the question of whether the Sceptic may be said to have beliefs) I broadly endorse. But we still need to clarify how the Sceptic's mental state differs from that of the Dogmatist even when they perform apparently indistinguishable actions on the basis of apparently similar impressions. The Sceptic will not believe the impressions to be true, and hence presumably will have no antecedent confidence in the success of the outcome. That does not, however, entail that he suffer any actual lack of confidence about it either, since presumably the feeling of a lack of confidence in the rightness of one's actions involves the belief that there is something to be right or wrong about—and the Sceptic has no such beliefs. Time and again, Sextus takes the Dogmatists to task for their rashness, their pride, their overweening self-confidence: it is that, not the Sceptical lack of commitment, which comes before a fall. Once more the Sceptic's disavowal of subjective certainty (or even inclination) need have no tendency to induce paralysis.

I hope to have established, at least *prima facie*, that the Sceptic's project of disassociating himself from any commitment to the truth of the impressions which he receives, and hence from any tendency to think that reality matches the appearances, is a coherent one. Of course it is a further question whether it is either desirable or psychologically attainable. It may turn out to be impossible actually to effect the degree of disassociation between affective attitude on the one hand and commitment on the other which the Sceptic seeks. Even Pyrrho did not underestimate the difficulty of the task (85–6). I have no views about this—and in any case, if it is correctly posed, it is an empirical rather than a philosophical question. Consequently, I shall proceed as though such disassociation is a psychological possibility.

The crucial feature, as Sextus presents it, of the Sceptic's views is that he will not believe of anything that it is either good or bad by nature (*PH* 1 25–8: cf. Chapter XVI, 226). Nor will he believe that nothing is good or bad by nature either:

the man who opines that anything is by nature good or bad is forever being disturbed (*tarassetai*); and when he does not have those things which he takes to be naturally fine, he thinks that he is tormented by things naturally bad, and he pursues the things he imagines to be good, then, having obtained them, he keeps falling into further disturbances because of his unreasonable and immoderate elation, and, fearing a reversal of fortune, he does everything in order not to lose the things which seem good to him. On the other hand, the man who makes no determination regarding things naturally good or bad, neither avoids nor pursues anything vigorously—and for this reason he is untroubled. (343: *PH* 1 27–8)

None the less,

we do not, on the other hand, suppose that the Sceptic is completely untroubled—rather we say that he is troubled by things that are unavoidable. For we allow that he is sometimes cold and thirsty, and suffers various affections of that sort. But even in these cases, while ordinary people suffer from two circumstances, the affections themselves but no less from the belief that these circumstances are evil by nature, the Sceptic, rejecting the additional belief that each of these things is evil in its very nature, gets off more lightly in these situations. Hence we say that while the Sceptic's end in matters of opinion is freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*), in the case of things unavoidable it is moderation in affection (*metriopatheia*). (344: *PH* 1 29–30)

343 and **344** outline the core of the Sceptical programme of psychological restructuring, and specify its goal—*metriopatheia*. It is to be achieved by the standard Sceptical method of oppositions (*PH* 1 31–3); when the apprentice Sceptic has gone through a process of comparing and contrasting different views of things, he will abandon his previous beliefs in their natural goodness or badness:

so the Sceptic, seeing so great a divergence in things, suspends judgement as to whether there is anything naturally good or bad, or in general to be done or not done, and thus turns away from dogmatic rashness and follows the observance of life undogmatically, and for this reason remains unaffected in matters of opinion, while in things unavoidable he is moderately affected. (345: *PH* 3 235)

We must now examine this claim. We have already considered the Sceptical arguments which derive from the diversity of human practices and the variety of Dogmatic views (Chapter XVI, 262ff.). We must now assess Sextus's argument that a belief in the existence of things naturally good and bad in itself, irrespective of its truth, produces mental disturbance.

He who assumes that there is something naturally good or bad...is disturbed in various ways. When undergoing what he takes to be natural evils he imagines himself tormented by them; but when he gets hold of what appear to him to be goods, on account of his vanity and his fear of losing them, and his concern not to experience once more what he thinks to be natural evils, he falls into no ordinary disturbance. (346: *PH* 3 237)

Crucial to this contention is the distinction, already noted in **343–4**, between affections which are a matter of opinion or judgement, and those which are simply forced upon us:

of the goods and evils which are said to exist, some are induced by belief, and others by necessity. So by belief are induced all those which men pursue or avoid as a result of judgement, as for instance in the case of externals, wealth, reputation, noble birth, friendship, and everything of that sort are said to be choiceworthy and good; and in the case of the body, beauty, strength, and good condition, in the case of the soul, courage, justice, wisdom, and virtue in

general, while their opposites are to be avoided. By necessity on the other hand are all those things which are set up in us by an irrational affection of the senses, and which are provided by a kind of natural necessity. (347: *M* 11 141–3)

Sextus proceeds to argue that no-one who does hold beliefs of the first type can live an undisturbed life, since

he draws upon himself many evils because of the goods, and is afflicted by many times more evils because of his belief in the goods. Thus the man who says that wealth (as it may be) is good and poverty evil is disturbed in two ways if he is not wealthy, since he both does not have the good and is busying himself with the acquisition of it, while when he has acquired it he is penalized in three ways: he is immoderately overjoyed, and he busies himself to retain his wealth, and because he agonizes and is fearful about losing it. (348: *M* 11 145–6)

The argument is straightforward: if you believe in the existence of things really good, you will be troubled when you don't have them (because you want them), and troubled when you do have them (through fear of losing them). It is worth noting that Sextus specifies two distinct sources of trouble in each case. First, there will be that caused by the actual pursuit of the goal, or the drive to retain it: such a life will be a life of continual striving, and hence will be unfulfilled. Even once you've got to the top of the greasy pole, you will need to struggle continuously to remain there, and hence can never attain the state of mental tranquillity that the Sceptic associates with happiness. But secondly a further, distinct sort of psychological disturbance will be occasioned by the very beliefs one holds about the status of the objects. In penury, one will be upset just by the fact that one believes it to be an evil condition—equally, once having achieved wealth, one will never be free from the fear of losing it and being returned to the dreaded state, the mutability of human affairs being a Greek commonplace. But even discounting for that peculiarly Greek obsession, there is surely something to what Sextus says. Striving causes stress—and stress is bad.

Both types of disturbance are the result of strong evaluations of the goodness and badness of things. The Sceptic, completely undisposed to believe that wealth is naturally good, will simply not put himself to the trouble of pursuing it (here it is plausible to think that the Sceptic's mental restructuring will have a direct impact upon what he does). But central to the Sceptic's case is that the second class of disturbance is directly the result of the beliefs themselves. Merely holding the beliefs (as distinct from what occurs as a result of acting in accordance with them) generates mental disquiet. There is a certain plausibility to this. If I dabble in the stock market as a way of passing the time, I may be mildly pleased if I make a little money or a little put out if my stock falls—but I will not care greatly about it. If, on the other hand, I form the belief that my life's happiness depends upon the success of my investment strategy, I will surely spend a good deal of my time worrying about it, even when everything is apparently going swimmingly. Of course there is a limit to what can be done by Sceptical therapy. I may indeed be brought to the view, by considering the different lifestyles of others, that there is nothing to be said for the opinion that happiness depends on stock-market success. I shall then, no

doubt, cease to devote most of my waking hours to worrying about it.

But even so, there are limits to the tranquillity I can achieve. I shall not thereby eliminate hunger and thirst, and their associated pains and drives:

for the man distressed by hunger and thirst, it is not possible to implant in him the conviction as a result of Sceptical argument that he is not troubled, nor in the man who rejoices at getting relief from them is it possible to induce the belief that he does not so rejoice. (349: *M* 11 149)

Some things are simply beyond therapy (cf. Stough, 1984, 152).

This is beneficial, according to the Sceptic, since these necessary afflictions are relatively mild and short-lived by comparison with the mental torment caused by immoderate belief (*M* 11 150–5; cf. Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 127–35); but even if they weren't, nothing could be gained by worrying about them (*M* 11 156). Effectively, the Sceptic seeks to extirpate all pleasures and pains of anticipation—these, which are the result of the imagination, can be eliminated:

the man who is disturbed at the presence of painful things is not to be censured, since the perturbation caused by the pain is not due to himself but is bound to occur of necessity, whether he wills it or not. But he who through his own suppositions invents for himself a multitude of things to be chosen and avoided is deserving of censure, since he rouses up for himself a flood of evils. For while the one who has no additional belief about pain being an evil is merely affected by the necessitated motion of pain, he who imagines in addition that only pain is objectionable, only pain is evil, doubles by this belief the trouble that results from its presence. (350: *M* 11 156–8)

Sometimes spectators at particularly painful surgical operations are more profoundly affected than the person actually undergoing them—and this, so Sextus claims, is due to their additional belief that pain is an evil (*M* 11 159–60; cf. *PH* 3 236). And if that explanation is questionable, such reactions surely do need accounting for—after all the spectators are not themselves *really* in pain.

Much of what Sextus has to say here is sane and reasonable. I have a powerful fear of dentists. This fear makes my life a misery in the run-up to a dental appointment. If I could eliminate that, then my experience of dentistry would be considerably less painful. Of course, I could not eliminate the pain altogether—that is a mere Stoic fantasy—but I would be freed of that portion of it which is up to me. But is it really up to me? Why should not the Sceptic think that, just as the actually painful experiences themselves are unavoidably so, that the impressions that I have that my next dental visit will be painful, which are painful in themselves, are equally forced upon me? Is it not Dogmatism to conclude the reverse? I think not, properly interpreted. Sextus will not, or at least should not, say that such relief from mental distress is within the grasp of everybody. Perhaps some people are so constituted that their poltroonery cannot be eliminated. But empirical psychotherapy suggests (commemoratively) to the Sceptic that in certain cases benefits may accrue from it—and that is a sound Empiricist reason for trying it out. Perhaps I may

never succeed in eliminating my fear of dentistry, even if I do come to believe it to be irrational—but I may moderate it, and that is surely better than nothing.

But again, the Dogmatist may urge, might it not *actually* be better to fear such things? What if they *are* objectively speaking fearful? Will I not then have deluded myself? The Sceptic cannot, of course, positively affirm the genuinely unfearful nature of visits to the dentist. But then he does not need to. He can allow that it is possible that there are things objectively to be feared, and things objectively to be desired. All he claims is that to have such beliefs is itself productive of psychological disturbance. It is only if one has a powerful antecedent commitment to the idea that the truth is intrinsically worthwhile that such a view will seem untenable. And it is relatively easy to describe situations in which it is clearly not in an agent's interest to know the truth: I may negotiate a great danger all the better if I am unaware of it as such—I will behave in a cooler, more rational manner, and will be the less diverted by fear and apprehension from the task in hand. Similarly, it is easy to describe in evolutionary terms situations in which it is better for a species systematically to be deluded about the nature of the external world. If I perceive things as being closer to me than they actually are, I will be less likely to blunder into them, or over them, as a result of miscalculation. My delusion, then, will be part of a biologically induced safety-margin. Of course, no Sceptic will have recourse, except dialectically, to such considerations. But they do show that the Dogmatic assumption that the truth shall set you free is by no means unexceptionable.

XVIII

The Sceptic Way of Life

Life without Belief

We know that the Sceptic's 'observance of life' (*PH* 1 9, 10; *PH* 1 22–3) has four components: (a) 'the guidance of nature'; (b) 'the compulsion of the affections'; (c) 'the tradition of laws and customs'; and (d) the 'instruction of the arts' (10; cf. Chapter XV, 251–4). Sextus defines (a) as 'that by which we are naturally capable of sensation and thought', and (b) as that 'whereby hunger drives us to food and thirst to drink' (*ibid.* 24); we have already seen what account a Sceptic can give of these things. But what of (c) and (d)? If I obey a law, or practise a trade, do I not thereby evince a set of beliefs? Not according to Sextus. I can obey a law without thinking that it enshrines anything of real value. I just do it because it seems the way to behave. My attitude to the law then precisely parallels my attitude to sensations and affections. Indeed, Sextus sometimes suggests that it is the very automatism of the behaviour that sets it apart from any such evaluation. He assumes that I can only be held responsible for what I actually *do*, for some fairly strongly agentive sense of 'do'—but he represents the Sceptic's mental life as being exclusively one of reaction, and hence one susceptible of no moral evaluation at all.¹

It is important not to misrepresent the Sceptic's attitude here. I might think it good to obey the law without thinking that the law I obey is itself good; it is good that people decide to drive on one side of the road rather than the other—but it matters not at all *which* side that is. In much the same way, one may agree that it is good that lawn tennis has certain rules, and good that they are for the most part followed, but a matter of complete indifference whether the tramlines are six inches wider or narrower, or the net an inch or so higher or lower. Such views are in a sense sceptical; but they are clearly not Sceptical, since they involve the second-order beliefs that it is good that there are laws, and good that they be followed. The Sextan Sceptic should feel no such thing. Rather, the laws and customs will simply form part of the background of appearances—it will seem right, or prudent, to obey an injunction, but as regards the question of whether it really is good to do so, the Sceptic will consistently suspend judgement—for that is no longer a matter for the practical arena. When in Rome, then, the Sceptic will (for the most part) do as the Romans—but not because he is a relativist, and believes that that is the right way to behave in Rome.

I see no reason why someone could not actually live like that. Similarly with regard to (d): a Sceptic can take up a trade and practise it, without necessarily feeling that it is good to do so, and certainly without endorsing the Stoic definition of *technē* as 'a system of co-exercised apprehensions directed towards some end useful in life' (*M* 1 75, 2 10, 7 109, 373, etc.). Pyrrhonists happily accept certain professions, provided they are practised in

an empiricist fashion: Sextus commends Methodist medicine (Chapter XIII, 234) on the grounds that the entire ‘art’ ‘can be subsumed under the necessity of the affections’ (*PH* 1 239): the Methodical doctor is driven by a type of natural compulsion to treat dilatation with constrictive treatments, and *vice versa* (ibid. 238). Sextus means this seriously: the Sceptic can coherently describe even apparently belief-ridden forms of behaviour involving the arts without invoking beliefs at all (see further Chapter XV, 251ff.).

Barnes (1982b, 13–18) offers an incisive discussion of the ‘fourfold observation’ in which he shows that it can be interpreted perfectly consistently with a ‘rustic’ reading of Scepticism, that is of a scepticism which eschews all belief—but Barnes further finds that such a construe sits badly with Sextus’s claims that the Sceptic sides with the common man against Dogmatist extravagances (cf. *PH* 21–4), since the common man has beliefs. But siding with life may mean no more than behaving in an ordinary manner; the contrast Sextus intends is with the theoretical obsessions of the Dogmatist philosophers: and no plain man will have any truck with that sort of thing. But that does *not* show that the Sceptic resembles the ordinary person in all other respects; and, if we take what he says about the Sceptic’s attitudes at all seriously, the Sceptic is in some ways quite unlike him. For the ordinary person surely has commitments, and surely thinks things are really true (although not necessarily in any philosophically-laden sense). He may do so unreflectively, without subtle Dogmatic theory—but he does so none the less.

Which brings us finally to the central notion of commitment. If I am right, what distinguishes the Sceptical state of mind from any other is its lack of commitment to any truth. When I, in my Dogmatist’s way, see a car approaching me too rapidly, I will take evasive action, sound my horn, wind down my window, and give the motorist the benefit of some expletive advice. The Sceptic can and may do all of those things. But when I do them, I do them because I *believe* that if I make no moves there will be an accident; I *expect* that depressing the horn-button will cause a loud sound to issue from my car; and I *think* that the other driver is a bloody fool. The Sceptic will have none of these distinctive states.

What characterizes them is their durability. My thinking that this particular road-user is a dangerous maniac is unlikely to change except in the face of pretty serious and irrefutable evidence to the contrary. Similarly, if I am seriously committed to some moral or political principle, it will be resistant to change even in the face of considerable evidence to the effect that it is dangerous, damaging, ineffectual, or unrealizable. Clearly almost everybody has beliefs of this kind: they are not restricted to the province of arcane scientific and philosophical theorizing. The majority of people in the United States believe in the existence of God, the virtues of the free market, the evil of socialism, the right to bear arms, the justice of the death penalty, and something known as the ‘American dream’. Irrespective of whether any of these beliefs are true, warranted, plausible, even intelligible, many of those who hold them do not do so for any good reason. Indeed they often appear to do so against what available reason there might be. The general imperviousness of certain types of belief (broadly speaking those which constitute what people take to be the non-negotiable moral foundation of their lives) to rational dissolution is a measure of the strength with which they are held.

This is exactly that condition which the Sceptic finds pathological. The Sceptic will back no horses. He may have views, in a suitably etiolated sense, but he is not wedded to

them, and has nothing invested in them. They will blow away at the first puff of phenomenal wind. He may express them; some of them may appear to ordinary people as expressions of belief, since it may seem (non-epistemically) to him that he should pray at the call of the muezzin, or refrain from eating meat on Fridays, or whatever. But he is simply making an *apangelia*, an avowal, with no commitment to the truth of what he says. Barnes (1982b, 4–5) compares the status of *apangeliai* as speech-acts with Wittgensteinian Äusserungen—the infant cries out in pain, exhibiting the fact that he is in pain, but not thereby evincing any belief that he is in pain—similarly if an older child or an adult exclaims ‘ouch!’ they are exhibiting pain-behaviour of a particular (culturally relative) sort; but they are not stating anything.

These two facts go together. Sceptical avowals (or ‘confessions’—*exomologēseis*: *DL* 104), state nothing, and hence state no beliefs. The Sceptic reports, but says nothing *about*, his *pathē*—and hence nothing about their durability, the way in which they may mirror reality, and so on. That is the nature of Sceptical *aphasia*. Thus any ordinary everyday claim will amount to a *dogma* if and only if it involves commitment of this sort. This coheres well with what Sextus says in 333 (cf. *PH* 1 16), where the disallowed sense of *dogma* is defined as ‘assent to something non-evident’—for any ordinary claim can be made in such a way that it involves assent to something non-evident, namely the truth or reality which the *pathos* is alleged to represent or be the causal consequence of. This is *adēlon* just because the *pathos* itself cannot underwrite it; and it goes beyond what is straightforwardly given in the phenomena.

How will this affect the Sceptic’s actual behaviour? Sextus sometimes suggests that it will have no effect at all: he will in general follow (albeit undogmatically) the laws and customs of his society, and will thus be behaviourally indiscernible from the average dull citizen. But nothing in what Sextus says about the Sceptical way commits him to the view that he will always do so. This matters, since the Sceptical acceptance of the *status quo* is sometimes presented as a particularly spineless form of conservatism. No doubt radical fervour is inconsistent with the Sceptic’s attitude. But the Sceptic need not accept laws and customs as absolute and binding. Rather they simply furnish him with a particular set of appearances, and as such may conflict with other, more powerful ones:²

(1) hence too one must despise those who think that [the Sceptic] is confined to inactivity or inconsistency: (2) to inactivity, because, as all life consists in pursuits and avoidances, he who neither pursues nor avoids anything is effectively rejecting life and holding himself in check like some vegetable; (3) and to inconsistency because, if he were ever in the hands of a tyrant and compelled to do something un-speakable, he will either not submit to the order given to him but will choose death voluntarily, or to avoid torture he will do as he is told, and so he will no longer be, as Timon has it, ‘unmoved by choice or avoidance’ [Fr. 72 Ds], but will choose one and shun the other, which is the behaviour of those who think with conviction that something is to be chosen and something avoided. (4) But arguing thus they do not understand that the Sceptic does not run his life according to philosophical reason (since he is inactive in so far as this is concerned), but he can choose some things and avoid others according to unphilosophical observance (*tērēsis*). (5) And when compelled by

a tyrant to perform some forbidden act, he will happen to choose one and avoid the other following the preconception (*prolēpsis*)³ due to his ancestral laws and customs; and compared with the Dogmatist he will more easily bear hardship, since he will have no additional beliefs besides it as the latter has. (351: *M* 11 162–6)

351 reinforces the Sceptic's contention that dogmatic belief is not a prerequisite for action; but more importantly it shows that the Sceptic may resist some immediate *pathē*. It is not the case that the Sceptic's life will simply consist of yielding to every *pathos* that comes along; for it may be countervailed by a stronger *pathos*. It is of course vital that this story can be told in purely descriptive terms, and that is precisely how Sextus sets it out in 351(5). The Sceptic's actions under duress will be conditioned by what preconceptions he happens to have. And presumably there may be cases in which the appearance of imminent pain will outweigh any socially-induced tendency to resist.

But here again the Sceptic will behave like anybody else. The only difference will be that, whichever way he goes, the Sceptic will not be troubled by the further belief that what is happening is really and truly bad. So there is no reason to imagine that the Sceptic, lacking all conviction, will be any less liable to perform actions which seem, from the Dogmatic standpoint at least, to require a passionate intensity. Even so, the Sceptic may still behave differently from ordinary people. First of all the ordinary person will be *committed* to their beliefs, they will hold them dogmatically, and hence more unshakeably (cf. Frede, 1979, 199). Consequently the Sceptic may evince a greater flexibility and mental suppleness. He will not continue to cling heroically to the wreckage of some view when all the phenomena tell against it—he simply does not *have* views that go against the phenomena.

Furthermore, some beliefs are such that they are only likely to be inculcated on the basis of reason dogmatically construed—and, while a Sceptic might still have such views (although without the associated commitments), it seems plausible to think that 'on the whole...., the skeptic will mostly believe what experience suggests' (Frede, 1979, 199). Thus the Sceptic's mental life will not simply be the Dogmatist's minus the commitment—it will differ from it substantially as well; and at least the Sceptic will not court the danger of pig-headed adherence to views which even the most rational of Dogmatists risks. On the other hand, there could never be a sceptical Gandhi or Martin Luther King: such lives require passionate commitment. The modern model of the sceptical way of life is Meursault in Camus' *L'Étranger*;⁴ I postpone for the moment the question of which pattern may be preferable, either psychologically or morally.

Nevertheless, Frede rightly notes that

what fundamentally distinguishes the skeptic from other people is not the beliefs he has but his attitude towards them. He no longer has the more or less naive and partially dogmatic attitude of the 'ordinary' man; his relation to his beliefs is permeated by the awareness that things are quite possibly different in reality, but this possibility no longer worries him. This distinguishes him from the dogmatist who is so worried by the question, how things are in reality, that he succumbs to the illusion that reason could guarantee the truth of his beliefs.... This dogmatic

craving for the security of true belief as a necessary, perhaps even sufficient condition for the tranquility and healing of the soul strikes the skeptic as, at best, futile, perhaps even pathological and harmful. (1979, 199)

Sceptical Therapy and the Scope of *Epochē*

Burnyeat (1980c, 139), in discussing the Sceptic's progress to *epochē*, finds him threatened with a serious, indeed fundamental incoherence. He makes use of argument; and Burnyeat thinks he is thereby committed, at least provisionally, to accepting the conclusions of those arguments as true. He cannot escape by construing them in terms of non-epistemic P-appearance:

certainly it appears to him that dogmatic claims are equally balanced, but this appearance, so called, being the effect of argument, is only to be made sense of in terms of reason, belief and truth—the very notions the skeptic is most anxious to avoid. He wants to say something of the form 'It appears to me that *p*, but I do not believe that *p*,' with a non-epistemic use of 'appears,' but it looks to be intelligible only if 'appears' is in fact epistemic, yielding a contradiction: 'I (am inclined to) believe that *p* but I do not believe that *p*.' (1980c, 138)

The Sceptic rejects all proof and sets no store by argumentative procedures (cf. *PH* 2 144–92; *M* 8 300–481: Chapter XI, 209–12); and yet *epochē* is apparently brought about by argument, by reflecting that nothing can be said conclusively on either side of the question.

First of all the final claim only risks incoherence if the parenthesis is dropped—one can surely be inclined to believe without believing; moreover, I do not feel that only an epistemic reading makes sense here. Nevertheless, Burnyeat continues:

how is this result to be avoided?

The difficulty is not to be overcome by suggesting that the skeptic emerges from his arguments in a state of bafflement rather than belief. Bafflement could be the effect of arguments for and against; you are pulled now this way, now that, until you just do not know what to say (cf. *M* VII 243). The problem is to see why this should produce tranquility rather than extreme anxiety. (1980c, 139)

There is something to this (cf. Chapter XVI); and I shall deal with it later on. For the moment let us follow Burnyeat a little further:

nor should we allow Sextus to deny that the skeptic's philosophical appearances are the effect of argument.... If the skeptic works through reasoned arguments to the point where the reasons on either side balance and reason stultifies itself, if his arguments are (in the now famous phrase) a ladder to be thrown over when you have climbed up (*M* VIII 481), then we must insist that they make their impact through the normal operations of our reason. (1980c, 139)

I do not see the force of that final contention at all. *Epochē* is indeed an effect of argument—but that need only mean that it is *caused* by argument. We do not add up the pros and cons, and find that they balance—rather we find nothing to be said pro or con; we examine the arguments, but on examination they turn out to be no more persuasive than otherwise, and hence *epochē* results. I do not conclude to it, since I do not conclude to anything. But having no conclusions itself amounts to *epochē*. Nothing prevents the apprentice Sceptic from starting out thinking that arguments can be probative or otherwise, and no doubt at first he will be guided by the canons of reason. But at the end of the process he will come to see (not to infer, just to see) that the very applicability of reason has been subverted. But then he will be in the state of *epochē*.

Epochē is not, then, some further intellectual conclusion which the Sceptic then Hence he can be perfectly happy about the self-refuting (or as Sextus prefers to say, self-cancelling) nature of his expressions, or *phōnai*.⁵ When the Sceptic says ‘I determine nothing’ he does so extremely carefully:

we hold that to determine (*horizein*) is not simply to say something, but to proffer something non-evident with assent. For in this sense it will perhaps be found that the Sceptic determines nothing, not even the ‘I determine nothing’, since this is not a Dogmatic supposition, but an utterance indicative of our affection. (352: *PH* 1 197)

The same goes for *ou mallon* (ibid. 191) and the rest (ibid. 192–6). It is in this context that Sextus introduces his famous comparison of the Sceptical slogans with purgative drugs (*PH* 1 206)—once they have done their job they flush themselves out as well.⁶ But, since *epochē* is a condition and not a conclusion, it need involve no commitment and no belief. The Sceptic is not thereby trapped into a second-order belief inconsistent with his general attitude.

Sextus remarks that the Sceptic’s utterances are to be taken as being interrogative in form (*PH* 1 188–91; cf. Barnes, 1982b, 5, 22, n. 25); and Burnyeat notes that this coheres well with the Sceptic’s claim to continue searching for answers (Chapter II: 1). Burnyeat writes:

again we must be careful about *ataraxia*. The skeptic goes on seeking not in the sense that he has an active program of research, but in the sense that he continues to regard it as an open question whether *p* or not-*p* is the case, at least for every first level proposition concerning real existence. But this should not mean that he is left in a state of actually *wondering* whether *p* or not-*p* is the case, for that might induce anxiety. Still less should he be wondering whether, in general, contrary claims are equally balanced. For if it is a real possibility to him that they are not, that means that it is a real possibility that there are answers to be found; and it will be an immense worry to him, as it was at the beginning of his skeptical education, that he does not know what those answers are. (1980c, 139)

The Sceptic’s continuing investigation will not amount to a research programme—rather

it will be a gentle sort of pottering around comparing and contrasting things. Certainly it will not be characterized by the intense, and as the Sceptic sees it, manic and pathological thirst for the genuine answers. But this does not preclude him from wondering whether or not p , for any value of p that happens to occur to him. Such wondering will in a sense be idle—but idle curiosity need not radically undercut the Sceptic's anxiety-reduction programme.

We may distinguish, loosely, two varieties of wondering: call them Dogmatic and Sceptical respectively. The Dogmatic wonderer wonders whether or not p in the light of a strongly held realist belief to the effect that there must be an answer to the question. It is this latter conviction which causes the anxiety. By contrast the Sceptical wonderer simply wonders. As a result of the Sceptical therapy, he has no tendency to believe that there *is* an answer to the question—he simply turns it over in his mind. It is wrong to suppose that the mere *possibility* that there are answers will create psychological disturbance—on the contrary, the very allowing of that possibility is part of what it is to be in an undogmatic, undisturbed state of mind. It is rather the second-order *certainty* that there are answers to be had which creates the Dogmatist's mental *bouleversement*.

Thus we need not agree with Burnyeat that 'if tranquility is to be achieved, at some stage the skeptic's questing thoughts must come to a state of rest or equilibrium' (1980c, 139); rather it is the fact that they never come to rest, but continually (although non-neurotically) turn over without arriving at definite conclusions, that produces *epochē* and by consequence *ataraxia*. *Epochē* is a sort of condition supervenient upon continuous mild investigation, not a conclusion to that investigation. The Sceptic is, in this sense, perpetually travelling hopefully, never arriving—but, since whether or not he arrives no longer matters to him, the condition is perfectly calm. And this squares perfectly with Sextus's actual account of the relations between *epochē* and *ataraxia*—the latter simply comes along as the unforeseen result of the former, itself the unforeseen result of inquiry.

Thus there is a perfectly good sense in which the Sceptic is a continual investigator. My interpretation is not, however, unproblematic. First, I characterize the Sceptical state with regard to conflicting positions and the arguments for them as being one in which those arguments have, in a genuine sense, no weight at all. But that seems to run counter to the passages where Sextus explicitly describes the Sceptic as having weighed the arguments and found them equal (*PH* 1 26, 196, 202–6: see Chapter XVII, 273ff.). At the very least, these passages need explaining away. To say that the considerations on each side are of equal weight is compatible with each of them being weightless—but it would be surprising if that fact were not mentioned.

Perhaps something like the following will do. The Sceptic sees arguments as species of psychological motivation—a good argument is one which has high motive power (as such of course the power of arguments will be something to be assessed relative to individuals: one which moves you may leave me entirely cold, and *vice versa*). That interpretation derives some support from Sextus's famous remarks at the end of *PH* in justification of the fact that Sceptics will on occasion use apparently lousy arguments. They do so because their business is therapy:

the Sceptic, being philanthropic, desires to cure by argument [or perhaps: speech] the vanity and rashness of the Dogmatists. So, just as the doctors of

physical affections have remedies that differ in strength, and administer the severe ones to those suffering severely, the lighter to those suffering lightly, so the Sceptic too brings up arguments of different strengths, and uses those which are weighty and capable efficaciously of curing the Dogmatist's affection of vanity in cases where they are suffering a severe attack of rashness, while he employs the lighter ones in the case of those who are suffering a mild and easily cured affection of vanity, and who can be cured by things of a milder persuasiveness. Thus the Sceptic does not hesitate to employ at one time arguments that are weighty in their persuasiveness, at other times ones which seem less so—and deliberately, since these are frequently sufficient for him to achieve his object. (353: *PH* 3 280–1)

Arguments, like drugs, affect different people differently. Hardened dogmatists will be relatively immune to the Sceptical medicine—others will have a low tolerance for it.

If the therapeutic interpretation of Scepticism is right, then, as Barnes (1982b, 18–19) points out, it has some implications for the question of the scope of Pyrrhonian scepticism. It makes more sense to speak of the scope of a particular course of therapy than of Pyrrhonism in general—if you suffer badly from Dogmatism, the Sceptic will need to treat you with stronger arguments. If not, relatively mild ones will do. Some people will be disturbed by some things others find quite untroubling—they too will require different treatments. Thus it will not be surprising to find a variety of different, even apparently incompatible, Sceptical 'positions' outlined in the *Outlines*, for they are not, strictly speaking, positions at all. The Sceptic *has* no positions. This does not mean that any talk of the scope of *epochē* is mistaken; for it implies that the Sceptic *may* attempt, by the application of the 'power of opposition' (cf. *PH* 1 8; Chapter II, 27), to induce *epochē* about any and every proposition that goes beyond the appearances—and that category includes any proposition that makes any truth-claim.

This last result raises once more a pressing question, long deferred, concerning the nature of the Pyrrhonist's Essential Scepticism. The domain of Essential Scepticism is the class of propositions which assert that real properties genuinely hold of objects. The Sceptic will refuse to allow claims like

(1) the tower is round (i.e. Barnes' type-(B) propositions: Chapter II, 26)

but he will not reject propositions of the form

(2) the tower seems round (type-(C) propositions). Drawing the epistemological line between (1) and (2) suggests that the Pyrrhonist has no generalized sceptical doubts concerning the actual existence of objects, preferring to reserve his fire solely for the predicative parts of assertions. None the less, it might appear that a Sceptic who adopts a thorough-going Essential Scepticism will be forced willy-nilly to doubt the existence of objects as well. One might argue as follows. Since for any object x and any property F allegedly predicable of x we can never say for sure whether x *really* is F , and since to be is to be the possessor of some properties or other (or the value of a bound variable, if you like), we can never say that x exists. But Sextus never argues like that; and indeed the inference is fallacious: from the claim that $(x)(F) \square (Fx)$ we cannot in general infer $\square (x)(F)(Fx)$ —that each predicate may fail to apply does not entail that all may do so.

Perhaps the nearest Sextus ever gets apparently to doubting the existence of external

objects is in the following:

since then what is grasped by way of something else [i.e. nonimmediately] is by common consent non-evident, and since everything which is grasped is so by way of our affections which are distinct from them [i.e. the things grasped], all externals are non-evident and are for this reason unknown to us. (354: *M* 7 366)

That might suggest a generalized scepticism about the external world. But it immediately follows a paragraph in which Sextus writes:

but nothing is of a nature to be perceived by itself, but rather everything is so *via* affection, which is distinct from the object which makes it apparent. When I am sweetened by the application of honey, I conjecture that the externally existing honey is sweet; and when I am warmed by proximity to fire, I infer from my own condition that the externally existing fire is warming; and the same account applies for the other perceptible objects. (355: *M* 7 365)

Sextus does *not* draw the Cartesian conclusion that there may be no such thing as honey or fire; rather he simply points out that we are in no position to say what it is really like (and in general Sextus seems perfectly happy not to question the existence of the ‘external underlying objects’: cf. 342). Sextan Scepticism advances piecemeal against the claims of the Dogmatist: ‘Is fire really hot?’ ‘I don’t know.’ ‘Is it really red?’ ‘I’ve no idea.’ And so on. Now the Dogmatist might ask: ‘Is that really fire?’, or, equally, ‘Does fire really exist?’ The proper Sceptic response to both of these questions is the same as before, which seems to imply Existential Scepticism (particularly in the second case).

The crucial word is the adverb ‘really’; to ask whether fire really exists is to ask whether something having the natural properties ascribed to fire by the Dogmatists exists—and the Sceptic can doubt that without having any generalized (or even particularized) doubts about external objects as such. Once again, in Barnes’ terms the Sceptic draws the boundary of epistemological acceptability between propositions like (1) and (2). The Sceptic does not doubt the existence of objects as such: but it now appears that he will at least in principle doubt any statement that has some theoretical content—and in principle any statement may have such content.

Let us return to Burnyeat’s argument. The nub of his 1980c essay is the claim that the Sceptic cannot coherently avoid being committed, however unwillingly, to some beliefs. Burnyeat contends that for *ataraxia* to be a psychological possibility the Sceptic must actually think that the search for truth is over:

ataraxia is hardly to be attained if he is not in some sense satisfied—so far—that no answers are forthcoming, that contrary claims are indeed equal. And my question is: How can Sextus deny that this is something he believes? (1980c, 140)

But we may now see that to be ‘in some sense satisfied’ that no answers are forthcoming need involve no belief, in the sense of commitment to any future continuation of that state

of affairs. It is simply, as Sextus stresses in his discussion of the Sceptical slogans (e.g. *PH* 1 193, 196, 197, 199, 200, 201, 202–3), a matter of how things seem to be at the time, on the basis (again, not to be construed argumentatively) of the investigations he has undertaken. The Sceptic's position is provisional—it has to be so. But it is a fundamental mistake to think that for this reason it must involve anxiety. That would be the case only if the Sceptical drugs had failed to work, and the Sceptic still had some genuine concern for the way things were going to turn out. But he hasn't—he is quite indifferent to the possibility that strong arguments he has not yet come across may none the less emerge to disturb his Sceptical equipoise, since he has no belief that such arguments *will* turn up.

At this point too, the Micawber Policy comes into effect. It is part of the power of opposition which constitutes the Sceptic's mental regimen (*PH* 1 8: Chapter II, 27). If the Sceptic is momentarily troubled by the possibility that his equipoise may be disrupted, he need only reflect that there is no reason to think that such a state of affairs, if it occurs, will be permanent. And that reflection itself will serve to rob even apparently weighty arguments of their weight. They may seem powerful to me at the time—but that, if I have learned my Sceptical lesson, will not disturb me, for it will have no tendency to make me even expect this state of affairs to continue. That, I think, is the source and centre of Sceptical *ataraxia*.

The Desirability of the Sceptical Life

It remains to be seen whether the Sceptic's attitude is really preferable, from the point of view of tranquillity, to that of the ordinary Dogmatist in the street, as well as to that of the scientific philosopher. It is worth distinguishing two features of the Sceptical attitude which we have so far lumped together. First of all, the Sceptic will have no theoretical beliefs, 'as far as philosophical argument is concerned'; this sets him apart from philosophers and natural scientists, although not from all practising professionals. But secondly he will have no strong emotional investment in the truth of particular moral dogmas; in this he will differ not only from the philosopher, but also from the ordinary person in the street. The goal of *metriopatheia*, moderation in affection, will see to that. And these distinctions mean that we need to address two different questions in order to determine whether or not the Sceptic's life is an enviable one.

Let us begin with scientific theories. The Sceptic claims that, because of the rampant and irresolvable *diaphōnia* concerning explanation, anyone who persists in the belief that explanations are to be found must necessarily find himself frustrated and thwarted in his quest—and this will produce *tarachē*, or mental disturbance. But it is by no means obvious that this need be the case. After all, why need the Dogmatist actually believe that there is an irresolvable *diaphōnia*? Why need he even think that there is one at all? He may indeed be perfectly and blissfully contented with the 'explanations' he has already found. At this point it will not do, for a variety of reasons, for the Sceptic to retort that he *should* not be so satisfied, because there really *is* this dispute. Even if we can purge that last remark of its obviously Dogmatic overtones, it misses the point. The Sceptic's concern, after all, is to diminish *tarachē*. In cases where there is none, he has no business interfering at all. The person in question might well be a bloody fool—but if he is a

happy fool the Sceptic, of all people, can have no quarrel with that.

Of course, he can consistently try to show the contented Dogmatist that, on his own principles, he *ought* not to have the confidence he has—but again the question is: Why should he? At the very least such a course of action seems to run counter to the Sceptic's pretended philanthropy (353). Perhaps the Sceptic may just say that he finds himself driven to refute the Dogmatist's arguments simply because they have been propounded. But even so, we have found no reason to believe that the Sceptic's life is any happier than that of the Dogmatist in his prelapsarian innocence. Hence, unless we are given some further psychological considerations to support the view that naïvely un-challenged dogmatism cannot be a position of contentment, we are driven to the view that the Sceptic cannot here make out his case universally. Sextus never suggests any such further considerations—and I do not see how to supply them on his behalf, even from a Dogmatist standpoint. If this is right, the Sceptic has no business *recommending* a universal Sceptical course of therapy, even if such a recommendation could be uttered consistently with the Pyrrhonian position of *aphasia*. But perhaps that is to misconstrue Sextus's purposes. He never, at least in the opening sections of *PH*, explicitly *prescribes* Scepticism. Rather he offers a description of what seems to happen under the Sceptical regimen. Perhaps it is a regimen only to be applied to those who are, as a matter of fact, in a state of upset because of their inability to resolve contradictions in their theoretical explanations of things. Intellectual Scepticism will then only be indicated in cases of intellectual suffering.

That does give Sextus a consistent position—but it seems inconsistent with much of his rhetoric, and with the apparent structure of his practice. Time and again, Sextus speaks of destroying the vain pretensions of the Dogmatists. The vast bulk of his enormous array of argument is directed against specific and identifiable Dogmatic targets. There is no hint that it is only mentally disturbed Dogmatists who are to be the recipients of such treatment. Sextus rather seems to present himself as engaged on a Sceptical crusade against Dogmatic rashness; and apart from the difficulty of justifying such an attitude in Sceptical terms, it prompts the obvious question: why should he bother at all, at least in cases where the Dogmatist seems perfectly undisturbed? No doubt foolish and unfounded confidence is irritating—but irritation at the complacency of others should not be part of any philanthropic Sceptic's motivation.

Suppose I believe the world is made up, ultimately, of atoms and the void. I am quite satisfied that all macroscopic phenomena can be explained on the basis of these elements, with their limited stock of fundamental properties. This gives me great peace of mind. Furthermore, oddly, it eliminates my fear of death and malevolent fate, and makes me disinclined to worry about worldly goods. That is, supposedly, the position of the Epicurean true believer. Epicurus himself held that it promoted *ataraxia*. Now why does it matter whether or not atomism is true? Of course it might matter to the Dogmatist, were he genuinely to entertain the possibility that atomism was a chimera; but there is no reason to believe that he is likely ever to do so (the Epicurean school was famous for the permanence of its converts). Indeed in certain cases the Epicureans themselves were prepared to allow that they may not have got *the* right answer—in that case a disjunctive set of possible explanations works just as well (Epicurus, *Letter to Pythocles* 10 87–8, 92–115); all that matters is that some answer or another (consistent with atomism) can be

given. Why, then, should Sextus disturb what seem to him to be the Epicurean's dogmatic slumbers?

This raises a further possibility. Perhaps the function of Pyrrhonism is supposed to be autotherapeutic. The Sceptic engages in argument, writes books, and so on, as a means of bringing himself to his own type of *ataraxia*. If others can achieve it in other ways, then bully for them. I suppose that one could make such a position consistent—but it does not sit comfortably with Sextus's own apparent attitude. He is *expounding* Pyrrhonism, showing how it works, not simply indulging in a piece of occupational therapy. Perhaps, then, it is a handbook for other apprentice Sceptics? This is more promising: *they* need to be able to refute dogmatic rashness, not for the Dogmatists' sakes but for their own. They fall into the class of people who are generally disturbed by 'the anomaly in things'—they need the benefit of Sextus's psychagogy. *PH* is, then, a self-help book. I conclude, then, that in relation to the philosophical positions of the Dogmatists it is an open question, and one to be settled on an individual basis, whether the Sceptical life is indeed desirable (with regard to *ataraxia*: of course there are further questions as to whether it is morally acceptable or worthwhile) by comparison with it.

But what of the ordinary man's beliefs? Is Sextus right to claim that the inevitable distress periodically caused by unavoidable affections is rendered worse by the belief that they are really bad? It seems plausible to think that in some cases (e.g. my dental cowardice) these additional beliefs do exacerbate the misery. The important question is whether the life of belief has any countervailing advantages not available to the Sceptic which might make it a preferable option. Having strong views and commitments may indeed cause pain. The romantic lover who loses his loved one will suffer far greater distress than will the casual Don Juan, who will simply look around for the next Elvira. But does the lover, as Russell for one passionately (if perhaps a trifle desperately) believed, gain something inaccessible to the rake? That too is a question for individual psychology. Whether it is better to have loved and lost than to have spent one's whole life in singles bars will depend on the individual. Of course, one might try to establish the view that certain sorts of life are objectively better irrespective of whether or not it feels better to live them. I can, in the end, see no force to such arguments. But whatever their merits and demerits, they are plainly unavailable to the Sceptic: if he wants to recommend anything at all, he must do so on the basis of the individual's actual occurrent mental life.

Hence there can, I think, be no general answer to this question any more than there was in the case of philosophical and scientific beliefs. The Sceptic's claims can be challenged on two levels—first of all it is controversial whether their recipe will in fact reduce *tarachē*, at least in all sufferers—perhaps some people need a good hearty dose of naïve Dogmatism (as religion apparently comforts the bereaved). But secondly it is not even clear whether the life of *ataraxia* is to be preferred. After all, it is a life without risk—and risk is exciting. There will be many who will think that the general Hellenistic emphasis on the avoidance of disturbance, the smooth flow of life as the Stoics called it, is profoundly misplaced. And against them Scepticism has nothing to say. Others may argue that being risk-prone really does diminish the overall quality of life—but to do so they need to avail themselves of arguments the objective content of which is simply beyond the Sceptic's reach.

And that brings me finally to the question of whether the Sceptic can in any sense *recommend* Scepticism. In large part, the question has already been answered, since, if what has gone before is right, the Sceptic will make no blanket diagnoses: rather his therapeutic practice will be driven by the individual exigencies of particular cases. Nor, obviously, can he consistently claim that Scepticism *will* bring about the expected benefits in any particular case. Perhaps some people are just resistant to it—and others may find the sense of moral vertigo thus induced ineradicable and deeply disturbing. The Sceptic can only act like an Empiricist doctor, on the basis of the appearances in ways suggested by memory and commemorative sign-inference. But is he committed to *assuming* that *ataraxia* is desirable? Some have thought so, and sought to moderate that un-Pyrrhonian commitment by noting that such a view was a Hellenistic philosophical commonplace, and hence not a matter of dispute. But it had not always been such—and any conscientious Sceptic, remembering Mr Micawber, could not believe that it would for ever remain so.

Sedley (1983, 21–2) contrasts Aenesidemus's view that *epoche* itself is the goal (*DL* 9 107; cf. *PH* 1 30: see Chapter VII: 179), with the Sextan view that we aim for *ataraxia*:

the latter option [i.e. Sextus's] scarcely needs defense, since the Skeptic supposes freedom from disturbance to be already a common, non-philosophical goal.... The Skeptic has up to now been motivated by just the same goal of *ataraxia*, but has got there by a different route. He too starts out by searching for the truth, but once he has discovered that there are equally strong arguments on either side of any dispute, he gives up and suspends belief; whereupon it dawns upon him, as luck would have it, he is *now* free from disquiet. This story has considerable evangelical force, yet it can be stated as a mere description of the appearances without any doctrinaire claim that things will necessarily continue to appear so or that the state achieved is objectively good. (1983, 22)

With the final sentence I am in complete agreement; but I do not go along with all that goes before. Goals as such will still, in some sense, require defence. But when Sextus talks of goals, he need only speak of his own motivations—he need offer no recommendations, in the strong sense, at all. The limited goal of personal *ataraxia* then does not need any justification, let alone by recourse to current philosophical dogmas. The Sceptic recognizes mental disturbance—even after the therapy has taken effect, *tarachē* of sorts will still exhibit itself from time to time as one of his *pathē*. That appearance of disturbance will itself be enough to drive the Sceptic to seek respite from it, in precisely the manner in which Sextus describes the functioning of medical Methodism (*PH* 1 238–9). Perhaps the Sceptic does indeed start out with the Dogmatic belief that *ataraxia* is objectively worthwhile (hence perhaps the concordance of the philosophical schools on this point can at least explain his 'point of departure' (*PH* 1 12: cf. Chapter II, 27ff.)—of course, it gets abandoned on the way, like so much else in Scepticism (including even argument itself, the ladder that is thrown away: *M* 8 480).

Sedley, I think, overstates the 'evangelical force' of Pyrrhonism. If it strikes no chord in you, well, the Pyrrhonist will not care much about that. He does not actively *desire* to make converts to the cause, since, properly speaking, there isn't one. None the

less, Sedley does, I think, come some of the way towards capturing what is distinctive about Pyrrhonism. Sextus does not, at the basic level, offer an argument for a way of life, or try to convince us that it is the better one (that fact of course is no bar to our attempting to determine its relative pros and cons). What he does is describe a condition, and a response to it. If you recognize the condition, then you may be helped by the response. If you don't, well maybe you don't really have it, or maybe you are simply indulging in denial—either way the Pyrrhonist cannot help you. And in particular to the person who says that he sees nothing attractive in the Pyrrhonian way of life, the Pyrrhonist has, appropriately, nothing whatever to say.

Biographical Appendix

The following brief notes are intended to assist the reader in placing the somewhat overwhelming cast of characters into their appropriate context.

Aenesidemus: *fl.* c. 80 BC; re-founder of Pyrrhonism in reaction to the softening of the sceptical Academy; author of *Pyrrhonian Discourses*, now lost, but summarized by Photius (Chapter VII).

Agrippa: ?first century AD; shadowy but arguably extremely important figure in the development of Pyrrhonism, to whom are attributed the systematic Five Modes (Chapter X).

Alcmaeon of Croton: *fl.* c. 480 BC; physician and philosopher of an empiricist and epistemologically cautious bent (Chapter III).

Anaxagoras: c. 500–c. 428 BC; innovative theorist of complete physical intermixture; held that phenomena were a guide to the unobservable physical fundamentals (Chapter III).

Anaxarchus: c. 388–c. 320 BC; the ‘Happiness man’; associate of and influence upon Pyrrho (Chapter IV).

Antiochus of Ascalon: *fl.* c. 100 BC; at first an associate, then an intellectual enemy, of Philo of Larissa; abandoned Academic scepticism for Stoic-influenced dogmatism (Chapter VII).

Antipater of Sidon: *fl.* c. 150 BC; contemporary of Carneades as leader of the Stoa (Chapter VI).

Antisthenes: c. 446–c. 366 BC; founder of the Cynic school of Socratic philosophy, famous for its anti-conventionalism and individualism (Chapter IV).

Arcesilaus: 315–240 BC; head of the Academy and founder of Academic scepticism; controversialist and opponent of the Stoicism of Zeno (Chapter V).

Aristippus (Senior): c. 435–c. 350 BC; founder of the Cyrenaic school of philosophy, noted for its ethical hedonism, and its insistence on the primacy of sensory affection (Chapter IV).

Aristocles of Messene: ?first century AD; Peripatetic author of anti-Sceptical polemic; a (hostile) source for Pyrrho and Timon (Chapter IV).

Aristotle: 384–322 BC; founder of the school of Peripatetic philosophy in the Lyceum, pupil of Plato, researcher (particularly in biology), seminal thinker in logic, ethics, politics, and metaphysics; preserver of much of what we know of Presocratic philosophy, as well as some early sceptical arguments (Chapter III).

Asclepiades: *fl.* c. 125 BC; doctor and corpuscularian physiological theorist; forerunner of Methodism (Chapter XIII).

Aulus Gellius: c. 130–80 AD; essayist (*Attic Nights*), antiquarian collector of historical, literary, and philosophical stories; source for Favorinus.

Carneades: c. 214–129 BC; head of the Academy and greatest of the Academic sceptics; ambassador and public lecturer in Rome, 156 BC; master dialectician and proponent of the epistemological criterion of the plausible (Chapter VI).

Cassius ‘the Sceptic’: *fl.* first century AD; hardline Empiricist doctor, opponent of Stoicism (Chapter XIII).

Chrysippus: c. 280–c. 205 BC; third head of the Stoa; formidable logician and metaphysician, chief creator of Stoic compatibilism; author of more than 700 works (Chapter VI).

Cicero: 106–43 BC; Roman orator, politician, and (in his last years) writer on philosophy; studied with Antiochus and Philo; major source for Stoic and Academic philosophy.

Clitomachus: c. 187–c. 110 BC; Carthaginian successor to and preserver of the thought of Carneades; both Cicero and Plutarch rely heavily upon his (now lost) works (Chapter VII).

Democritus: c. 460–c. 380 BC; inventor (with Leucippus) of atomism; proponent of the infinite universe; *via* Epicurus, an enormous influence on Hellenistic and subsequent philosophy (Chapter III).

Diocles of Carystus: *fl.* mid-fourth century BC; Sicilian doctor, critic of excessive aetiologizing (Chapter XIII).

Diodorus Cronus: late fourth century BC; dialectician, proponent of the so-called ‘Master Argument’ deriving the fixity of the future from the necessity of the past, and of arguments against the process of motion (Chapter XIV).

Diogenes of Babylon: *fl.* mid-second century BC; head of the Stoa, contemporary and philosophical opponent of Carneades (Chapter XIV).

Diogenes Laertius: ?third century AD; encyclopaedic antiquarian author of *Lives of the Philosophers*, a largely uncritical (but invaluable) compendium of material culled from earlier sources.

Empedocles: c. 495–c. 435 BC; physician and natural philosopher, author of a four-element doctrine, and a rudimentary theory of perception (Chapter III).

Epictetus: *fl.* c. 100 AD; freed slave, author of late Stoic compendium of doctrine and moral apothegm; anti-Sceptical epistemologist (Chapter VIII).

Epicurus: 340–270 BC; founder of the Epicurean school of atomistic hedonism; opponent of Democritean ‘scepticism’ in regard to secondary qualities, and of epistemological scepticism in general.

Erasistratus: *fl.* c. 260 BC; physician, physiologist, anatomist; author of sceptical argument against antecedent causes (Chapter XII).

Eusebius: c. 260–340 AD; Christian bishop, author of *Preparation for the Gospel*, which excerpts many earlier writers, including Aristocles and Numenius (Chapter IV).

Favorinus of Arles: *fl.* c. 100 AD; friend of Plutarch, associate of the emperor Hadrian; rhetorician and philosopher, author of sceptical arguments against the Stoic conceptions of knowledge (Chapter VIII) and divination (Chapter XV).

Galen: 129–c.210–15 AD; the greatest doctor of later antiquity, reviver of Hippocratism, and voluminous writer on medicine and philosophy (Chapter VIII).

Gorgias of Leontini: *fl.* late fifth century BC; sophist; author of *On Non-Being*, a treatise designed to show that nothing existed—or if it did it could not be known—or if it could

be known it could not be communicated (Chapter III).

Heraclitus: c. 540–c. 480 BC; legendarily opaque early metaphysician; author of the theory of flux and the doctrine of the unity of opposites (Chapter III).

Herophilus: *fl.* c. 260 BC; Alexandrian physician; specialist in anatomy, discoverer of the distinction between and separate functions of the motor and sensory nerves; proponent of a cautious, empiricist epistemology; author of arguments against causal ascription (Chapter XIII).

Hippolytus: c. 180–235 AD; bishop, polemicist, hammer of heretics; his *Refutation of All Heresies* is one of the most important sources for early Greek philosophy.

Lacydes of Cyrene: *fl.* mid-third century BC; second head of the Sceptical Academy; proponent of memory-scepticism (Chapter VI).

Lucian of Samosata: *fl.* late second century AD; satirist, part of the ‘Second Sophistic’ movement; dabbler in sceptical philosophy (Chapter VIII).

Menodotus: *fl.* mid-second century AD; leading Empiricist doctor of his day, and controversialist (Chapter XIII).

Metrodorus of Chios: *fl.* mid-fourth century BC; Democritean of sceptical epistemological leanings; influence on Anaxarchus (Chapter IV).

Parmenides: ?c. 520–c. 450 BC; metaphysician and author of a celebrated argument denying the logical possibility of change (Chapter III).

Philo of Alexandria: c. 30 BC–c. 45 AD; Jewish scholar and biblical exegete; preserver of the earliest (if incomplete) version of the ten Modes of Scepticism (Chapter IX).

Philo of Larissa: c. 160–c. 83 BC; Academic, successor to Clitomachus; responsible for softening the official Academic epistemological line in order to allow for limited knowledge (Chapter VII).

Philolaus: c. 470–c. 400 BC; Pythagorean, proponent of a metaphysics involving ‘limiters’ (form) and the ‘unlimited’ (matter) (Chapter III).

Photius: *fl.* ninth century AD; patriarch of Constantinople, author of a catalogue and synopses of hundreds of books in his library, including Aenesidemus’s *Pyrrhonian Discourses* (Chapter VII).

Plato: 427–347 BC; associate and apologist of Socrates; influential thinker on metaphysics and politics; interpreted (bizarrely) by some later writers as a sceptic (Chapter V).

Plutarch of Chaeronea: c. 50–120 AD; Platonist philosopher, essayist, and biographer; source for Stoic, Epicurean, and Academic philosophy (Chapter VIII).

Protagoras: c. 490–c. 420 BC; sophist and propounder of a sophisticated relativism in moral and political contexts (cf. Plato’s *Theaetetus*; Chapter III).

Pyrrho of Elis: c. 360–c. 270 BC; first and eponymous Pyrrhonist, legendary for his philosophical imperturbability. Perhaps visited India with Alexander the Great (Chapter IV).

Serapion: *fl.* c. 225 BC; pupil of Herophilus, probable founder of the Empiricist school of medicine (Chapter XIII).

Sextus Empiricus: ?second-third century AD; great systematizer and compiler of Pyrrhonian Scepticism, as well as an Empiricist doctor. Our most complete surviving source for Greek Scepticism (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Adversus Mathematicos*).

Socrates: 469–399 BC; inquirer and questioner of accepted notions of virtue; inventor of

the *elenchus*, a method of refutation of opponents, and as such a philosophical role-model for Sceptics (and others).

Theophrastus: 371–287 BC; Aristotle’s pupil and successor as head of the Lyceum. Effectively founded the tradition of philosophical doxography.

Thessalus of Tralles: first century AD; founder of medical Methodism, a system built upon a highly simplified phenomenal pathology; opponent of causal explanation.

Timon of Phlius: c. 320–230 BC; Pyrrho’s follower, amanuensis, and hagiographer; writer of satirical poems on Sceptical themes, notably the *Silli* and the *Images*, as well as philosophical prose-works such as the *Pytho* (Chapter IV).

Xenophanes: (c. 580–c. 480 BC) natural philosopher and theologian, author of some sceptical remarks on the limitations of human knowledge (Chapter III).

Zeno of Citium: c. 340–264 BC; founder of the Stoic school of philosophy; developer of an epistemology associated with the criterion of the cata-leptic impression; opponent of Arces-ilaus (Chapter V).

Zeno of Elea: ?c. 490–c. 420 BC; follower of Parmenides and author of a series of celebrated paradoxes de-signed to undermine the coherence of motion, divisibility, and a plural uni-verse (Chapter IV).

Glossary

I include only the most significant Greek terms (and on occasion their English equivalents) which occur during the development of the argument.

adēlon: obscure, hidden, not open to immediate perceptual inspection.

adiaphoron: indifferent, in the sense of having no tendency to sway the observer one way or the other.

adiapseuston: infallible, unfalsifiable.

agōgē: way of life (of the Sceptic); for the Sceptic involving *tērēsis* (q.v.).

aitia, aition: cause, reason or explanation, particularly of something *adēlon* (q.v.).

aitiologia: causal explanation, again primarily referring something *adēlon* (q.v.), and hence rejected by Sceptics and Empiricists (q.v.); subject of Aenesidemus's Eight Modes.

akatalēpsia: ungraspability (sc. of truth, or the reality of things) the epistemological position attributed to the Academic sceptics.

akatalēptos: ungraspable, or ungrasped (by the Stoic *cataleptic impression*, q.v.).

analogismos: in *Dogmatist* (q.v.) medical contexts, reasoning from evident signs to hidden conditions; rejected by *Empiricists* (q.v.); equivalent to *sēmeion endeiktikon* (q.v.).

anepikritos (of *diaphōnia*, q.v.): undecided, or undecidable.

apangelia: avowal; the Sceptics' characterization of their own utterances as not involving commitment to truth or falsity.

aperispastos (of *phantasia*, q.v.): unreversed, or irreversible, of a Carneadean plausible impression which does not conflict with other impressions or beliefs.

aphasia: the Sceptical refusal to make real assertions (as opposed to *apangeliai*, q.v.) about the natures of things.

apistia: unconvincingness, disbelief.

apithanon: implausible, unconvincing.

apprehension: see *katalēpsis*.

archē: principle, source, origin, startingpoint, axiom, foundation.

ataraxia: imperturbability, tranquillity, freedom from mental distress or disturbance: the psychological goal of the major Hellenistic schools, including the Pyrrhonists, for whom it is a consequence of universal *epochē* (q.v.).

autopsia: personal observation; part of the methodology of *Empiricist* (q.v.) medicine, along with *historia* and *transition* (qq.v.).

cataleptic impression: see *katalēptikē*.

commemorative sign: see *hupomnēstikon*.

diaphōnia: disagreement, over the natures of things, which the Sceptics find to be endemic and incurably undecidable (*anepikritos*, q.v.) among the Dogmatists.

diexōdeumenē (of *phantasia*, q.v.): thoroughly tested; part of Carneades' epistemological hierarchy of plausible impression.

dogma: belief, but with connotations of theoretical weight; for the Sceptics, any opinion regarding something *adēlon* (q.v.).

Dogmatist: in medical circles, any physician committed to a theoretical account of physiology and pathology, an umbrella-term sheltering all those who are neither *Empiricists* nor *Methodists* (qq.v.). In Sceptical parlance, any philosopher or scientist committed to offering accounts of things which are by nature *adēlon* (q.v.).

dunamis: power, potentiality, faculty, function, capacity, ability, possibility.

empeiria: experience; collection of observed similar instances which ground *Empirical* (q.v.) medical practice.

Empiricist: school of doctors who held, against the various *Dogmatists* (q.v.), that effective medical practice was obtainable solely on the basis of straightforwardly observable concatenations of events, and limited extrapolation from them.

enargeia, to enarges: clarity or perspicuity, the status of something *phainomenon* (q.v.) as opposed to *adēlon* (q.v.).

endeiktikon: (of *sēmeion*, q.v.) indicative sign; phenomenal occurrence that permits (according to Dogmatist methodology) an inference to the non-evident condition which produced it; contrasted with *hupomnēstikon* (q.v.).

endeixis: (in medical contexts) indication of some hidden internal condition; the medical equivalent of *sēmeion endeiktikon* (q.v.).

enstēma: obstacle, sc. to someone's acceptance of a *cataleptic impression* (q.v.) as such.

epilogismos: in *Empiricist* (q.v.) medical circles, reasoning from *phainomenon* (q.v.) to likely consequences and reasonable therapies; equivalent of *sēmeion endeiktikon* (q.v.).

epochē: suspension of judgement; the refusal to form opinions, either positive or negative, about an issue characteristic of Pyrrhonian (and to an extent Academic) philosophy.

eulogon: reasonable, justifiable; Arcesilaus's 'practical criterion' of action.

hairesis: method, *modus operandi*; school or sect.

hē tou homoion metabasis: 'transition to the similar'; comparison of similarities between different types of case, or of therapy, which generates for the *Empiricist* (q.v.) doctors new testable empirical hypotheses.

historia: the reports of others' experiences: part of the methodology of *Empiricist* (q.v.) medicine.

hupomnēstikon: (of *sēmeion*, q.v.) commemorative sign; phenomenal occurrence which calls to mind some further type of event which is temporarily (but not intrinsically) non-evident.

idiōma: particular characteristic of an object, supposedly presented to the observer in the Stoic *cataleptic impression* (q.v.).

impression: see *phantasia*.

indicative sign: see *endeiktikon*.

isostheneia: equipollence; the fact that the considerations on either side of a question balance, and hence incline the inquirer in neither direction; the professed aim of the Pyrrhonist method is to establish the *isostheneia* of all competing claims *pro* and *contra* any particular theoretical position, and thus to induce *epochē* (q.v.) thereupon. *katalēpsis*: apprehension, grasping: the Stoic condition of having a secure grip upon a body of knowledge.

katalēptikē: (of *phantasia* (q.v.)) apprehensive, cognitive. A *phantasia katalēptikē*, cataleptic or apprehensive impression, is one, according to the Stoics, about which it is impossible to be in error.

kathēkon: correct action performed by those who have not yet attained to the state of cognitive and hence moral perfection (Stoic technical term); contrast *katorthōma* (q.v.).

katorthōma: right actions performed, in state of complete knowledge, by the Stoic Sage; (for Arcesilaus) any reasonable and justifiable action.

kritērion: criterion, means of establishing the veridicality of some impression or belief; subject of sustained Sceptical attack.

logos: reason, argument, formula, structure (originally: word); opposed (by *Empiricist* (q.v.) doctors) to *peira* (q.v.).

Methodist: adherent of the third medical *hairesis* (q.v.) in addition to those of the *Dogmatists* and the *Empiricists* (qq.v.), which emphasized the simplicity and easy assimilability of the crucial facts about pathology and therapy, which were supposed in some sense to be self-evident.

metriopatheia: moderation in affection, the aim of the Sceptic's affective life.

Mode: fundamental pattern of Sceptical argument, as in the Ten Modes, the Five Modes of Agrippa, the Two Modes, and the eight Modes of Aenesidemus against *aitiologia* (q.v.).

pathos: affection, something which happens to one.

peira: empirical testing, experiment; part of *Empiricist* (q.v.) methodology.

periōdeumenē: = *diexōdeumenē* (q.v.).

peritropē: 'about-turn'; self-refutation, or the deployment of an argument against its original proponents.

phainomenon: appearance of an object, the way something seems to be; the 'criterion' of the Sceptical life.

phantasia: impression, internal appearance, representation of a *phainomenon* (q.v.).

pithanon: plausible, convincing: the basic Carneadean epistemological criterion (usually modifying *phantasia*, q.v.).

prodēlon: pre-evident (self-evident).

propeteia: rashness, precipitancy; the over-credulousness of which sceptics accuse dogmatists.

prosdoxazomenon: additional belief, beyond what is warranted by immediate perception.

sēmeion: sign, or sign-inference; standardly divided by the Hellenistic schools into indicative (*endeiktikon*, q.v.) and commemorative (*hupomnēstikon*, q.v.)

sēmeion endeiktikon indicative sign.

sēmeion hupomnēstikon: commemorative sign.

sunkatathesis: assent to (the content of) an impression; a key component in the Stoic theory of action, and where they located the distinction between humans and non-rational animals, and human freedom.

suspension: see *epochē*.

tarachē: disturbance, antonym of *ataraxia* (q.v.).

technē: art, skill, science; systematized body of practical knowledge.

telos: end, purpose, goal, object, in particular the ultimate purpose of life.

tērēsis: direct observation of phenomena; basis of *Empiricist* (q.v.) medical method; also observance, sc. of ordinary patterns of behaviour in the Sceptical *agōgē* (q.v.).

transition: see *hē tou homoioi metabasis*.

Notes

Chapter I Introduction: Sources and Transmission

- 1 A proper name in bold indicates that the person named is the subject of a brief notice in the Biographical Appendix.
- 2 For a recent attempt fully to take account of this in a scholarly context, see Osborne, 1987.
- 3 A 'fragment' in this sense is record of an author's actual words: to the unwary, the term sometimes suggests words surviving on pieces of broken pottery or papyrus—and sometimes indeed these are the source of our fragments; but by far the preponderance of them survive in the form of quotations.
- 4 In recent years much progress has been made on the scholarly task of discerning the various different sources behind Diogenes' account—and consequently we are now better placed to be able to make at least provisional judgements of a particular story's provenance, and hence probable veracity. See Barnes, 1986a; and Hahm, 1992.
- 5 For Timon, see Diels, 1901; and, more recently, Lloyd-Jones and Parsons, 1983, 368–95 (Frs. 775–848).
- 6 His precise dates are a matter of controversy, but he certainly wrote no earlier than the end of the second century AD, and may well have flourished in the third century: see House, 1980.
- 7 On the controversy, see usefully Barnes, 1988b, and the references collected there.
- 8 *M 7* consists of a detailed doxography of ancient views on the *kritēriōn*, the criterion of truth (see Chapter XI); the *kritēriōn* is also dealt with at *PH 2* 14–96—but the final section of *PH 1* (210–41) is devoted to distinguishing Pyrrhonism from other, superficially similar, philosophical positions, and some of the material therein (relating to Heraclitus, Democritus, the Cyrenaics, Protagoras, and the Academy) is to be found in expanded form in *M 7*; none the less, *M 7* provides much of the material relevant to a sceptical interpretation of early Greek thinkers, notably Xenophanes and Democritus: Chapter III.
- 9 See Janáček, 1963.
- 10 Bury's Loeb edition refers to them by these names, which are a better guide to their contents as well as avoiding the misleading implication that *M 7–11* are merely a continuation of *M 1–6*.
- 11 LS refers to the texts collected by Long and Sedley, 1987.
- 12 *DL 7 40* reproduces the latter example, but with physics and ethics intersubstituted (the ancients differed as to the relative functions of yolk and white). Sextus further reports that the first-century BC eclectic Stoic Posidonius 'preferred the comparison of philosophy with an animal: physics with the blood and flesh, logic with the bones and sinews, ethics with the soul' (*M 7 19*).
- 13 The term 'Dogmatist' functions differently in philosophical and medical contexts, although there are obvious points of contact between the various uses. It is possible that the sceptics took 'Dogmatist' over from the medical debate as a convenient general label; I follow Sextus

- in using it as a useful collective term for any and every anti-sceptical type of thinker. Because of the excessively pejorative connotations of ‘Dogmatist’ in English, Long and Sedley (1987) prefer ‘doctrinaire philosopher’: this is perhaps more accurate and less misleading, but it is clumsy, and in any case ‘Dogmatist’ is hallowed by usage. On the medical sense, see below, 10; see also Chapter II, 13ff., and n. 2.
- 14 On the nature and development of Medical Empiricism, see Frede, 1987a, 1988, 1990; Edelstein, 1967, 195–203; Hankinson, 1987b.
- 15 On the relations between medicine and philosophy in antiquity, see Jones, 1946; Frede, 1986; Edelstein, 1967, 195–246, 349–66; see also Lloyd, 1979; and Hankinson, 1991b.
- 16 For Galen’s philosophy, see Frede, 1981; Moraux, 1981 (a useful, although in places misleading, short summary); Barnes, 1991; Hankinson, 1988b, 1989, 1992d.
- 17 The best statement of his philosophy of medical science is to be found in the first two books of his *De Methodo Medendi* (‘On the Therapeutic Method’): see Hankinson, 1991a.
- 18 For Galen’s attitude to Empiricism, see Frede, 1985, Int.; and Hankinson, 1987a; 1992d.
- 19 We possess *Subf. Emp.* in a Latin translation by the fourteenth-century master Nicholas of Reggio (a key figure in the survival of Greek science: Thorndike, 1946; Weiss, 1950); *Med. Exp.* survives (apart from two shortish fragments of the original Greek) in a ninth-century Arabic version done by Hunain Ibn ‘Ishaq from an earlier Syriac translation. Both these translations are, fortunately, extremely faithful ones: so much so that, in the case of Nicholas’s *Subf. Emp.*, Deichgräber was able plausibly to reconstruct Galen’s original text from the Latin version. *Subf. Emp.* appears as Fr. 10b of Deichgräber, 1930; an English translation of *Med. Exp.* appears in Walzer, 1944; Frede, 1985, reproduces Walzer’s English *Med. Exp.* as well as supplying new English versions of *Subf. Emp.* and *SI*.
- 20 See Frede, 1982; Edelstein, 1967, 173–91; Lloyd, 1983, part III.
- 21 All of this is owed to Schmitt, 1983, 234–5, whose brief but invaluable study should be consulted by all interested readers.
- 22 Done by people such as Nicholas of Reggio: n. 19 above.
- 23 Probably the work of Nicholas of Reggio: Schmitt, 1983, n. 6.
- 24 See especially Popkin, 1979.
- 25 Its inadequacy had already been exposed by John Philoponus in the sixth century AD; but it was not until the fourteenth-century work of Jean Buridan and others that this fact became widely accepted in the scholastic world.
- 26 None the less, one need not accept the judgement of Bury, 1933, xlii: ‘he studies fairness by quoting his opponent’s own views, often at great length; but he wearies the reader by his habit of piling argument upon argument for the mere sake of multiplying words—bad argument and good heaped together indiscriminately’.
- 27 For the first part of this story the reader may consult Popkin, 1980, and the later articles in Burnyeat, 1983.

Chapter II The Nature of Scepticism

- 1 Henceforward, I use the upper case to denote Pyrrhonian Sceptics: Sextus himself restricts his use of the term to those of his own philosophical persuasion. Hereafter ‘sceptic’ with a lower-case ‘s’ will have a more general sense.
- 2 Annas and Barnes, 1985, 1–2, write: ‘the ancient sceptics labelled their opponents “dogmatists”. The word “dogmatist” in contemporary English has a pejorative tone—it hints at an irrational rigidity of opinion, a refusal to look impartially at the evidence. In its ancient

sense the word lacked that tone: a dogmatist was simply someone who subscribed to dogmas, or doctrines. We shall use the word in the ancient sense. The disadvantage of this practice is off-set by the convenience of having a short label for all those who are not sceptical philosophers.’ Sensitive to the same need, but repelled by the inappropriate connotations of ‘dogmatist’, Rescher, 1980, 3, proposes ‘cognitivist’, as being free of the unwanted connotations. But even that term seems dangerously misleading, since it suggests that a non-cognitivist will be a sceptic—and while that may be all right for a relaxed and general sense of ‘sceptic’ it will not do for the more precise and restricted sense which we shall be using in this book: a non-cognitivist in ethics of Mackie’s stamp (Mackie, 1977) is in a certain sense an ethical sceptic—but he is emphatically not an ethical Pyrrhonist (see Chapter XVI, 265–7). Long and Sedley’s (1987) ‘doctrinaire philosophers’ is perhaps the least misleading alternative—but it is a mouthful, and does not (as yet) command widespread currency.

- 3 The story is to be found in Russell’s memoir of Wittgenstein: 1951, 297.
- 4 Maconi, 1988, suggests that ‘Metadogmatist’ would be a more accurate (although equally barbarous) label.
- 5 See e.g. Mackie, 1977, ch. 1.
- 6 The term ‘Ontological Scepticism’ has caused some concern—in particular Mark Gifford has suggested that ‘Alethic’ or ‘Metaphysical’ Scepticism might be less misleading (since the scope of O-scepticism covers facts, states of affairs, and perhaps simply general truths). After some thought I have decided to retain Oscepticism as a term of art; but it is worth stressing that the positions involved can all be adequately characterized in terms of their attitudes towards various kinds of propositions, whether they are true or not (Ontological Scepticism and its congeners), and whether or not they can be known (Epistemological Scepticism and its siblings). It may be worth developing this a little further. We may distinguish six distinct positions, three in each basic category. First, there are the three Ontological (or Metaphysical) stances:

- O: (1) Positive O-Dogmatism: ‘some statements of type *T* are true’;
- (2) Negative O-dogmatism: ‘no statement of type *T* is true’;
- (3) Genuine O-scepticism: no commitment to either (1) or (2);

then the three Epistemological positions:

- E: (4) Positive E-dogmatism: ‘some statements of type *T* are knowable’;
- (5) Negative E-dogmatism: ‘no statements of type *T* are knowable’;
- (6) Genuine E-scepticism: no commitment to either (4) or (5).

The following logical relations hold within each category:

- (a) (1) and (2) are contradictories;
- (b) (4) and (5) are contradictories;
- (c) (3) is incompatible with (1) and (2);
- (d) (6) is incompatible with (4) and (5).

Moreover, given the (uncontroversial) principle of epistemic logic

- (L) if some statements of type *T* are knowable, then some statements of type *T* are

true,

the following relations hold between the categories:

- (e) (4) entails (1) (by L, modus ponens);
- (f) (2) entails (5) (by L, modus tollens);
- (g) (2) and (4) are contradictories (by (a) and (e)); (which rules out position 1A on the table below)
- (h) (2) and (6) are incompatible (by (d) and (e)); (which rules out position 1B)
- (i) (3) and (4) are incompatible (by (c) and (f)) (which rules out position 2A).

All other combinations of E and O are compatible, and hence philosophically tenable: see the table, p. 16. Once more, I owe the working-out of these detailed relations to Mark Gifford.

- 7 See n. 6 for a fuller working-out of these entailments.
- 8 Compare the principle of humility regarding belief: it is rational to believe that some of one's beliefs are false—but of course it is not rational to believe *of any one* of one's beliefs that *it* is false, since as soon as one believes it to be false it is no longer a belief: see Makinson, 1964, for a discussion of a related paradox.
- 9 This is only one reason for rejecting the so-called 'KK thesis'. For the KK thesis, the notion that if you know something then you know that you know it ($Kxp \rightarrow KxKxp$) and its relations with scepticism, see Rescher, 1980, 113–19.
- 10 A similar distinction may be drawn among types of relativism (see Chapter III, 46–7).
- 11 Sextus repeatedly urges that the expressions 'there is' or 'x is', should be replaced with 'there appears to me' or 'x appears to me': see e.g. *PH* 1 135, 202; *M* 11 18–19. It is as we shall see sometimes unclear whether the Greek verbs *esti* and *phainetai* in these expressions should be construed impersonally to govern the whole sentence (rather in the manner of quantifiers), or as taking an ordinary subject (the distinction is between 'it appears to me that x is F ' and ' x appears to me to be F ': and it is not trivial).
- 12 *DL* 9 58; *M* 7 88. Compare Arcesilaus (Cicero, *Academica* 1 45) and Carneades (*Acad.* 2 28); see further, Chapters V and VI.
- 13 On these issues, see Burnyeat, 1982b; Everson, 1991a; a failure to appreciate the strength of this point vitiates the entire argument of Groarke, 1990.
- 14 Reseller's language here ('questions *or* denies') indicates that he takes 'sceptical' in the relaxed sense, i.e. as encompassing negative dogmatism.
- 15 For the distinction between internalist and externalist accounts of knowledge, see BonJour, 1980; 1985.
- 16 It is worth noting here for those impressed by the force of Gettier-type objections that they only damage the pretensions of such analyses to offer a set of jointly sufficient conditions for knowledge; they do not compromise their status as severally necessary. For a recent penetrating attempt to give an account of knowledge basically faithful to this picture, yet immune from Gettier-examples, see Nozick, 1981, ch. 3; see also Goldman, 1967; Lehrer, 1979.
- 17 Whether this latter is a possibility turns upon whether one accepts an externalist account of knowledge of the type advocated by Goldman (1967; 1986); see also BonJour, 1980; 1985.
- 18 What follows is an expanded version of Ayer's useful formulation (1956, ch. 2).
- 19 As it is famously in Hume: *Enquiry*, sect. IV.

- 20 The interested reader is referred to Ayer, 1956, chs 2 and 3 for an extended analysis and philosophical teasing-out of the consequences of rejecting any part of this argument. Essentially, he identifies four major strategies, associated with the denial of different premisses in the argument: the naive realist rejects (1); the reductionist (or phenomenalist), e.g. Russell in his 1948, rejects (4); the ‘scientific approach’ (exemplified by Slote, 1970) denies (5); while the ‘method of descriptive analysis’, a version of which Ayer ultimately adopts himself, denies (6). I shall make some use of these categories later on.
- 21 Perhaps Peter Unger is an exception: Unger, 1971, 1975; at any rate if there is such a person: cf. Unger, 1979.
- 22 This translation is controversial: see Brunschwig, 1990; Chapter XVII, 274–5.
- 23 For a brief but careful assessment of the different possible ranges of scepticism, of what he labels, echoing Quine, ‘three grades of sceptical involvement’, see Barnes, 1983, 159–60.
- 24 The sense is that of Harman, 1973; see Rescher, 1980, 4–5.
- 25 There are hints of such attitudes. For the external world, see e.g. *PH* 2 72–3 (although this passage does not explicitly cast doubt on whether there are external objects, but only upon whether we can distinguish them); *M* 7 354, 357–8, 365–6, 383 (these passages occur in connection with the ‘criterion’, and as such I discuss them below in Chapter XI): but here again, the sceptical attack is by and large restricted to whether we can say anything *about* the alleged external objects—at no stage does Sextus canvas the possibility of generalized doubt concerning their very *existence* (except just possibly at *M* 7 366: see Chapter XVIII, 302:354). Regarding other minds, one Theodosius, the author of a *Sceptical Summaries*, objected to describing Sceptics as Pyrrhonists on the grounds that one can never know the mind of another and that Pyrrho’s disposition was hence inaccessible to us (*DL* 9 70: Hicks’ translation obscures Diogenes’ real point; on this passage and its interpretation, see Sedley, 1983, 20, and nn. 62, 63): but here again the scepticism is not generalized and existential.
- 26 Once again in a relaxed sense: see above. The question is whether objects really have the properties they seem to have, not whether they have basic non-accidental properties which in some sense explain all the apparent properties of the object.
- 27 Equally, the use of *archē* in a slightly different sense at the beginning of *PH* 1 12 (‘we say that the causal origin [*archē*] of the sceptical way is the hope of achieving *ataraxia*’) carries no hidden Dogmatic commitments.
- 28 No translation of *technē* is adequate to all its Greek usages and contexts; crudely, a *technē* is an activity of a systematized sort, in which there are regularly accepted procedures, and which calls for a certain level of skill; standardly, too, it should be directed towards ‘some goal useful for life’ (or so the Stoics held: *M* 1 75; 2 10; 7 109, 373; *PH* 3 188, 241, 251); in different contexts ‘art’, ‘craft’, ‘skill’, sometimes even ‘science’ will be appropriate.
- 29 The page numbering is that of Nidditch’s revised version (1975) of the Selby-Bigge edition of Hume’s *Enquiry* (the ‘only’ is a restoration of Nidditch).
- 30 *PH* 1 232; this is controversial: see Chapter V, 75ff.
- 31 *DL* 9 107, following (for Arcesilaus) Timon; Sextus at *PH* 1 30 refers to ‘some estimable Sceptics’ who have added to the other *telē* ‘*epochē* in investigations’. On the end, see Chapter V, 86ff.; VI, 96ff.; XVIII, 303ff.; sceptics can consistently claim that as a matter of fact they have an end, provided that they do not, in contrast with the Dogmatists, make any attempt to justify it.
- 32 Some recent scholars have found interesting adumbrations of the Wittgensteinian notion of avowal (‘Äusserung’: see Wittgenstein, 1967, § 549), notably Barnes, 1982, 4–5; a Pyrrhonist who makes an avowal does not thereby make a truth-claim and hence commit himself to any form of belief (see further Chapters XVII, 278ff.; XVIII, 295).

Chapter III Precursors

- 1 On the pre-history of epistemology, and Homer's claims to sceptical status, see Hussey, 1990.
- 2 21 B 14 DK=167 KRS: the obvious model for this is Homer's treacherous, back-biting, adulterous pantheon (cf. 21 B 11 DK=166 KRS).
- 3 DK refers to Diels and Kranz, 1951, the standard collection of Presocratic fragments and testimonia; KRS refers to Kirk, Raven and Schofield, 1983.
- 4 The notion of giving a 'natural history' for religion was popularized by Hume in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*; but it is a quite general and very powerful tool: cf. Mackie, 1977, ch. 1.
- 5 Little is known of this man, except that he was mentioned by Democritus (*M* 7 53), and held that everything was false (or unreal): *M* 7 388. Sextus employs his view at *PH* 2 76 to construct a *peritropē*, or about-turn argument: see Chapter XI: 229.
- 6 I am grateful to Jim Leshner for letting me see his discussion of this fragment in advance of the publication of his new text and commentary on Xenophanes.
- 7 The nature of the hypotheses in question is a matter of controversy, as is the interpretation of *Vet. Med.* as a whole: see Hankinson, 1992.
- 8 However one should not infer that the author of *Vet. Med.* was an enthusiastic Xenophanean, for he *does* think that knowledge is straightforwardly available—and nor does he commend the method of hypothesis (which would presumably be the doxastic method) in non-empirically verifiable matters except in a plainly ironic manner.
- 9 Anacharsis supposedly left his native Scythia sometime around the turn of the fifth century BC to go in search of wisdom. He is mentioned by Aristotle as the author of an example of particularly remote explanation (*Posterior Analytics* 1 13, 78b31–2): there are no flutes in Scythia because there are no vines; no vines, so no grapes; no grapes, so no wine; no wine, so no drinking parties; no drinking parties so no flute-girls; no flute-girls so no flutes (this is not the only possible reconstruction of the 'explanation'—Tredennick in his Loeb edition [89, n. c] offers one that is if anything even more far-fetched—but it is the most colourful). For Anacharsis's death, see Herodotus, 4 76–7; cf. *DL* 1 101–5.
- 10 Rather the fact of the 'emergence' of different colours in what is apparently the same substance was taken to support the Anaxagorean doctrine of the complete intermingling of substance: see Mourelatos, 1987; Barnes, 1979 2, 16–39; and Schofield, 1980.
- 11 It anticipates the soritical argument of Wright, 1976. The sorites and similar arguments were (and still are) important in sceptical contexts: see Barnes, 1982a. Sextus's language here suggests that Anaxagoras's argument was indeed cast in soritical form, since he refers to *tēn para mikron tōn chrōmatōn exallagēn* and *tas para mikron metabolas*; and we know that the sorites was known as the *para mikron logos*. However, it is most unlikely that this formulation is due to Anaxagoras himself. See further, Chapter XIII, 228ff.
- 12 So Barnes, 1979 1, 147: 'Sextus...takes it to refute perception; but he misconstrues the Greek. The fragment should rather be compared with [22 B 17 DK] ("Most men do not understand the things they meet with...") and with 22 B 56 DK ("Men are deceived with regard to knowledge of what is evident..."): the truth is not manifest; only a practiced eye will discern what is presented to it; the senses need direction by a mind that is not "barbarous". I agree entirely with the substance of the interpretation: but I think Barnes may himself have misconstrued Sextus's construal. It turns on the correct translation of '*elenchei*', which Barnes takes to mean 'refutes'; I prefer the more neutral 'attacks'; the verb really

means something like ‘submits to cross-examination’. See further below.

- 13 On Alcmaeon’s philosophy of mind, see Hankinson, 1991b.
- 14 Sextus even claims another sense for *einai*, namely that of appearance: *M* 11 18–19; see Chapter II, 18. For the complexities of the Greek verb ‘to be’, see especially Kahn, 1966 and 1973; and some of the essays in Hintikka and Knuutila, 1986.
- 15 For a brilliant analysis of the argument as Plato presents it, see Burnyeat, 1982b, and in general Burnyeat, 1990.
- 16 For this particular interpretation of PNC, see Cassin and Narcy, 1988; see further Kirwan, 1971; Code, 1986, 1987; Cohen, 1986.
- 17 Barnes, 1979 2, 246, provides a rather different account.
- 18 As it turns out, however, my interpretation of the Sceptical position in Chapters XVII and XVIII turns on the Sceptic’s being able to construe all sorts of appearance as P-appearances—and whatever the truth of that, the restriction to purely sensible objects is too restrictive.
- 19 Although relativism may still turn out to be pragmatically unacceptable—for a discussion of the *Theaetetus* issues, see Burnyeat, 1990, 19–52; and Burnyeat, 1976b.
- 20 This is an echo of Parmenides, who promised to demonstrate ‘the genuine heart of well-rounded truth’: 29 B 1.29 DK; most editors prefer *atremes*, unshakeable, in place of *atrekes*; but the Democritean echo favours *atrekes*.
- 21 A slightly different version is recorded in the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On Melissus, Gorgias, and Xenophanes*.
- 22 Gorgias employs a similar argument-pattern in his *Defence of Helen*, arguing that she did what she did either under duress, or moved by passion, or swayed by arguments, or under the influence of gods—but in none of these cases can she be genuinely responsible for her actions.

Chapter IV Pyrrho and the Socratic Tradition

- 1 Timon’s fragments are presented in Diels, 1901 (=Ds); and in Lloyd-Jones and Parsons, 1983. The fragments relating to Pyrrho are presented and discussed in Decleva Caizzi, 1981a. The *Silli* are discussed by Dal Pra, 1975 1, 95–103.
- 2 Timon’s *Silli* are written in mock-epic style, hence the tone of my translation. Of his literary parodic skill there can be no question: this fragment is a close imitation of *Iliad* 3 223 (about Odysseus). DC refers to the fragments and testimonia collected in Decleva Caizzi, 1981a.
- 3 The charge that opponents were *tuphoi* (vain, conceited, proud, puffed-up) becomes a sceptical *topos*; compare Timon’s indication of limited approval of Xenophanes by calling him *hupatuphos*, ‘semi-free-from-vanity’ (Fr. 60 Ds). The charge of vanity goes along with that other ubiquitous sceptical accusation, of dogmatic rashness (*peripeteia*)—their vanity and rashness consists in their unfounded conviction to be speaking the truth on non-evident matters. For a discussion of the *topos* of *tuphos*, see Decleva Caizzi, 1980.
- 4 Aristocles used to be placed in the second century—but an earlier date now seems more plausible.
- 5 Cicero, *Fin.* 5 88 (=68 A 169 DK) explicitly ascribes *athambia*, along with *euthumia* (being of good heart), to Democritus’s account of the *summum bonum*; cf. 68 B 215, 216 DK. Stobaeus 2 7 3 even says that Democritus called happiness ‘*ataraxia*’; if that is correct, then there is an even tighter link between the Democritean conception of the good life and that which was to become standard in the Hellenistic schools.

- 6 There is no reason to think that Lucretius is not here reproducing an original argument of Epicurus's: cf. Epicurus's own *Principal Doctrine* 23: 'if you take issue with all perceptions, you will have no criterion against which to measure even those which you hold to be mistaken'. See Burnyeat, 1978.
- 7 See Decleva Caizzi 1981a, 157–60, for comments on the texts associating Pyrrho with Anaxarchus.
- 8 *DL* 6 83: for the sceptical term *tuphos*, see 66, n. 3 above; cf. *M* 8 6.
- 9 For a vigorous and entertaining discussion, see Burnyeat, forthcoming.
- 10 For an interpretation of Anaxarchus's position that ties it in with Greek theories of optics, see Burnyeat, forthcoming.
- 11 Diogenes (*DL* 6 3) credits him with defining *logos*, account, as 'that which manifests what a thing was or is' (*to ti ên ê esti*): the first three words have strong Aristotelian associations. Aristotle also records his view that predication is impossible, the only allowable form of assertion being the identity-statement (*Metaph.* 5 29, 1024b33–4), and hence that contradiction was impossible (*ibid.*, 1024b34–5; *Topics* 1 11, 104b21; cf. Chapter III, 43, on Protagoras).
- 12 Cynicism was advertised by its supporters and derided by its opponents as 'a shortcut to virtue': *DL* 6 104.
- 13 'Alleged', since there is now considerable scholarly dispute as to whether this Aristippus was the original Cyrenaic, or whether the honour should rather go to his grandson, Aristippus Junior: see Mannebach, 1961, 114–17. However, there seem to me to be no good reasons for rejecting the bulk of the ancient testimony in favour of the older man; and as Richard Bett has pointed out in a recent (unpublished) paper, the candidacy of Aristippus Junior rests on a probable misreading of a passage in Numenius (*apud* Eusebium). See also Guthrie, 1971.
- 14 This is particularly obvious in the case of Epicurus, who advocated a sophisticated hedonism according to which it was better to eliminate all desires that were not both natural and necessary (*Ad Menoeceum*, =*DL* 10 127–32), declaring unambiguously that

when we say that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of the spendthrift or those of sensuality, as some think whether out of ignorance, prejudice, or malice. By pleasure we mean absence of pain in the body and disturbance (*tarachê*) in the soul; not a sequence of drinking bouts and revelry, nor the sensual enjoyment of boys, women, fish, and all the rest of it. (*Ad Men.*, =*DL* 10 131–2)

Yet he was slandered even by his contemporaries as a dissolute rake and wastrel (*DL* 10 4–8: a judgement not shared, it should be said, by Diogenes himself).

- 15 This is apparently a reference to *PH* 1 27–8, where Sextus in fact makes the much more general claim that anyone who holds anything to be good or bad by nature must inevitably suffer mental disturbance as a result; of course, the Cyrenaic adoption of pleasure as the end (and hence presumably as a natural good), means that they are comprehended under Sextus's general argument. For a full discussion of the Sceptical position here, which is of great theoretical importance, see Chapters XVI–XVIII.
- 16 *aperispastos* is another term with an Academic epistemological provenance—see Chapter VI below. It is further a matter of dispute whether it should be translated as 'irreversible' or 'unreversed'. I prefer the latter in the Academics' case, for theoretical reasons (Chapter VI, 111); but the case is less clear for the Cyrenaics, and in many ways the stronger modal

reading seems preferable.

- 17 This is a peculiar phrase—and the Greek is consistent with the translation ‘we must either posit the phenomenal affections or whatever is productive of them’, which is in many ways preferable; but it would entail some surgery to the subsequent text to maintain the reading.
- 18 The text reads ‘Bryson son of Stilpo’; but it is probably corrupt—the emendation ‘or’ was suggested by Roeper. A very late source (the tenth-century Byzantine lexicon the *Suda*, s.v. ‘Socrates’) makes Pyrrho a pupil of Menedemus, the Eretrian eristic dialectician (cf. *DL* 2 134–5); Menedemus is also diachronically associated with Pyrrho by Strabo, 11 1 8. Elsewhere (s.v. ‘Pyrrhon’) the *Suda* links Pyrrho with Metrodorus of Chios, by way of one Alexander (Frs 1–4 DC).
- 19 A recent exception is Flintoff, 1980, who writes: ‘the majority of scholars have preferred to carry on as though this passage of the life of Pyrrho had never existed. A fairly typical reaction is that of A.A. Long (1974, 80): “it is impossible to know whether Oriental influences played any significant part in Pyrrho’s philosophical development. The evidence does not require such a hypothesis.”’ Flintoff’s article has done much to challenge that assumption (although ultimately I side with Long): I examine its claims in detail below. Other exceptions to the general neglect are Piantelli, 1978; Mills Patrick, 1929, 57 ff.; Frenkian, 1957b, 1958.
- 20 For the early history of Greek contact with the East, see West, 1971.
- 21 Otherwise unknown, a fact which prompted Müller and others to conjecture ‘Hecataeus’: on this, see Decleva Caizzi, 1981a, 135–6.
- 22 The ascription is repeated in the *Suda* (s.v. *epochē*;=1C DC): but that hardly qualifies as an independent testimony. Decleva Caizzi, 1981a, 135–6, discusses the attribution of *akatalēpsia* and *epochē* to Pyrrho; she notes that *akatalēpsia* only gained its epistemological sense via Zeno the Stoic—but concludes rightly that that is no bar to ascribing the *concept* to Pyrrho.
- 23 This is the view of Reale, 1981; I should emphasize that, in connection with Pyrrho and other Sceptics, I use terms like ‘doctrine’ undogmatically, as Sextus would say, without connoting any dogmatic commitment to theoretical positions. Rather it serves more or less as a synonym for ‘attitude’ or ‘way of life’.
- 24 Decleva Caizzi, 1981a, 136–43, carefully reviews the evidence for Pyrrho’s Indian influence, and the scholarly literature on the subject; cf. *ibid.* 159–60.
- 25 ‘[]’ and ‘< >’ mark difficulties in the text to be discussed later.
- 26 This suggestion is also supported, for what that’s worth, by Aulus Gellius, the second-century AD miscellany-writer (*Attic Nights* 9 5 4: see Chapter VII, 183); but Aulus’s source almost certainly derives that view from Aenesidemus: Chapter VII, 163.
- 27 Cf. my interpretation of Xenophanes, 16.
- 28 He reads ‘*dia to*’ for ‘*dia touto*’: this has the grammatical advantage of removing the need for a missing particle here.
- 29 See Stopper, 1983, 292, n. 50, for an endorsement of the ‘subjective’ view; he further stigmatizes the move from indeterminacy of judgement to indeterminacy of the world as ‘a zany inference’, although without saying why. Two things stand out here: first, the mere fact that the world is indeterminate need not show our senses to be *unreliable*: for they might *reliably* (in Protagorean fashion) report that fact. On the other hand, Timon actually says that our perceptions and opinions are neither true *nor false*. If, then, we take our perception falsely to declare the world to be stable when it isn’t, why does Timon think they are not false? Perhaps because, given the Heraclitean nature of the world, no *x* is either determinately *F* or determinately not-*F* (and the propositions that form the contents of our judgements are

so determinate).

- 30 On the issue of interpretation here, see Stopper, 1983, 272–4; Stopper, against Reale, 1981, takes the scope of the *ou mallon* to be broad.
- 31 Cf. Frenkian, 1957b.
- 32 Some scholars (notably Reale, 1981, 315–21) have discerned an influence in the other direction, and have taken Pyrrho to be reacting to Aristotle in holding, *contra* the arguments of *Metaph.* 4 4, that one could in fact believe contradictions. Reale (318–20) adopts the NS reading of *ou mallon* in 78, takes Pyrrho to be *asserting* the assertibility of contradictions; but even if we accept the NS reading, we need not ascribe such a position to Pyrrho (above, 63). In default of that, the suggestion that Pyrrho was explicitly responding to Aristotle (rather than simply invoking a Democritean/Protagorean heritage) lacks foundation. See also Stopper, 1983, 273.
- 33 Nausiphanes was supposed to have associated with Epicurus (Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 20 14,=29 DC), perhaps even as his teacher (*DL* 10 13); at all events, they evidently fell out somewhat severely, if Diogenes is to be trusted, Epicurus calling Nausiphanes a ‘jellyfish, illiterate, fraud, and whore’: *DL* 10 8 (cf. *M* 1 2–4). Diogenes also reports that Epicurus ‘admired Pyrrho’s way of life’ (*DL* 9 64), which may indicate that Epicurus took inspiration for his own search for *ataraxia* from the example of Pyrrho.
- 34 This striking phrase (*ekdunai ton anthrōpon*, literally ‘take off the man’) is also attested in Antigonus—but as Diogenes almost certainly follows Antigonus here that attestation is of limited value; nevertheless it may well be Pyrrho’s own. Its meaning is disputed: for a discussion, see Decleva Caizzi, 1981a, 166–8. Timon, in his hagiographical 66, echoes the language of divestment: the phrase I translate ‘escape from the bondage of opinions’ is *ekdusis latreiēs doxōn*.
- 35 A slightly fuller story (attributed to Antigonus of Carystus, and thus early) appears in Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 26, =15b DC: he is alleged to have fled from the dog up a tree. Here is Aristocles’ version of the other story: ‘when Philistia his sister was sacrificing, and another family-member had promised the requisites for the sacrifice but had failed to provide them, Pyrrho bought them and complained; whereupon the relative said that what he was doing was not consonant with his words nor appropriate to impassivity: and Pyrrho replied “What need is there in the case of a woman to make a demonstration of it?”’ Whatever that is supposed to mean, Aristocles has Pyrrho make a rather different and somewhat less chivalrous response than Diogenes does. Jacques Brunschwig has intriguingly suggested that in the two versions of the story we have the antecedents of rustic and urbane scepticism (see Chapters XVII and XVIII); the suggestion is attractive, if speculative.
- 36 Again, a slightly fuller version is to be found elsewhere, this time in Plutarch, *Quomodo Quis Suos in Virtute Sentiat Profectus* 82e–f,=17b DC; in it, Pyrrho ‘says to his companions that anyone wishing not to be thoroughly disturbed by the things that happen to him must cultivate this kind of impassivity by argument and philosophy’.
- 37 The Stoic intermediates, or *adiaphora*, were supposed to be neither good nor bad in themselves, but still none the less could be the objects of rational pursuit and avoidance: they could have what Antipater called ‘selective value’, and could be ‘preferred’ or ‘dispreferred’ (on the coherence of this position, see Striker, 1986). Ariston denied that the intermediates (which included health and wealth) could be the object of selection.
- 38 Another passage ascribing an undogmatic life in accordance with the appearances to Pyrrho is Anon. *In Theaet.* 60.48–61.46,=71D LS,=80 DC; but we should not place much weight on the writer’s claim that these views are to be ascribed to the historical Pyrrho, since the description of Pyrrhonism he offers is that of a later systematization. Nevertheless,

- 'Anonymous' may date from as early as the first century BC, and cannot be ignored: see Chapter VIII, 137.
- 39 E.g. by Reale, 1981, 302–3.
- 40 See Stopper, 1983, 270, and n. 25: there is also a reference to a Numenius in *DL* 9 114, in an anonymous line of verse which Timon was said to be fond of quoting—but it is clearly proverbial in import (it is explained by Diogenianus as referring to a notorious thief, Numenius of Corinth—and that makes sense in the context: see n. 49 below). Stopper notes that 'the verse is inscrutable', and 'the passage [i.e. *DL* 9 102] is a mess'.
- 41 Cf. Dal Pra, 1975 1, 103–4.
- 42 If indeed it *is* a continuous fragment: as it stands it lacks a verb, prompting a variety of emendations and other responses: see Burnyeat, 1978; Decleva Caizzi, 1981a, 255–61; Stopper, 1983, n. 34; for interpretations, see Stough, 1969, 25; Dal Pra, 1975 1, 108; Stopper, 1983, 270–1; Reale, 1981, 306–12. My translation follows Decleva Caizzi's text. Burnyeat's reading is in some ways attractive, and purges the fragment of its dogmatic overtones: 'that the nature of the divine and the good is whatever makes life most equable for a man'.
- 43 See Sedley (1983, 20; n. 59).
- 44 *PH* 1 187–209: for non-determination, see *PH* 1 197–99; see further Chapter XVIII : 354.
- 45 See Dal Pra, 1975 1, 93.
- 46 The conventionalism is explicit if Hirzel's reading of 'nomōi (by custom)' for 'noōi (by the intellect)', on the basis of *DL* 9 61 (76), is correct: and even if it is not, the fragment is still conventionalist in tone.
- 47 LS translate the last clause (*houper an elthēi*) as 'wherever one goes'; but the rendering I prefer (cf. Decleva Caizzi, 1981a, 110) is perfectly possible Greek and gives a better sense (cf. Long and Sedley, 1987 2, pp. 7–8, *ad* 1H).
- 48 Another prose work: see Decleva Caizzi, 1984, for a discussion.
- 49 This is the verse mentioned at n. 40 above: it actually reads 'Attagas went along with Numenius.' 'Attagas' and 'noumēnios' are names for two types of water-fowl—but they are also proper names, and may well refer to notorious criminals of that name; however, see Barnes, 1986a.
- 50 This may echo the Democritean war between reason and the senses: Chapter III, 59.
- 51 Galen's word here, *prosdoxazomenon*, is a technical term in Epicurean epistemology: holding that 'all perceptions are true', Epicurus located the source of all deception and illusion in *prosdoxazomena*: see *Ad Herodotum*, =*DL* 10 50.
- 52 For the 'Third Mode', in which the reports of different sense-modalities are shown to generate conflicts, and hence mutually to cast doubt on each other's reliability, see Chapter IX, 167–9.
- 53 Mueller, 1982, provides an excellent account of the sceptical attack on geometry.
- 54 Sextus's language is full of pointed word-play, which it is difficult to reproduce in translation. 'Positing an *archē*' is the geometers' technical term for laying down a hypothesis.
- 55 The only surviving reference to this work: Dal Pra, 1975 1, 105.
- 56 LS use lower-case letters following the section number (in this case '1') to indicate a supplementary text that appears only in their volume 2 (and hence of which they do not provide a translation).
- 57 Still the clearest treatment of Platonic hypothesis is to be found in Robinson, 1953.
- 58 This appears to be the geometrical method of analysis and synthesis: see Robinson, 1969, ch. 1; and Hintikka and Remes, 1974.
- 59 See Long, 1978, and Decleva Caizzi, 1984, for further analysis and speculation.
- 60 Such a solution of course relies on the concept of instantaneous velocity, a notion familiar to

us from the calculus, but not available to the Greeks: see G.E.L.Owen, in Nussbaum 1986b, ch. 3; Barnes, 1979 1, 276–85; and KRS, pp. 272–4.

Chapter V The Scepticism of the Middle Academy

- 1 In philosophy of mathematics in particular Aristotle considers them both worthy of detailed refutation: see *Metaph.* 13 6, 1080b4–6, 22–4.; 8, 1083a18–b8; 9, 1086a3–11, etc.
- 2 So Ioppolo, 1986, 17, 20, 41, etc.
- 3 As Crantor died around 290 BC, this conversion must have taken place some years before Arcesilaus eventually became head of the Academy (c. 272 BC). *DL* 4 29 has them quoting lines of Euripides to one another with erotic intent—but it should be remembered that such intellectual homosexual liaisons were part of the Platonic legacy. Numenius, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 6 4, writes: ‘having associated with Theophrastus as a boy, being as a man gentle and not unaverse to erotic matters, he became the beloved of Crantor the Academic being still young and on account of his beauty’; but Numenius is hardly an unbiased source. Ioppolo, 1981, 158, n. 43, rejecting the story of amorous motivation, speculates that Arcesilaus must have been drawn by an interest in moral philosophy (which the Academy specialized in: for an alternative reason—to study mathematics—see Napolitano, 1981, 184; cf. *DL* 4 29, 32). Stopper, 1983, 294, n. 64, is suitably sceptical—but does not reject the love story out of hand. Lancia, 1981, speculatively traces the links between Arcesilaus and the moralist Bion of Borysthenes (cf. Numenius, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 6 6, =Fr. 25 des Places), and suggests a common moral interest.
- 4 This famous *bon mot* is a parody of Homer’s description of the chimera at *Il.* 6 81: ‘lion in front, dragon behind, she-goat in the middle’. Arcesilaus merited the description, Sextus explains, ‘because he employed the dialectic of Diodorus, although he was actually a Platonist’: *PH* 1 234; on Diodorus, see Chapter VI, 103; Chapter XIV, 246.
- 5 Menedemus was a member of the fourth-century school of minor Socratics, the Eretrians; for his connection with Pyrrho, Chapter IV, n. 18.
- 6 The text is very uncertain; the fragment is reproduced by Numenius, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 5 11–14; Eusebius reads *theusetai*, which I translate; by contrast, the MSS. of Diogenes, followed by Lloyd-Jones and Parsons, 1981, read *thēsetai*, perhaps meaning ‘put on’ in the sense of put on arms (cf. *Iliad* 10 34); but it is extremely difficult to interpret, as Declava Caizzi, 1981a, 190, notes—of course we would be greatly helped if we had the entire context. Timon is clearly sketching some parodic aquatic scene here (cf. Fr. 32 Ds below): see further n. 8.
- 7 So, roughly, Sedley, 1980, 11: ‘this image [i.e. Ariston’s] neatly encapsulates Arcesilaus’s eventual philosophical position. If Pyrrho lay at the back of his philosophy it is because he inspired in Arcesilaus the notion that suspending judgement might actually be more desirable than committing oneself to a dogmatic stance, and not just a bleak expedient in the cause of intellectual honesty, as its older advocates tended to suppose. If Diodorus lay at its heart, it is because Arcesilaus adopted the best dialectical techniques available in his day, those retailed by Diodorus and his associates.... If, finally, Plato stood at the front of Arcesilaus’s philosophy, it is because Arcesilaus professed to be no innovator but a reviver of the dogma-free dialectic which had characterized the Academy under Plato.’ That may be to read a little too much into what is, after all, simply a witticism—but at bottom it seems to me to be right.
- 8 Different interpretations, however, abound. Diels, 190.1, 183, thought that Timon represented philosophy as a contest between non-Dogmatic fish, including Plato (Fr. 30 Ds) Arcesilaus,

Pyrrho, Menedemus, and Diodorus, and Dogmatist fishermen such as Zeno (portrayed by Timon as an obese old Phoenician fisherwoman in the memorably insulting Fr. 38 Ds). Long, 1978a, 79–80 offers an alternative in which Menedemus, Pyrrho, and Diodorus are all fishermen, swallowed by the fish Arcesilaus along with the line. Decleva Caizzi reviews the evidence: 1981a, 188–90. Further difficulties surround ‘that mass of flesh’, *to pan kreas*. Lloyd-Jones and Parsons, 1981, 379, citing *Iliad* 24 80 ff., read *keras* (‘horn’) for *kreas* (‘flesh’), taking the whole to refer to a compound lead and horn fishing-implement. Decleva Caizzi, 1981a, 189, however notes Timon’s persistent punning with the name ‘Plato’ and words connoting bloatedness, being puffed-up: cf. 98: Fr. 34 Ds (*platuneai*), and Fr. 35 Ds, which refers to ‘the unadulterated verbosity (*platurēmosunē*) of the Academics’; and she concludes that flesh is supposed to connote substantiality by contrast with the windiness of the Academics—it is part and parcel with the portrayal of other philosophers as *tuphos* (cf. Decleva Caizzi, 1980), vain, conceited and puffed-up with pride (contrast Fr. 52 Ds, assigned by Long to the attack on Diodorus: ‘What do you want? Little meat, much bone’). Decleva Caizzi sums up: ‘Pyrrho, completely *atuphos* (cf. 66: Fr. 9 Ds), is all meat.’

9 On this issue, see Ioppolo, 1986; Frede, 1984, 258; Long, 1986, 441; Maconi, 1988, n. 9.

10 *Academica* is conceived in dialogue form—but Cicero makes no attempt to emulate Plato’s dramatic skill, preferring to have his characters present long disquisitions as the representatives of various schools. Consequently Cicero’s words do not invariably represent his own position, but frequently reproduce original arguments from sources now lost. Cicero had himself received a well-rounded philosophical education, studying with the Academic Philo of Larissa (Chapter VII, 116) in the 80s BC. In 79 he visited Athens, attending lectures by Antiochus of Ascalon (Chapter VII, 116), and two leading Epicureans (Phaedrus and Zeno), and then travelled to Rhodes where he ran across Posidonius, the most influential Stoic of his day. Consequently, when Cicero turned to philosophy towards the end of his life while the Roman Republic crumbled (and with it his own political career), he was able to draw on a wealth of (admittedly rather old) first-hand experience. We know from Cicero’s letters that the *Academica* was originally written in the Spring of 45 BC in two volumes: this version, of which the first volume is lost, is known as the *Academica Priora*, or the *Lucullus*. Its *dramatis personae* were, in the first, lost book: Catulus (defending Carneadean scepticism), Hortensius (favouring the newly dogmatizing views of Antiochus), and Cicero himself (speaking for the Philonian Academy); and in book 2 (which survives, and which is referred to here as *Acad.* 2), Lucullus, who mounts an Antiochean attack on scepticism, and Cicero himself, who defends it. However, Cicero was unhappy with the first edition, and composed a second which appeared later in the same year. There are only two speakers: Cicero for Academic scepticism, and Varro for the dogmatists. Only the first book (of four) of the *Academica Posteriora* (or *Varro*; or *Acad.* 1) remains. Unfortunately neither direct treatment of Carneades’ scepticism survives. On Cicero’s philosophy, see Lévy, 1992; Powell, 1995; Inwood and Mansfeld, 1997.

11 The *Index Academicorum* is a Herculaneum papyrus containing a list of Academic philosophers, along with a brief summary of their views.

12 ‘Sceptical Academy’ denotes the Academy from Arcesilaus down to, and including, Philo of Larissa. Classifying its various developments has been a problem since ancient times. Arcesilaus’s school is usually known as the ‘Middle Academy’, that of Carneades as the ‘New Academy’; while Philo’s and Antiochus’s were described as the ‘Fourth’ and ‘Fifth’ Academies respectively (*PH* 1 220; cf. 231–5). I shall not make anything of this (but see Tarrant, 1985; Gucker, 1978). Nor did Academic scepticism die with Philo: Chapter VIII, 141ff.

- 13 These words are not corroborated by other sources (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4 7 15, *Acad.* 1 41, Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 2 89 1); Maconi, 1988, 240, n. 26, writes that they ‘are plainly a slip—by Zeno, by Arcesilaus, by Sextus, or by the scribes of Sextus (we might have expected *sphalera* or *epispthalē* [deceptive, unreliable] instead of *pseudē*)’.
- 14 Here ‘visum’ is Cicero’s translation of *phantasia*: *Acad.* 1 40.
- 15 I.e. ‘*katalēpton*’ (*Acad.* 1 41); cf. *Acad.* 2 18, where ‘comprehensio’ translates *katalēpsis*, and ‘evidentia’ or ‘perspicuitas’ *enargeia*.
- 16 Maconi, 1988, 239–41, arguing against Ioppolo’s thesis that there are two different senses of *doxa* in orthodox Stoicism, captured respectively by (D1) and (D2), allows that they are distinct, but rightly notes that ‘that does not in itself establish an ambiguity in the word; for the two formulations need not be construed as rival *definitions*. Perhaps the two formulas were supposed to be extensionally equivalent. There is one, and I think only one, text standing in the way of this pleasant conclusion’ (240). That recalcitrant text is Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2 112 W (=41G LS): ‘there are two types of opinion, assent to the non-apprehensive and weak supposition’; Maconi supposes it to be confused, based upon a misreading of some source. Stobaeus, a fifth-century AD antiquarian, is usually thought to have relied upon Arius Didymus’s first-century digest of Stoicism—but there are reasons for doubting that (Long, 1983); Maconi suspects ‘that it is a farrago of different views’ which could explain why Stobaeus imagined that there were two distinct types of *doxa*. However, see Ioppolo, 1986, 23 (and cf. 27, 72, 87, 97–100, 103–4); and cf. Long and Sedley, 1987 2, 258 (*ad* 41G LS). In fact (D1) appears subjective in tone, describing the mental state of the assenter, while (D2) characterizes the objective circumstances that surround belief and its objects—and there is no reason why the two should not coincide (although equally no obvious reason why they should).
- 17 All of these issues are treated with scholarly insight in Inwood, 1985.
- 18 The Stoics sometimes require the cataleptic impression to reproduce *all the idiōmata* of the object (*M* 7 248; cf. *DL* 7 46); and these are taken to be internal qualitative distinctive properties of it. However they do not need such a strong thesis: in Orestes’ case the impression presumably reproduced none of them. Moreover Zeno is reported as denying that a cataleptic impression need represent ‘everything in the object’ (*Acad.* 1 42).
- 19 Frede, 1983, 164, treats Def. 1 as consisting of only two clauses, effectively collapsing (iii) into (i). But Diogenes’ text favours my version, and (i) and (iii) should be kept separate: effectively, (iii) guarantees that not only will the object stand in *some* causal relation to the impression, but that it will stand in the *appropriate* one: see Hankinson, 1991c.
- 20 Sextus’s text here is certainly consistent with the DI; however it does not demand it: and *M* 7 158 (125) appears unequivocally to assign a criterion to Arcesilaus.
- 21 For the doubts about ‘and false’, see above, n. 13.
- 22 Sextus spells the argument out:

since all things are non-apprehensible because of the non-existence of the Stoic criterion, if the Sage assents, he opines; since if nothing is apprehensible, when he assents to anything, he assents to what is non-apprehensible, and assent to the non-apprehensible is opinion. So that if the Sage is in the class of assenters, the Sage is in the class of those who opine. But the Sage is certainly not in the class of those who opine, since according to them opinion is a mark of folly and a cause of error; therefore the Sage is not in the class of assenters. And if this is so, it will be incumbent upon him to refuse assent in all cases. But refusing assent is nothing other than suspension of judgement; therefore the Sage will suspend judgement

over everything. (*M* 7 156–8)

- 23 Ioppolo, 1986, 145, cf. 56 ff., contends that *epochē* and *asunkatathesis* are distinct, but it is hard to see how on her account they can be, since (as Maconi, 1988, n. 37, points out) ‘she certainly allows that *epochē* is a matter of neither affirming nor denying’.
- 24 These issues are well discussed by Glucker, 1978, 36–46; see in particular 38–9, where he records the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato’s* rebuttal of the view that Plato was an aporetic (cf. *PH* 1 221). On Plato as aporetic, see Chapter VII, 127.
- 25 Thus, according to Ioppolo (above, n. 2), the Stoics and Academics vied for the Socratic mantle. The Stoics imbibed Socratic moralizing via Cynicism, as well as the claim that knowledge was sufficient for virtue, and sought to combine it with an epistemology of certainty. The post-Arcesilaan Academics saw Socrates as exemplifying the value of refutation, and attempted to marry it with Diodoran dialectical rigour. This is in many ways a convincing picture, although Ioppolo underestimates the evidence for Pyrrhonian influence on Arcesilaus (cf. **100**; **104**; Numenius, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 6 4–6; and n. 7 above). But whatever the truth of the matter, there seems to be no need to take Arcesilaus to be merely an eristic, solely concerned with the intellectual discomfiture of his Stoic adversaries.
- 26 Perhaps the followers of Theodorus and Bion: Numenius (in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 6 6), retails a story from one Diocles of Cnidus to the effect that Arcesilaus refrained from putting forward any doctrines of his own ‘for fear of being attacked by the Theodoreans and Bion, who used to assail the philosophers and shrank from no means of refuting them’, and that he ‘used to promote *epochē* as a protection like the black ink that cuttlefish squirt out’. Numenius is discussing whether Arcesilaus was really an Academic (Numenius accuses him of closet Pyrrhonism): and the story presumably has something to do with the rumours that an esoteric Platonism was being purveyed within Arcesilaus’s Academy. Numenius rejects the story, however, presumably because it sits badly with his image of Arcesilaus the dialectical wizard. On Theodorus and his followers, see *DL* 2 97–100: he embraced Cynic-influenced views on self-sufficiency and the rejection of conventional norms. On Bion, a pupil of Crates the Academic, see *DL* 4 46–59; he abandoned the Academy for cynicism (*DL* 4 51), and then ‘went over to the views of Theodorus the Atheist, who used every kind of sophistical argument’ (*DL* 4 52); see Bignone, 1936 1, 46; Lancia, 1981.
- 27 Sextus goes on to report (as hearsay) the view that Arcesilaus gave the appearance of being an aporetic Pyrrhonist only because he used the aporetic method to test whether his pupils were ready for the reception of genuine Platonic dogma (*PH* 1 234); the question of whether the Middle and New Academies really did teach an esoteric Platonism has recently been revived: Glucker, 1978, 296–306, reviews the evidence. Most scholars reject it (see Ioppolo, 1981; Brochard, 1923, 114–20; Lancia, 1981, 165–6), in my view rightly.
- 28 That account is not orthodox—even Ioppolo does not believe that Arcesilaus *advocated akatalēpsia*: 1986, 10, 158; see also Striker, 1980, 1981.
- 29 This view is urged in its essentials by Maconi, 1988, 246–7.
- 30 Ioppolo 1986, 125–6, claims, while trying to establish the argument’s Socratic provenance, that the idea that wisdom consists in right actions is compatible with a Socratic position which ‘links moral excellence to right action’. But that seems to underestimate the force of Socratic intellectualism. Ioppolo also contends that the idea that happiness comes through prudence is un-Stoic, since it implies a means-end relation while for the Stoics virtues, including prudence, are rather constitutive of happiness. But as Maconi, 1988, 249, shows, Sextus’s text is compatible with the constitutive reading. Hence Ioppolo cannot thus establish the non-Stoic tenor of the passage.
- 31 For texts bearing on the distinction and its deployment by the Stoics, see LS 59, and their

comments *ad loc.*

- 32 DI-theorists fasten on this Arcesilaan ‘irony’ in support of their views (Couissin, 1929/83, 37); Ioppolo, 1986, 134, explains it as ‘showing that the Academic acts for the same reasons as the Stoic sage’; but I don’t see why it cannot both be an ironical dig at the Stoics and an expression of what Arcesilaus takes to be the right account of action. *Kathēkonta* are the subject of Cicero’s treatise *De Officiis (On Duties)*, ‘officium’ being his translation of *kathēkon*.
- 33 Ioppolo, 1981, 150, further points out that, if Arcesilaus’s use of *katorthōma* had been pointedly anti-Stoic, we should expect Chrysippus’s Stoic counter-attack (see e.g. Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions* 1 1059b; *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1036c–37a) to include a defence of the concept: but no hint of one survives. Even Numenius (in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 5–6) who, as Ioppolo, 1981, 150, justly remarks, ‘makes detailed reference to the polemical confrontation between Zeno and Arcesilaus’, makes no mention of any.
- 34 Forcefully put by Maconi, 1988, 248: ‘[Arcesilaus offers] the Stoics, *gratis*, a criterion of action. But why should he ever have done that? Why, having reduced their Sage to *epochē*, did he not leave him to stew? We are invited to imagine that Arcesilaus first knocked his opponent to the ground, and then gave him a hand up again. And that is a most unGreek idea.’ Quite.
- 35 The quotation is from *Iliad* 20 250; *DL* 9 73 mentions the line in connection with the discussion of the sceptical interpretation of Homer—it was apparently seized upon by those wishing to portray Homer as a dialectician.
- 36 Impression, impulse, and assent are key ingredients in Stoic action-theory; *ta oikeia* figure crucially in the Stoic account of choice and selection, as well as in their developmental psychology; while *hēgemonikon* is their term for the ruling part of the soul (LS 53, 57): see Inwood, 1985, for a thorough analysis.
- 37 Again see Inwood, 1985; on *lekta* in general see the texts assembled in LS 33.
- 38 Here it seems perfectly clear, in spite of what most scholars (e.g. Ioppolo) appear to think, that Arcesilaus is indeed influenced by Pyrrho’s example: above, **100, 104**, nn. 7, 25.
- 39 Because they held that all perceptions were (in a sense) true; the argument is *ad hominem* in an interesting way. Plutarch effectively says that, if the Epicureans are right, then they can easily explain how the Sceptic acts on mere appearances—hence the objection cannot be framed from within Epicurean theory. Of course, the Epicurean may reply that he is not framing it from *within* Epicurean theory at all, but is simply taking dialectical advantage of what the Sceptic provides. But even so, the Sceptic may coherently claim that he just behaves as he says he does; he is not in the least interested in the causal facts, if any, which underlie that behaviour—such an enquiry is strictly for the Dogmatists. He simply reports how things appear to him—and this is how he can, undogmatically, make claims which appear to have causal content.
- 40 Aristotle’s argument is slightly different. If there is no difference in point of veridicality between sleep and waking, then why won’t someone who dreams they are in Athens when they are in fact in Africa set out for the Odeon, either (a) while still asleep or (b) when they awake (Aristotle’s meaning is unclear)? But (a) confuses waking and dreaming ‘reality’—perhaps they do set out for the Odeon *in their dreams*. On the other hand, (b) requires the waker to *compare* the differing sets of impressions (dream images of Athens, waking ones of Africa), and conclude that as one is no more to be preferred to the other he might as well continue with the dream-project of visiting the Odeon. But that assumes that the Sceptic will engage in rational reflection. What will happen, no doubt, is that his dream impression of Athens will be superseded by his waking impression of Africa, and he will act accordingly,

but without commitment to either being more real than the other.

41 Frede, 1984, 264; Ioppolo, 1986, 143–4.

42 So Maconi, 1988, 251–2.

Chapter VI Carneades and the Later Sceptical Academy

- 1 Who is this Aristippus? Certainly not the original Cyrenaic (see Chapter IV, 56) of the previous century, for chronological reasons; and it is highly improbable that it was his grandson, Aristippus junior (see Chapter IV, n. 13). But there is no mention of any other Aristippus of Cyrene (much less a distinguished one) apart from Diogenes' remark (*DL* 2 83) that 'there was another Aristippus, a philosopher of the New Academy'; and although the New Academy is standardly held to have begun with Carneades—and Diogenes explicitly refers to Arcesilaus's school as the 'Middle Academy' (*DL* 4 28)—Diogenes does make Lacydes (bizarrely, as Glucker, 1978, 234–5, points out) the founder of the New Academy. It is tempting to think that Numenius has confused his chronologies, and has inferred from the fact that there was an Academic Aristippus that it must have been the famous Aristippus of Cyrene, prompted perhaps by the fact that Lacydes too was of Cyrenaic origin.
- 2 Ancient epistemologists were concerned with memory—the theory of recollection is central to Plato's rationalist epistemology, and Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Epicureans all felt that they needed to give an account of memory in order to explain concept formation and utilization: but none, apparently, saw the sceptical implications of the fallibility of recollection.
- 3 See Dal Pra, 1975 1, 165–6.
- 4 His dates are conjectural, but Cicero says he lived to the age of ninety: *Acad.* 2 16.
- 5 E.g. by Ioppolo, 1986, ch. 8.
- 6 The embassy and Carneades' speeches were also treated by Cicero, *De Republica* 3 8–11, 21, 23: but this part of Cicero's text is seriously mutilated, and it is impossible to make much out from it: cf. Dal Pra, 1975 1, 169–71.
- 7 Ioppolo, 1986, 197, n. 13, ascribes these views to Numenius—but they occur between quotations. Eusebius may be relying on Numenius here: but he does not say so.
- 8 Ioppolo, 1986, 197–8, locates the Carneadean restriction of *epochē* in the context of the debate with the Stoics: Arcesilaus's *epochē* had proved too all-embracing to leave open any genuine avenues for action; hence Carneades restricts it in order to evade the charge that scepticism entails *apraxia*. Further, it makes it impossible for the Stoic Sage to claim infallibility (trivially, since he never makes a claim to be wrong about), since even while holding that nothing is *katalēpton*, the Sage will still have to act, and will still have to assent to or dissent from things (those which are not *adēla*); and hence will have opinions and can make mistakes. It all depends on the notion of 'opinion' here: if 'opinion' is strong assent or commitment, then no-one need have it. But if opinion simply involves any inclination, then it is a prerequisite for action, and those inclinations can be wrong. Hence no-one can be infallible. I prefer to see Carneades here as refining the Arcesilaan picture, rather than refuting it, as Ioppolo has it. But her reconstruction of the dialectical context is attractive and convincing. See also Allen, 1997.
- 9 I leave *technē* transliterated—it has no exact equivalent in English, and its range of meanings is broad (art, skill, craft, expertise, technique, sometimes even science). See Isnardi Parente, 1961.
- 10 The arguments of *M* 5 against astrology are probably owed in outline at least to Carneades:

Chapter XV, 257–61; the considerations Carneades urges are still valid in today's increasingly gullible world: see Hankinson, 1988a.

- 11 Robin, 1944, 116, puts it well: 'the difficulties in which the Stoics find themselves are from this point on inescapable, and they are reduced to simple bluster: "if there are gods, then there will be divination; there are gods, so there is divination". A dangerous piece of reasoning, since one might just as well, retaining the major premiss, put the minor thus "there is no divination", and conclude "so, there are no gods".' On Stoicism and divination in general, see Long, 1982; Hankinson, 1988a.
- 12 For details of Chrysippus's compatibilism, see Sorabji, 1980a; Hankinson, forthcoming (b).
- 13 In this case including Aristotle: *Nic. Eth.* 31–5.
- 14 On these issues, see Hankinson, forthcoming (a) and (b).
- 15 See e.g. Prior, 1955; Hintikka, 1973, ch. 9.
- 16 The argument recalls Aristotle's famous discussion of the status of the future sea-battle at *De Interpretations* 9: see usefully Ackrill, 1963, *ad loc.*
- 17 Although Aristotle does not reject the Law of the Excluded Middle. Other interpretations, notably that of Anscombe, 1956, have Aristotle deny not prior truth but prior necessity—if this is right, then Aristotle prefigures Carneades' solution to the issue: see below, 105ff.
- 18 Richard Sorabji discusses these categories (although not under these names) and the relations that hold between them, in his 1980a: see especially chs 5–8; and see also his 1980b.
- 19 Epicurus thought of the swerve as involving the minimal possible divergence from the atom's previous inertial trajectory. Furthermore, Epicurus need not be saddled with the jejune view that mere randomness is enough to generate human freedom—rather it may be that human beings can take advantage of the causal elasticity in events which the swerve permits. These are difficult questions, both in scholarly interpretation and philosophical exegesis—and I am not convinced that this 'elbow room' solution really gives Epicurus a much more coherent position. However, for a subtle analysis and defence of these views, see Sedley, 1988; cf. n. 20 below.
- 20 Sedley, 1988, argues that the function of the swerve is simply to allow for acts of volition: that the swerve is uncaused is an unjustified inference of Epicureanism's opponents. Rather, the atoms' ability to be deflected allows volition a toehold into causal efficacy, since the will can now actually affect the mechanical course of atomic events. See also Long and Sedley, 1987 1, 110–12. I am not convinced either that this is the correct interpretation of Epicurus (some swerves, those invoked to get the universe moving at all, are clearly random: Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 2 216–50), or that it is philosophically a fecund or attractive solution. But this is not the place to voice those worries.
- 21 Note particularly *M* 7 430–2: 'perhaps someone will say that the cataleptic impression is the criterion both of the object that it exists and of itself that it is cataleptic;...or else the impression will require something to vouch for it and certify that it really is cataleptic'. However, Sextus may well be making a suggestion on the Stoics' behalf rather than reporting an actual argumentative manoeuvre of theirs.
- 22 Sextus later complains that the Stoics allow us no independent purchase on either the notion of a cataleptic impression or that of a real object, since they are interdefined: *M* 7 426.
- 23 For an account of the Stoics as coherence-theorists, see Annas, 1980a.
- 24 The first six Sceptical Modes (*PH* 1 40–128) mount a concerted attack on the satisfiability of the Stoics' five conditions: see Chapter IX.
- 25 Or 'irreversible' (so, e.g., Bury): *aperispastos* can have a modal flavour—but it seems to suit the provisional nature of all Academic epistemic claims to read it as simply reporting a current state of affairs; such a proposition is as yet unfalsified, but not necessarily

unfalsifiable.

- 26 Sextus's account is peculiar, since **150** follows the sentence 'and the impression that is also unreversed ['irreversible': Bury; see n. 25] is of such a kind'. Bury rightly notes 'this is a curious example of an "irreversible" impression. If the text is right, it looks as if Sextus was nodding.' However, *M* 7 180 is entirely congruent with this passage (albeit employing the example of Menelaus confronted with the real Helen but not believing it since he had previously been fooled by the phantom Helen). Perhaps Sextus means that the unreversed impression in this case is Admetus's prior conviction that Alcestis is already dead.
- 27 Sextus's two expositions of Academic positive epistemology are slightly different: *PH* 1 229 suggests that the order of increasing confirmation is persuasive-tested-unreversed, while *M* 7 181 favours the order persuasive-unreversed-tested. However, given that each of the conditions picks out quite distinct features of the impression and its surroundings ((b) is a perceptual criterion, while (c) is an intellectual one), and given that the process of corroboration could apparently go either way, nothing turns on this.
- 28 Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* V 778 Kühn; see also Hankinson, 1991c.
- 29 Burnyeat (1980c, 29, n. 16) remarks, 'getting the translation right is a first step towards undoing the myth of Carneades as a proponent of "probabilism"'.
- 30 Can it not still be offered dialectically? Even so there are difficulties, since if the argument shows that the opposition has no right to help themselves to the straightforward truth and falsity of perceptual impressions, then it also shows that they cannot fall back on probability: hence it is not an available refuge even for them.
- 31 On these issues see Frede, 1984; Bett, 1990; the notion of commitment is crucial to distinguishing the Sceptics from their opponents: Chapters XVII, XVIII.
- 32 See Brunschwig, 1980; and Barnes, 1980.
- 33 See further Hankinson, 1991 c.
- 34 Compare here Diogenes' story of Sphaerus, Ptolemy, and the wax pomegranate (*DL* 7 177): 'one day when a discussion arose on the question of whether the Sage could stoop to hold an opinion, and Sphaerus had maintained that this was impossible, the King, wishing to refute him, ordered some wax pomegranates to be put on the table. Sphaerus was deceived, and the King cried out "you have assented to something false!" But Sphaerus replied cleverly: "I assented not to the claim that they were pomegranates, but that it was probable (*eulogon*) that they were pomegranates; the cataleptic impression and the probable are different.'" Sphaerus was a Stoic contemporary of Chrysippus.

Chapter VII Secession: the 'Fourth Academy' and Aenesidemus

- 1 Metrodorus was originally an Epicurean: *DL* 10 9; he pioneered the 'positive' view of Carneades' philosophy.
- 2 Glucker, 1978, 393–8, reviews, and largely demolishes, the evidence for widespread Philonian innovation; see also Striker, 1997; and Hankinson, 1997.
- 3 *Pathēmata*: the word has connotations of misfortune, and Numenius plays on the idea that his experiences were also a disaster for his philosophy. Scholars usually assume that we owe to Philo the fallibilist epistemology I have ascribed to Carneades himself: but if I am right about Carneades, this cannot be correct. We know that Philo did not himself claim to innovate, maintaining rather that his position had been the Academy's all along (*Acad.* 2 13); in fact he denied that there had been more than one Academy (*Acad.* 1 13; cf. Dal Pra, 1975 1, 303–5).
- 4 It is usually assumed by scholars that the date of the break coincided with the so-called

‘*Sosus* affair’, of which more below; Barnes, 1989, offers some persuasive considerations against that view. See also Gucker, 1978, 64–90, and Sedley, 1981.

- 5 On the view that there can be two kinds of assent, strong and weak, of which only the former amounts to dogmatism, and its intellectual history, see Frede, 1984.
- 6 On the distinction between internalist and externalist analyses of knowledge, see e.g. BonJour, 1980.
- 7 In Photius’s summary of Aenesidemus’s *Pyrrhonian Discourses* (see further below), Aenesidemus (attacking the Philonian Academy) argues:

the Academics are unaware that they are contradicting themselves. For to make unambiguous assertions and denials, at the same time as stating that †it is the case that things are in general apprehensible†, introduces an undeniable conflict: how is it possible to recognize this as true, this as false, yet still entertain perplexity and doubt, and not make a clear choice of one and avoidance of the other? (Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170a28–33, =71C LS [part])

The text is deficient: the obelized passage makes no sense as a *contrast* with what comes before. One might insert a ‘not’ after ‘is’ (after Sandbach), or emend ‘apprehensible’ to ‘inapprehensible’ (Hirzel). However, if Philo really is the target here the latter seems unacceptable, and more text may have fallen out. Gucker, 1978, 117, n. 67, suggests reading ‘it is the case that things are apprehensible in general, but each thing in particular is non-apprehensible’: this is highly attractive, paleographically convincing, and precisely congruent with the line I father on Philo. Tarrant, 1981, 89–92 (cf. Tarrant, 1985, 59–61), makes a suggestion that would have much the same effect. But the proposed emendations would disturb the obvious symmetry of contrast between making assertions and denials on the one hand, and whatever is supposed to come in the disputed clause on the other. It is not impossible: but it is perhaps unlikely, and hence I reluctantly accept Sandbach’s suggestion as the most probable: see Long and Sedley, 1987 2, 460.

- 8 For Galen and the Stoics, see Hankinson, 1992b; for Aristotle, see Barnes, 1987.
- 9 It is often assumed (e.g. by Tarrant, 1985) that the bulk of Sextus’s doxography of the criterion derives from Antiochus; but, as Barnes, 1989, has shown, there is no evidence for this, and some considerations tell against it (notably the fact that Sextus *mentions* Antiochus at *M* 7 162, 201, and hence can hardly simply be copying from his text at these points). For a discussion of the evidence regarding the debate over the status of *enargeia* in the Late Academy, see Tarrant, 1985, 49–53.
- 10 Another succession, that of Sotion and Hippobotus, traces a continuous Pyrrhonian line from Timon to Sextus—but it is clearly a fabrication.
- 11 He was a doctor, a fact which perhaps accounts for his importance in Menodotus’s eyes, and was allegedly a teacher of Aenesidemus—but there is no independent evidence for this (see Viano, 1981, 566–7, for a suitably sceptical view).
- 12 For a résumé of the arguments concerning Aenesidemus’s dates see Rist, 1970. It is possible that Aenesidemus is reacting not directly against Philo or the Philonians, but against the rather later Platonism of Eudorus. Tubero survived Cicero’s death; and hence Aenesidemus could have written after Cicero, which would at least account for the latter’s silence. There is something to be said for this view; but Aenesidemus’s description of the Academics as ‘Stoics fighting Stoics’ tells against his target being a revived and more historically self-

conscious Platonism. I conclude that if Aenesidemus did write after Cicero had died, his target was a resurgent Philonian scepticism, rather than an inchoate Middle Platonism (see further below). At all events, these issues bear only indirectly upon our philosophical appreciation of Aenesidemus's arguments. For more on Eudorus, see Chapter VIII, 137.

- 13 Burnyeat, 1980c, 27, 29, n. 17, identifies the text mentioned by Diogenes with the first noted by Aristocles, on the grounds that both Diogenes and Aristocles assign Aenesidemus's outline of the modes of scepticism to them; but Diogenes does not explicitly say that the modes are Aenesidemean at all, while Aristocles refers puzzlingly to *nine* modes only: more on this below.
- 14 Aristocles gives a very brief, not to say garbled, review of them—it is difficult to disentangle even nine modes from the report he gives, and certainly at least one of Sextus's ten (the mode from rareness) seems absent from the discussion. Some scholars have taken Aristocles' 'nine' seriously to imply that Aenesidemus's list omitted one from the later canon. But as Annas and Barnes, 1985, 27, note it is at least as likely that 'nine' in the text here is simply an error.
- 15 Aenesidemus does not seem to have used the term, preferring 'Pyrrhonist': Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 169b40. Tarrant, 1984, 22–7, discusses the issue in detail, and concludes that it is probable that Philo of Alexandria (c. 30 BC–c. 45 AD), the Jewish philosopher and scholar to whom we owe our earliest account of the Ten Modes, used the term at least once in what was to become its technical significance (*Congr.* 52), although elsewhere he simply employs it in its standard ancient sense of 'inquirer' (i.e. any philosopher or scientist). Tarrant concludes plausibly that the word had not yet become embedded in its technical sense in Philo's day. A century or so later Favorinus (reported by Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 11 5 6) would use the term indifferently of Academics and Pyrrhonians, although this may be explained by the highly Pyrrhonian cast of his own Academic scepticism: Chapter VIII, 141 ff.
- 16 Sextus at *PH* 1 36 gives 'arguments' (*logoi*) and 'schemata' (*tupoi*) as synonyms for *tropos*: but Bury prefers to read *topos* for *tupos*, perhaps rightly.
- 17 With the possible exception of the first sentence, which may be an attempt on Photius's part to insinuate a self-refuting element into Aenesidemus's procedure—but even that, given sceptics' cheerful tolerance of apparent self-refutation, may be original.
- 18 On the distinction between two types of assent in the Sceptical tradition, see Frede, 1984.
- 19 The interpretation of this whole passage, and the question of whether or not relativism can be fastened on Aenesidemus, turns on the position of this comma. Punctuating here (i) gives the effect of restricting the scope of what none of them has said only to the first disjunction ('all things are apprehensible, or all things are not'); this entails that the succeeding claims ('no more *A* than not-*A*, sometimes *A*, sometimes not-*A*, *A* to one person, not-*A* to another') are part of what a Pyrrhonist would say. However, if we delete the comma, (ii) then all of the second part becomes an explication of what it is to say that everything is apprehensible (in a very weak sense), and hence is all part of what 'no Pyrrhonist would say', i.e. it is *all* Academic. The same considerations of course apply in (3) and (4). Tarrant, 1985, 79–80, implicitly adopts (ii), since he takes Aenesidemus to be accusing the Academics of relativism and seems to think that all the positions distinguished by Aenesidemus are unavailable to the true Pyrrhonist, although his translation suggests he adopts the first punctuation. René Henry's Budé translation of Photius also endorses (ii), but seems not to translate the 'but' (*alla*). I find the second option attractive only if one is desperate to discover an Aenesidemean Scepticism more or less identical with that of Sextus. However the text clearly suggests (i), and hence supports the allowability of relativistic language for Aenesidemus. It should be noted that we embrace (ii) at the expense of losing on Aenesidemus's behalf even

the *ou mallon* formula. If one rejects Aenesidemean relativism, then the problems with his Heracliteanism are compounded (below, 129ff). Tarrant responds by denying that the Heraclitean Aenesidemus represents his real Pyrrhonian position (1985, 80–1); but I prefer to take the evidence of his Heracliteanism closer to face-value.

- 20 The Greek is compatible with ‘A’ here referring back to ‘apprehensible’, and hence that the succeeding remarks all refer to apprehensibility (so Tarrant, 1985, 80: but he has a particular interpretation of this passage: n. 19 above); but this is hard to square with the ‘non-existent’ of (7)—hence I take these to be perfectly general, open predicative sentences.
- 21 On Scepticism and relativism, see Chapters VIII, 138ff.; IX, 177ff.; X, 185ff.; Annas and Barnes, 1985, 96–8; Barnes, 1990d.
- 22 As Woodruff, 1988, 141, characterizes it, an ‘*aporia* is a very special sort of problem...you have when every attempt to support your claim to knowledge has been refuted’. My interpretation is indebted to Woodruff’s interesting and unorthodox article, although I disagree with him about several particular points.
- 23 And thus as renewing the struggle for the right to the Socratic patrimony which Ioppolo, 1986, discerned as crucial to the development of the Hellenistic schools: Chapter V, 83ff..
- 24 At least if our text of Sextus is reliable: cf. Tarrant, 1985, 75, 161, n. 33. Woodruff remarks that, while Sextus uses ‘aporetic’ as a synonym for ‘sceptic’ ‘from refuting and seeking about everything, as some say’ (*PH* 1 7) he does not appear very comfortable with it, since ‘he adds the incompatible alternative “or from the inability to assent or deny”’ (1988, 142). It is not clear that this alternative *is* incompatible with the original definition: this combination of positions appears to be precisely that of Aenesidemus in Photius’s summary.
- 25 ‘Truths’, *alēthōn*, seems out of place here; Pappenheim suggests *archōn*, ‘principles’, which makes good sense (cf. Barnes, 1983, 186, n. 6).
- 26 Equally ‘motion’ (*kinēsis*) seems misplaced: perhaps the text should read *noēsis*, ‘intellection’.
- 27 This is not the only possible meaning for the Greek phrase ‘*kata Hērakleiton*’; Barnes, 1988a, 261, n. 75, notes that phrases of this sort may mean ‘in relation to’; and cites *M* 7 349, where the parallel ‘*tines kala Demokriton*’, he claims, ‘can only mean “some say in relation to Democritus that”, i.e. “some say of Democritus that”’. Furthermore, the phrase might mean ‘in the *Heraclitus*’ i.e. in a book of that name. Thus the phrase merely shows, in Barnes’ view, that Aenesidemus discussed Heraclitus’s views, not that he endorsed them. But ‘*tines kata Demokriton*’ might mean ‘some in the Democritean fashion’, or the like; and the ghost of a Heraclitizing Aenesidemus cannot so easily be laid: **170** below.
- 28 This does not conflict with the previous paragraph: *M* 7 349 refers to the divine intellect, the Heraclitean *logos*; *ibid.* 350 to our poor apology for it. Aenesidemus apparently held the heterodox view that the basic Heraclitean substance was air: *M* 10 233. For this theory of mind (also attributed to Heraclitus, Strato, and Aenesidemus), see Tertullian, *On the Soul* 9 5; cf. 14 5, 25 1.
- 29 This view is developed in Burkhard, 1973; it is compatible with that of Barnes: n. 27 above.
- 30 I find Tarrant’s suggestion that Sextus ‘avoids giving the impression that Aenesidemus *personally* held these doctrines’ (1985, 81) unconvincing—surely Sextus, as a good sceptic concerned with methodology, would *emphasize* this fact if it were supposed to show that Aenesidemus was not really a Heraclitean.
- 31 Rist, 1970, after analysing and summarizing conflicting interpretations, opts for a genetic explanation, arguing that Aenesidemus began as an Academic, becoming a Pyrrhonian by way of Heracliteanism—but this sits badly with **170**. For the view that Heracliteanism need not involve dogmatism, see Capone Braga, 1931; see also Glucker, 1978, 116–19.

- 32 Tarrant, for his own interpretative purposes, wishes to father flux-theory on Aenesidemus as well (1985, 163, n. 63)—but the evidence does not bear this out.
- 33 This short anti-sceptical treatise survives in a fourteenth-century Latin translation done by Nicholas of Reggio (Chapter I, n. 19); see Hankinson, 1998.
- 34 The others involve various combinations of moving and motionless cause and effect (moving cause of motionless effect, or *vice versa*; and so on: *M* 9 227–31); and all possible temporal combinations as well (past cause of present effect, present of past, etc.: *M* 7 232–6). They are isomorphic with 173.
- 35 See Hankinson, 1998, *ad loc.*, for detailed commentary; also Hankinson, 1990a.

Chapter VIII The Scepticism of the Early Empire

- 1 Glucker, 1978 (ch. 3; see also chs 4 and 5), has shown that it is highly unlikely that the Academy continued *as an institution* through this period; Glucker exposes the late myth of an unbroken apostolic succession of Platonic scholars from the time of the master to Justinian's proscription of philosophy for the fiction that it is.
- 2 See Tarrant, 1985, 4–6, 129–35; our knowledge of him is exiguous in the extreme.
- 3 Much of what follows is indebted to Tarrant's careful and scholarly study, especially ch. 4. In favour of the early dating are the facts that *A* adopts the 'One Academy' thesis of Philo (55.2–3: references are to the text of Diels and Schubart, 1905), that he is uncertain as to the proper categorization of the dialogue, that the picture of Pyrrhonism he presents is consistent with Aenesidemean scepticism, and that it was apparently written before Thrasyllus's classification of the subject-matter of the dialogues had become canonical in the first century AD. Tarrant, 1985, 69, further sees in *K* the emphasis on inquiry which he takes to be characteristic of the 'Fourth Academy' (cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 1 46); and *A* does indeed paint Plato's Socrates as an inquirer (2.42, 3.20) whose inquiries are essentially problematic in form, making no assertions or denials (59.12–17)—*A* thus apparently accepts the aporetic interpretation of Plato championed by Aenesidemus (VII, 127ff.). However, this picture is qualified: and *A* sometimes presents Plato as upholding positive doctrines (55.8–13). *A* in fact treats the disinterested aporetic inquiries as propaedeutic, a necessary preliminary before the positive search can properly be got under way (2.9–11, 58.33–6); as Tarrant, 1985, 69, notes, this view is echoed by a number of other Platonists of the period, including Philo of Alexandria (*Her.* 247), Plutarch (*Platonic Questions* 1000c), and Albinus (*Prologus* 6). He is thus not himself a genuine sceptic of any stamp. We have already noted (Chapter V, 83–5) the tradition that ascribed esoteric Platonism even to Arcesilaus; and the backbone of the 'One Academy' thesis was that, exoteric appearances notwithstanding, positive doctrines were always taught inside the Academy. The Academic refutational methodology was then merely the first stage on the path to ultimate enlightenment, and did not in itself constitute the whole of philosophy. This picture is Philonian (VII, 116ff.); and it is extremely implausible as an interpretation of the Academy of Arcesilaus (the more so that of Carneades). But *A*'s adoption of it places *A* in the syncretizing post-Philonian tradition.
- 4 Tarrant, 1983, 179–87, thinks that its author may well have been Eudorus—but this is highly conjectural.
- 5 The interpretative issues here are delicate: Annas and Barnes 1985, 90–8, acknowledge the relativistic trend of 182 (and of 185 from Aulus Gellius: below, 144–5); but they take this to be misinterpretation on the part of *A* and Aulus Gellius. But several texts attribute relativism to Aenesidemus; that evidence can be integrated with the rest of what we know about him;

and the alternative is to suppose that, even in cases in which authors like Gellius, who was personally acquainted with the most influential Academic of his day, Favorinus, are explicitly trying to distinguish Academic from Pyrrhonian Scepticism, and are concerned therefore precisely with the proper characterization of the latter, none the less they radically mistake its structure. I prefer the more simple-minded view that if Gellius (or *A*) says that Pyrrhonists of a certain period were relativists, they probably were. The distinction between Sextan Scepticism and relativism will be treated in the next chapter.

- 6 There is another possible interpretation available: the previous text involving left and right and so on may *also* have been a discussion of what Pyrrhonists say: for the Sceptics do make some, limited, appeal to such predicates (*PH* 1 135, *DL* 9 87); and Sextus explicitly differentiates between two different ways in which things seem to be relative: ‘first relative to the subject judging, and second relative to the things seen along with it, as right is relative to left’ (*PH* 1 135); hence *A* may be making Sextus’s own point here. But I still think that the comparison of the difference between the limited Protagorean conclusions and the stronger inferences of Aenesidemean scepticism probably underlies this text as well.
- 7 For von Arnim’s thesis, see *SVF Praef.* x–xv; it is given qualified support by Glucker, 1978, 260–1, 276–8; the opposing view is taken by Pohlenz, 1939; and Cherniss, 1976, 397–8.
- 8 Fragment and Testimonium numbers cited from Barigazzi, 1966. Polemo does not actually mention Favorinus by name—but the identification is unmistakable, and well-known in the ancient world: cf. the quotation from the anonymous *De Physiognomica Liber* appended by Barigazzi, 1966, 90–1, to the Polemo passage (T 3 B).
- 9 Glucker, 1978, 283–4, notes that Plutarch and Favorinus are reported to have written several books with the same title—but in the single case in which both survive, *On Exile*, their contents are rather different. The other substantial surviving pieces of Favorinus (a *Corinthiaca* and an *On Fortune* are generally attributed to him) are resolutely un-sceptical in tone.
- 10 See Glucker, 1978, 280–2.
- 11 Gellius reports the phrase in Greek, presumably to underline its authenticity; it is almost certainly owed directly to Favorinus.
- 12 Again Gellius writes the Greek, *ta pros ti*.
- 13 Or possibly, reading ‘cernuntur’ for ‘creantur’, ‘discerned’.
- 14 The term has now acquired its technical sense; cf. Chapter VII, 121; Tarrant, 1985, 22–5. However, while (1) seems to restrict the term to the Pyrrhonians, (5) has it, along with its regular congeners ‘ephectic’ and ‘aporetic’ (cf. *PH* 1 7), applied indiscriminately to Academics as well. Tarrant, 1985, 23, suggests that as a proper *name* it strictly applies only to the Pyrrhonians; but that Academics sometimes get labelled the same way.
- 15 The position espoused is thus compatible with that of Arcesilaus (Chapter V: **106**), if he did indeed embrace *akatalēpsia*, although expressed in different (Philonian?) terms.
- 16 He calls them ‘bumpkin Pyrrhonists’: *On the Distinction of Pulses* VIII 711; *Whether Blood is Naturally Contained in the Arteries* IV 427.
- 17 His philosophy of science, dealing with topics in epistemology, foundations, logic, and theory of reference, is to be found in the first two books of his *On the Therapeutic Method* (X 1–156); see Hankinson, 1991a.
- 18 This is pointed against the Pyrrhonians, who claimed to be on the side of common sense: *PH* 1 23–4.
- 19 The word Galen actually uses, *apangellontos*, is significant: see Chapters II, 30, XVII, 279 on *apangelia*; cf. *PH* 1 13, 200; and see Barnes, 1982b.
- 20 References to Galen are keyed to Kühn, 1821–33; a much better text is provided by

- Marquardt, *Galen Scripta Minora* I (Leipzig, 1884); the text also appears in even better shape as Fr. 28 B. Favorinus wrote three books attacking the Stoic conception of a cataleptic *phantasia*, as well as other texts on epistemology (*On the Best Method of Teaching* I 41–2).
- 21 This title is suspect: Glucker, 1978, 285, n. 112, suggests that this may not be a title at all, but a corruption of either Arcesilaus, or Carneades, or (perhaps most plausibly) both: hence Galen represents Favorinus as arguing with his great Academic predecessors at the same time as saying that nothing can be known.
- 22 *Palaioteroi*, *ibid.* 40; the context makes it almost certain that Galen means earlier Academics; however, as was noted above the technique of opposing arguments, and particularly the technical term *epochē*, belong at least as much in the Pyrrhonian tradition, and it is possible that Galen simply means ‘older Sceptics’ in general. Barigazzi, 1966, 176, takes the reference to be to the Academics; and he glosses as ‘Arcesilao e seguaci’: p. 176; and of course Arcesilaus did advocate (in so far as a sceptic can) suspension of judgement too (see Chapter V, 85ff).
- 23 Galen’s objections are in part narrowly stylistic: *bebaiōs gnōston* is decent Attic Greek, while *katalēpton* is a barbarous neologism (*ibid.* 41–2: see Glucker, 1978, 286); all the same, there is substantial point to Galen’s attack here.
- 24 For Sextus on the self-refuting nature of sceptical arguments, see *PH* 1 206, 2 187–8; *M* 8 478–81; Chapter XVIII, 297ff. Cf. **189** below.
- 25 *On the Best Method* I 47, 48; cf. *PH* 1 15; and cf. Plato, *Phil.* 55e–56a.
- 26 See Bowersock, 1969, and 1974.
- 27 Compare Avicenna’s anti-Sceptical prescription: Chapter I, 10. The reference to the ‘worse argument’ is of course a reminiscence of the early Sophists: cf. Aristophanes *Clouds*; Plato, *Apol.* 18b. It is hard to resist the conclusion that Lucian sees little difference between this sort of Pyrrhonism and mere sophistry.
- 28 *Hermotimus* used to be admired: Bevan, 1913, 138, wrote:

the Sceptical School in the second century AD had also among its adherents the most brilliant literary man of the twilight of Hellenism, Lucian of Samosata. Anybody who wants to read the case for Scepticism in a more agreeable form than the treatises of Sextus had better turn to the dialogue of Lucian which bears the name of *Hermotimus*.

Few now follow that advice. But *Hermotimus* is still worth brief consideration.

Chapter IX The Ten Modes of Scepticism

- 1 Although his dates are very uncertain: see House, 1980; Chapter I, n. 5; see also Vollgraff, 1902.
- 2 It is avowedly the aim of the Epicurean philosophy as well: *Ad Hdt.* 82; *Ad Pyth.* 85, 96; *Ad Men.* 128; *DL* 10 136, =Fr. 2 Usener; for the Stoics’ possible agreement, see *SVF* 3 449, and Cicero, *Acad.* 2 138, =*SVF* 3 21.
- 3 On ‘Herrenius’, see Annas and Barnes, 1985, 27: they report the suggestion that the Herrenius compiler’s original source may have predated Philo’s presentation—but see now Schrenk, 1989.
- 4 The reader interested in the interrelations between the various presentations (at least what we know of them) should refer to Annas and Barnes, 1985, ch. 3.

- 5 My formulation is a slightly amended version of those of Striker, 1983, and Annas and Barnes, 1985, 39, 68, 82–3, 98, 102, 121–2.
- 6 See Chapter III, 40.
- 7 No example is given of the earth-born animals. Various editors have offered supplements: Kochalsky suggests ‘earthworms’, comparing Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 7 7 9; Fabricius preferred mice; Bury cicadas. The weight of evidence favours Kochalsky (Diogenes, in his much shorter summary of the Mode, gives earthworms as an example of spontaneously generated creatures: *DL* 9 79); but in truth no supplement is strictly demanded. Cf. Annas and Barnes 1985, 184.
- 8 The text, which has dung-beetles produced from donkeys, seems deficient; either read ‘blister-beetles’ (*kantharides*) in place of ‘dung-beetles’ (*kantharoi*); or assume that two sources of generation (dung-beetles from dung, blister-beetles from donkeys) have been conflated; or read ‘*ex onōn <koprou>*’, ‘from donkeys’ dung’. Cf. Annas and Barnes, 1985, 184. None of this affects the basic sense of the passage.
- 9 Philo’s treatment of the Mode is in many ways peculiar: for a start, he emphasizes the different ways animals can appear *to us* (chameleons, octopuses, doves, and reindeer all change their appearance); and he seems to take the Mode to show that we cannot tell how *animals* really are. That is, he does not take it to be a Mode from the judger at all. Either he has radically misunderstood the point of the Mode; or he reports an early and different version of it; or he deliberately reworks the material to suit his own purposes. Annas and Barnes, 1985, 46–9, point out that he is a Jewish writer, writing a biblical exegesis, and that fact may well dictate his employment of the Modes (in particular he will not be happy with an argument that concludes, as Sextus’s does, that humans are no better than the beasts of the field). Secondly, Philo’s argument concludes to *akatalēpsia*: ‘these facts and others like them are clear warrant for the view that things are inapprehensible’ (*Ebr.* 175); however, given that Philo is early (turn of the first century AD), that will be less surprising in view of the story we have told in the preceding two chapters.
- 10 Annas and Barnes, 1985, 44, fill out the viper example as follows: ‘vipers are numbed by oak-twigs, other animals are not. Hence, we are meant to reason, vipers will shun oak-twigs, other animals will not. So oak-twigs will be unpleasant to vipers, to other animals not. So oak-twigs will appear differently to vipers and other animals. And since the difference in appearance underlies a contrast in reaction, the difference itself is likely to be a conflict.’ That reconstruction is possible, and makes sense of Sextus’s argument—but I doubt that it is necessary. After all, to a viper presumably an oak-twig *feels* paralysing or numbing as it does not to us—and already there is a difference of appearance.
- 11 This example became a Sceptical commonplace; in recent times it has been fashionable to reject it as another case of faulty observation on the part of the ancients, since it is now generally said that jaundice has no such power to affect the visual field (so, e.g., Annas and Barnes, 1985, 42); however I am told (admittedly only anecdotally), that this may be because no case of jaundice ever nowadays becomes severe enough to produce the effect. At all events, it is not the truth of all the premisses that matters to arguments like this, but the collective plausibility of the view that some of the premisses will be true, and hence generate conflicts of the requisite sort.
- 12 Diogenes’ presentation of the Second Mode makes the connection more apparent, since he describes it as that ‘depending on the natures and customs and constitutions of humans’ (if the text is right: see Annas and Barnes, 1985, 187): *DL* 9 80. Divergences of human custom are among the oppositions collected by the Tenth Mode.
- 13 Philo omits the Mode altogether, while Diogenes offers only a fragmentary résumé:

everything that follows is based on Sextus's account.

- 14 This is puzzling: *does* it really look unpleasant? Annas and Barnes, 1985, 69, assert that 'Sextus means in fact that honey is unpleasant when it is smeared on or dripped into the eyes'. But Sextus gives no indication that that is the case; and as Annas and Barnes themselves note, if he does mean that, his example seems completely out of place. I'm inclined to think that Sextus means what he appears to say: that honey actually *looks* unpleasant to some people—and perhaps it does; it certainly looks sticky to me and I find sticky things unpleasant (for the most part). The example may not be a good one (gastromes will delight in thinking up more appropriate ones); but it seems better to take it at its face value.
- 15 Cf. Locke, *Essay* 4 3 23; but he rejects the sceptical inference; incomplete knowledge is not the same as ignorance: 'the ignorance and darkness that is in us no more hinders, nor confines the knowledge that is in others, than the blindness of a mole is an argument against the quick-sightedness of an eagle'.
- 16 See Woodruff, 1988; and cf. Chapters VII–VIII.
- 17 Cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* 4 5, 1010b9–12; 6, 1011a7.
- 18 For the distinction between the Sextan and the Cartesian 'dream arguments', see also Hookway, 1990, 49.
- 19 Diogenes does not mention painting by name, but this is surely what he has in mind when he writes 'level things appear to have projections': *DL* 9 85. Philo actually invokes the dove's-neck example in the context of the First Mode: *Ebr.* 173; but he offers an idiosyncratic version of that Mode tailored to his own purposes: above, n. 9.
- 20 In what follows I am indebted to Annas and Barnes, 1985, 103–9.
- 21 For the Epicurean account of perception, and their commitment to its veridicality, see Taylor, 1980, and Everson, 1990a.
- 22 The Greek here is '*eilikrinōs apophēnasthai*'; the Platonic term *eilikrinōs* is rarely used in Sextus, and it has been suggested that this represents part of Sextus's genuine Aenesidemean inheritance (the word occurs at *PH* 1 222, in Sextus's discussion of whether Plato was a sceptic, in an Aenesidemean context). This may be right: but the word is well suited for the context here on the assumption that the Seventh Mode intends to rule out only a very powerful form of Dogmatism—the word has, ideally for this context, strong Platonic connotations of absolute reality, genuineness.
- 23 See Barnes, 1990d, for a detailed exposition of this line of interpretation.
- 24 See Annas and Barnes, 1985, 186 for details: I am inclined to think '*kai tonde ton tropon*' should be excised as an intruded marginal note added by someone who noticed that, in the earlier taxonomy, the Eighth Mode itself figured in one of these subdivisions.

Chapter X The Modes of Agrippa

- 1 See Barnes, 1990b, 17–19; and compare the Academic *phantasia aperispastos*: Chapter VI, 109–10.
- 2 Compare the Sceptical view with Popper's notion of the corroboration of scientific theories: corroboration is essentially backward-looking, and merely expresses the current evidential status of a theory—it has no quasi-inductive tendency, in Popper's view, to give us any confidence as regards its future behaviour.
- 3 This is noted by Barnes, 1990b, 207–9; 1990c, 106.
- 4 *Adēlon*, non-evident: Barnes cites *PH* 2 116, 145, 180–4; *M* 8 178, 257.

- 5 *Akatalēpta*, ungraspable: *PH* 2 168; 3, 23, 30, 54, 56, 139, 254; at *PH* 3 5, Sextus says that god is ‘inconceivable’ (*anennoētos*) because of dispute.
- 6 For *epochē* as either the rationally compelled, or psychologically necessary outcome of dispute, Barnes instances *PH* 2 37, 39; 3 238 as cases where dispute leads to *epochē*; for undecidable dispute leading to *epochē*, *PH* 1 26; 2 19, 259; 3 108, 182; *M* 7 380. Equipollent dispute leads to *epochē*: *PH* 3 65; if we are parties to a dispute, we must suspend judgement: *PH* 1 59, etc.
- 7 The distinction between sensible and intelligible objects of knowledge is important, and elsewhere Sextus deploys it to good sceptical effect (Chapter XI, 196–8). But here it is at best tangentially relevant, and tends to confuse the argument. See further the Two Modes: 226.
- 8 See Barnes, 1994, *ad loc.*, for a very clear and formally rigorous discussion; see also *Prior Analytics* 2 5–7, 57a18–69a42. For the connection between Aristotle and scepticism, see Long, 1981, which discusses the relationship between the Five Modes and *Post. An.*
- 9 See Hankinson, 1988a, 138–9; Chapter XV, 256.
- 10 The reference is to the ‘more recent sceptics’ of *PH* 1 164.
- 11 This clause is missing in the Greek MSS, but can be supplied from the Latin translation.
- 12 On the Two Modes, see Janáček, 1970.
- 13 The reservations involve the argumentative strategies of *reductio*, where mutual incompatibilities among assumptions entail that at least one of them must be false—but of course it is worth pointing out that it is usually up for grabs *which* of them is false.
- 14 See Barnes, 1994, *ad loc.*, for comment; see also Irwin, 1988, ch. 6; and Taylor, 1990, for a brief, clear account.
- 15 It should be noted that the equals axiom is explicitly stated by Galen to have been rejected by Carneades: *De Optima Doctrina* I 46 Kühn, although Galen does not say what form that rejection took.
- 16 Its structure can be exhibited in different ways. Barnes, 1990b, 214–16, produces two different tree-schemata, the first approximating to Sextus’s presentation of the Two Modes, the second representing a hybrid structure of his own invention based upon the Two Modes with the addition of the Hypothetical Mode from the Five. One may take issue with particular features of the structures—but the basic point, that the scepticism involved is thus systematic, is not in dispute.
- 17 The distinction between (c) and (d) is not to be found directly in Sextus’s text—but it is plausible to think that the Hypothetical Mode could find a home at this juncture.

Chapter XI The Criterion, Signs, and Proof

- 1 For a series of studies on the concept and its development, see Huby and Neal, 1989.
- 2 In general Sextus allows conceptual knowledge: scepticism does not debar us from knowing what words or concepts mean, since it is concerned with their extensions rather than their intensions. At *PH* 2 1–12 (esp. 11–12), Sextus asks the question whether the Sceptic can investigate what the Dogmatists say: and he explicitly allows for the possibility of conceptual knowledge in order to turn a Dogmatic claim that the whole Sceptical critical enterprise is incoherent (see Chapter XVII, 281).
- 3 But cf. *M* 7 349, where Dicaearchus is said to adopt the (Aristotelian) view that the intellect ‘is no more than a certain disposition of the body’; his objection, then, is to soul considered as a separate substance.
- 4 Sextus does not address this possibility: idealism has no counterpart in ancient thought; see

Burnyeat's eponymous 1982b; the nearest to an exception is the passage of Galen's *On the Distinction of Pulses* (VIII781–3) discussed in Chapter VIII, 146–7.

- 5 On this formula, and its puzzling use by Sextus, see Brunschwig, 1990; Chapter XVII, 274–5.
- 6 Sextus rehearses the same distinctions at *M* 8 145–7; however, at *M* 8 317–19, Sextus confusingly reports a different categorization in which things non-evident fall into two classes, those naturally non-evident (which coincide with the cases he elsewhere describes as 'totally non-evident') and those 'generically non-evident', which correspond to the naturally non-evident of other contexts. The category of 'temporarily non-evident' is not mentioned at all (this latter fact can be explained on the grounds that Sextus's subject at *M* 8 317 ff. is proof—and proof is of genuinely non-evident things only). Sextus is no doubt reporting a different standard classification here—and consistent with the overall Sceptical policy of not making an issue over terminology, he does so indiscriminately. It is irritating—but no more. Nothing of importance or interest turns on it.
- 7 See particularly Brunschwig, 1980; and Glidden, 1981. A less critical account of the Sceptical treatment of signs is to be found in Chiesa, 1990. Barnes, 1983, has interesting comments.
- 8 For example Glidden, 1983, takes this fact to indicate that Sextus is insincere in his adherence to CS; but for several reasons this seems false (in particular, it does not allow that the Sceptic may coherently allow CS but not as a species of *inference*): see Chiesa, 1990. On ancient sign-theory in general, see most usefully Sedley, 1982; for its historical development, see Ebert, 1987.
- 9 Philo of Megara, fourth century BC associate of Diodorus Cronus, not to be confused with either Philo of Larissa, the temporizing Academic, or Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish exegete.
- 10 Diodorus Cronus: see Chapter IV, n. 6; Chapter VI, 103.
- 11 For Diodorus's atomist assumptions, see Chapter IV, 72–3.
- 12 The reference is plainly to the Stoics: the truth-conditions for this type of conditional are known as 'Chrysippean'.
- 13 The notion of conflict is notoriously difficult adequately to specify: see the exchange between Nasti, 1981, 1984, and Stopper, 1983. But it seems clear that two propositions *p* and *q* conflict when *p* entails the falsity of *q* and *vice versa*. Incompatibility does not, then, simply boil down to non-compossibility, since *p* and *q* would be non-compossible if *p* is necessarily false ('2+2=5') whatever *q* expresses: indeed *q* may express something that seems *prima facie* at least compatible with *p* ('5/2=2'). See also Barnes, 1990b, 11, n. 12.
- 14 In this case principally if not exclusively the Stoics: although they were by no means the only ancient Dogmatists to invoke sign-inference (see Sedley, 1982a). The Epicureans did so too, and argued for their soundness (cf. Philodemus, *On Signs*); and they too frequently supposed that a sign could be such that, if the signifier were true the signified could not fail to be true. However, they were less concerned with the formal aspects of the business than the Stoics (Epicurus himself had no time for logic at all); and I shall treat of their attitude more fully in the context of the Eight Modes against the Aetiologists in Chapter XII, since they are, apparently, directed in particular against Epicurean science.
- 15 See Barnes, 1980.
- 16 Not that the Peripatetics necessarily thought that it was; the central text is Aristotle's *Post. An.*: and on Barnes' influential interpretation (1969, 1994) the theory of demonstration is not a theory of scientific discovery. This is, however, controversial.
- 17 See the Nasti-Stopper debate in *Phronesis* 1981–4: it turns on whether the Stoics could

recognize the possibility of self-conflicting premisses.

Chapter XII Causes and Explanation

- 1 Barnes, 1983, 164–7, discusses the status of *epimarturēsis* in Aenesidemus’s argument, and worries about the legitimacy of extending the concept beyond its usual bounds of the confirmation of something evident (or at least potentially so) by something else evident—is it an Epicurean extension, or has Aenesidemus pulled a fast one? It does not seem to matter to the run of the argument, for either way the Epicurean is in genuine difficulties. Either he does extend the concept of *epimarturēsis* to the confirmation of intrinsically non-evident objects (and falls foul of the underdetermination problems); or he does not, in which case he has no reason at all for holding the views he does.
- 2 Bury, 1933, 105, translates ‘*ginomenōn*’ as ‘events’; but it is plausible to see Aenesidemus’s target here as being specifically the inadequacy of atomist accounts of regularity in the world, of which the prime case is natural generation. For an acknowledgement—of sorts—of these difficulties, and an unsatisfactory attempt to give them an explanation in atomist terms, see Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 5 416–508, 772–924.
- 3 The definition is probably Stoic in origin; but cf. Barnes, 1983, 170: ‘there is nothing proprietorially Stoic about that: “*dia*” is the ordinary Greek preposition for expressing causality’; indeed one might go further and say that it was the ordinary Greek preposition for any explanatory relation. Hence the initial suggestion of agency needs to be moderated. On causal vocabulary in general, see Frede, 1980.
- 4 For a commonsensical account of this fact (although no theory of it), see Taylor, 1975.
- 5 See Hankinson, 1987a, for further details of the relations between these concepts.
- 6 For a full discussion of all these passages, see Hankinson, 1998, *ad loc.*
- 7 On this tendency, see Mackie, 1974, 34ff.; and also Mackie, 1975.

Chapter XIII Scepticism in the Medical Schools

- 1 The extent of Herophilus’s scepticism is much disputed: for a sceptical Herophilus, see Kudlien, 1964; against, see von Staden, 1989, 115–24; and Hankinson, 1990a.
- 2 The *Iatrica Menonia* is an anonymous text preserved in Papyrus Londinensis 137; it is edited by Hermann Diels as *Supplementum Aristotelicum* III.1.
- 3 The sense of this lapidary fragment is disputed: see von Staden, 1989, and Hankinson, 1990a. Von Staden (125) translates ‘let the appearances be described first even if they are not primary’: but that reading requires us to take the two occurrences of the word ‘*prōta*’ in completely distinct senses, even though there is no indication to that effect.
- 4 For further details on these and other doctor-sceptics, see Barnes, 1983, 189–90, n. 14.
- 5 That development is still incompletely understood, and requires further work—but see e.g. Edelstein, 1967, 195–203; Frede, 1987b, 1988; Matthen, 1988; Hankinson, 1987b.
- 6 I follow Frede, 1985, in keying references to the much superior edition of Helmreich, 1893.
- 7 Which survives only in the fourteenth-century Latin version of Nicholas of Reggio (see Chapter I, n. 19); it is edited and given a re-translation into Greek in Deichgräber, 1930, where it appears in its entirety as Fr. 10b.
- 8 Which also exists only in translation, this time Arabic (Chapter I, n. 19).
- 9 On the Empiricists’ ‘memorism’, see Frede, 1990.

- 10 *Med. Exp.* takes the form of a Dogmatist attack upon, and an Empiricist defence of, Empirical medicine. Galen's Dogmatist reproduces in large part the anti-Empiricist views of Asclepiades of Bithynia; the Empiricist counterblast derives from Menodotus: see further below (for Menodotus's hostility to Asclepiades, see also Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* II 52). On Asclepiades, see Rawson, 1982, and 1985, 171–7; Vallance, 1990; John Vallance is preparing a new, complete edition of the fragments, which will greatly aid Asclepiadean studies.
- 11 The sorites and its history in sceptical argument is discussed by Barnes, 1982a.
- 12 'Indication' is the medical counterpart of IS inference; cf. Galen, *On the Therapeutic Method* X 242–9 Kühn.
- 13 Reading 'experientia', as suggested by Deichgräber, for Nicholas's 'natura'.
- 14 On the application of this meta-principle of transitional inference, see Hankinson, 1987b.
- 15 See further Frede, 1990, 231–4.
- 16 Here and in what follows I am much indebted to Frede, 1990.
- 17 For the Empiricists' rejection of logic, see also *Outline* 11, Fr. 10b 82 Dr; *On Medical Experience* 7, 95 W.
- 18 Note in this context the Empiricists' rejection of anatomy: a creature vivisected is clearly not in a normal condition, yet we need to know how they function under normal conditions. And we can never adjust for this non-naturalness of state, since we cannot know, as we cannot see, what the normal functioning creature looks like (Celsus, *On Medicine* Pr. 40–4; cf. 74; cf. Galen, *On Anatomical Procedures* II 287–91 Kühn).
- 19 See Edelstein, 1967, 173 ff.; Frede, 1980; Lloyd, 1983, part III.
- 20 For the relations between Themison and Thessalus, and early Methodism in general, see Edelstein, 1967, 173–9.
- 21 It must be emphasized, however, that Methodism evolved just like all the other schools—and our principal surviving exponent of the school, Soranus of Ephesus (fl. c. 125 AD), clearly allows himself far freer theoretical rein than would be suggested either by Sextus, or indeed by Galen's account of Methodism: on this, see Lloyd, 1983, part III.
- 22 For a full discussion, see Hankinson, 1987b, and Hankinson, 1998, *ad loc.* The 'sophism' is Erasistratus's argument against non-sufficient causes (Chapter XII, 222).
- 23 For an elaboration of this account, see Hankinson, 1987b.
- 24 Matthen, 1988, explores the view that the basic distinction between Empiricist and Dogmatist is ontological.

Chapter XIV Sceptical Physics and Metaphysics

- 1 For Galen's teleological theology, see Hankinson, 1988d, 1989.
- 2 Sextus's treatment does not precisely follow these divisions: and he adds two further heads: 'from the absurd consequences of denying the gods' existence [*M* 9 123–6]...and by refuting the opposing arguments [*M* 9 36]' (*M* 9 60).
- 3 On Zeno's syllogisms in general see illuminatingly Schofield, 1983.
- 4 Aristarchus, the famous Alexandrian grammarian and literary critic, was a contemporary of Carneades, a fact which suggests that, even if Sextus's attribution of the original counter-example to Alexinus is accurate, these arguments were taken up and deployed by Carneades with renewed gusto. Carneades' hand is often thought, plausibly, to lurk behind much of Sextus and Cicero's anti-theological argument, even where he is not specifically mentioned (as he sometimes is: *ND* 3 29–34, 43–52) by name. 'Grammatical' in this context means

‘possessed of the theoretical art of grammar’, i.e. a grammarian in the strict sense (see further Chapter XV, 254); the imputation is not that Plato could not write grammatical Greek.

- 5 In Tony Long’s apt phrase: Long, 1990, 281; I am much indebted to Long’s excellent treatment of the subject.
- 6 Such moves from concept to existence are not the only way to ‘prove’ the divine existence—one might adopt the Rationalist line of Plato (in a slightly different context: *Phd.* 74a–75c) and Descartes (*Meditation* 3) that our conceiving of certain objects was only to be explained on the basis of the fact that they actually existed.
- 7 Since ‘possibly *p*’ is taken to entail ‘at some time *p*’. For this, originally Aristotelian, modal thesis, see *De Caelo* 1 12; cf. Hintikka, 1957; Waterlow, 1982; for the Stoics’ account of the modalities, see Frede, 1974; Mignucci, 1978.
- 8 See Mackie, 1983, for a lucid criticism of Plantinga’s argument.
- 9 Cf. Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions* 1075a–c: he attacks the Stoics for *ignoring* the universal belief that the gods are immortal:

Chrysippus and Cleanthes...have held that none of all these many is indestructible or everlasting except Zeus alone, in whom they consume all the rest.... They...state expressly that all the other gods have come into being and will be destroyed by fire.

Cf. Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1052a.

- 10 See Philo, *On the Eternity of the World* 76–7 Long, 1990, 286–7, holds that ‘in all probability, it was the dialectic of Carneades that prompted later Stoics to diverge from Chrysippus on this point’ (cf. *Acad.* 2 119).
- 11 See Long, 1990, n. 5, for details: Sextus mentions Carneades by name at *M* 9 140; his first four arguments, which turn on inferring God’s perishability from his sentience, are paralleled by *ND* 3 29, 32–4, while arguments 6 and 18 take off from the typically sceptical disjunctive premiss ‘if anything is divine, then either it is a body or it is incorporeal’: cf. *ND* 3 29, 34; all of the arguments of *ND* 29–34 are explicitly attributed to Carneades; arguments 7–15 in Sextus, which all exploit aspects of the Stoic account of virtue and vice, are not explicitly fathered on Carneades: but he seems the likely original behind them none the less.
- 12 On the ancient sorites, see Barnes, 1982a; on Carneades’ theological sorites, see Burnyeat, 1982c.
- 13 On geometry and scepticism in general, and the distinction between mathematical and physical conceptions of it, see Mueller, 1982.
- 14 These arguments have their origin in Aristotle’s criticisms of the Platonic account of mathematics and geometry in *Metaph.* 13.
- 15 The precise nature of Aristotle’s ‘abstraction’ is a matter of scholarly dispute: see Mueller, 1970; Lear, 1987, 231–47.
- 16 As some of the later ancients were to do, anticipating some modern accounts: see Sorabji, 1988, chs 1–3.
- 17 See Burnyeat, 1984, for a discussion of the concepts of place at work here.
- 18 Sedley, 1982c, usefully distinguishes between internal and external conceptions of vacuum.
- 19 Stoics: Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions* 1077d, 1083c–d; Locke: *Essay* 2 27 1.
- 20 Burnyeat, 1984, lucidly reviews the arguments and puts them in their sceptical place; he also points to the Aristotelian ancestry of the notion (if not the terminology) of the distinction between place broadly and narrowly conceived: 234–8.
- 21 The regress was already canvassed by Zeno: 29 A 24 DK; cf. Barnes, 1979 1, 256–8.
- 22 The argument, and various responses to it, are analysed in Konstan, 1988.

- 23 See Barnes, 1988a, 274–7. The trilemma derives ultimately from Plato’s *Parmenides* (145c–d); and Aristotle held that (i) was in a sense true (I am identical with my rational soul, but my rational soul is a part of me: *NE* 10, 1177b34 ff.). Similarly, one might consider, in the case of diachronic identity, that only a certain subset of my bodily parts (my vital parts, if you like) were necessary for my continued existence, and hence were really me—which might seem to license a version of (ii).
- 24 See Barnes, 1988a, 277–80, for an expansion of the considerations rehearsed here.

Chapter XV The Liberal Arts

- 1 Hadot, 1984, argues that the *enkuklia mathēmata* were not thus canonized until Porphyry’s time, at the end of the third century AD (and consequently, most would think, later than Sextus). Hadot thus tries to explain away *M* 1 7, not altogether convincingly: see Barnes, 1988b, 56, n. 8.
- 2 So at least Barnes, 1988b, 56–7, plausibly; but Desbordes, 1990, 173–4, rightly notes that the general tone of the attack on logic elsewhere differs from that of *M* 1–6, with the exception of a ‘curious chapter’ of *PH* 2 (229–59) on sophisms, which she speculates may derive from the same sources as those of *M* 1–6.
- 3 See especially Janáček, 1948, 1972; see also Barnes, 1986a, 407–12.
- 4 On the relations between Greek scepticism and Epicureanism, see usefully Gigante, 1981a, the introduction to which (reprinted as Gigante, 1981b) provides a useful sketch of varying scholarly opinions on the question. See also Gigante, 1990.
- 5 The view of Dumont, 1972.
- 6 Frede, 1979, 1983; see also Burnyeat, 1980c, 1984; Barnes, 1982b. This issue is dealt with in Chapter XVII.
- 7 Barnes, 1988b, 61–2, is dubious about the prospects for such a reconciliation of the arguments of *M* 1–6 with the official Pyrrhonist position of *PH* 1 23–4:

I think a coherent account of the Pyrrhonian attitude can be elaborated. But I doubt if the same line of thought will make sense of what Sextus himself says in *M* 1–6. The text makes no distinction between formal and informal *didaskalia*. The arguments against *didaskalia* seem, most of them, to apply indifferently to either sort of teaching.... 1 39 effectively conflates formal and informal *didaskalia*. And in any event, even if we may characterise Pyrrhonists as informal teachers and learners, the Pyrrhonists cannot *themselves* do so.

The last sentence raises a very important issue, namely that of the coherence of the Sceptical attitude viewed from the inside (I treat of it in detail in Chapters XVII and XVIII). But I do not think it necessarily matters here—the Pyrrhonists accept the ‘instruction of the arts’ in a non-dogmatic way, i.e. they do not commit themselves to any beliefs, either regarding the substance of the arts or their effectiveness. They simply allow their lives partially to be organized by them.

- 8 See usefully Hutchinson, 1988, on these issues.
- 9 As Desbordes, 1990, 168, remarks: ‘même s’il emprunte beaucoup, Sextus domine ses matériaux, et il est exclu qu’il reproduise servilement côté à côté des sources sceptiques et non sceptiques sans en percevoir la différence. Ici comme ailleurs il fait fleche de tout bois,

et des matériaux d'origine quelconque sont purement et simplement mis au service de la méthode sceptique de l'équilibrage'.

- 10 For a full, sympathetic account, see Mueller, 1982.
- 11 The concessive structure of the arguments in *M* 1–6 is perhaps slightly different from that which is common elsewhere in Sextus—but I do not see that it is as radically different as Barnes (1988b, 75–6) makes out.
- 12 Dodds, 1951, documents the rise of divination in the ancient world; see also Hankinson, 1988a.
- 13 For this reason, Chrysippus reformulated astrological conditionals ('if you are born at the rising of the Dog-star, you won't die at sea') as negated conjunctions ('you cannot both be born at the rising of the Dog-star and die at sea'): Cicero, *On Fate* 11–16. The latter do not, for the Stoics, connote causal connections. Cf. Chapter VI, 103ff.
- 14 See Hankinson, 1988a, especially pp. 153–7.
- 15 Mau prints *hoti hē tēs kardias peripsuxis esti thanatos*, i.e. 'that chilling of the heart is death', a reading retained by lesser MSS, which removes the reference to causes—but the change is dubious, and in any case not warranted; the Empirical doctors here referred to were quite happy to speak (non-theoretically) of causes: Chapter XIII, 235–6.
- 16 The Great Year was the time supposedly taken from a given moment for the heavens to return precisely to their relative positions at that moment.

Chapter XVI Sceptical Ethics

- 1 For a general treatment of the relations between Scepticism and relativism, see Barnes, 1990d. For a fuller version of this chapter, see Hankinson, 1994.
- 2 In Sextus's ordering: it is fifth in Diogenes, and eighth in Philo's truncated list; according to Diogenes (9 87), it was ninth in Favorinus's order; Annas and Barnes, 1985, 27–9.
- 3 I shall also make use of the more compressed reports in Diogenes (*DL* 9 87–8), and Philo (*Ebr.* 193–202), as well as another short passage of Diogenes, *DL* 9 101.
- 4 This objection is never formulated as such in Sextus: but something like it clearly underlies his remarks at *PH* 3 171–5 (part of which is quoted as text 326 below), and the parallel *M* 11 35–9.
- 5 Annas and Barnes, 1985, 161–3, rightly stress the differences in Philo's treatment of the ethical mode from the versions offered by Sextus and Diogenes; in particular, Philo urges that differences in cultural background and conditioning provide the best explanation for divergences in beliefs about value. This is a limited application of a particular type of sceptical argument which has, as Annas and Barnes note, been welcomed by ethical sceptics of all ages, e.g. Mackie: 1977, 36 ff.
- 6 Cf. *M* 1 147, where fire and its alleged universal heating property is contrasted with the case of grammatical gender, which is not (on this account) natural in the same way (cf. *ibid.* 142–3, 148 ff.); and *M* 8 189, from the discussion of signs.
- 7 This is precisely the manoeuvre that Galen makes in the case of Erasistratus's argument against causes: cf. Chapter XII, 222–3.
- 8 It should be pointed out that the Dogmatists are not even forced to avail themselves of (6*), since they might hold that an *apparent* failure of (6) constituted grounds for redefining the extension of the natural kind. Again such moves can be, but need not be, *ad hoc*.
- 9 For a discussion of the therapeutic function of Sceptical argument, see Barnes, 1988b; Nussbaum, 1991.

Chapter XVII The Sceptical Attitude

- 1 The translations are both possible renderings of the Greek, which contains the notoriously ambiguous word '*logos*', a word perhaps singlehandedly responsible for more bad philosophy than any other single lexical item. They are not of course equivalent—but I think that in this context at least they come to the same thing: for what will be a 'matter of reason', i.e. will require inference of a non-commemorative sort, just is anything to do with the definitions, and hence the real natures of things.
- 2 The appropriate translation would then be something like 'we doubt in so far as argument is concerned whether...etc.'
- 3 For this metaphorical sense of being puffed up (the Greek word is *phusioō*), compare the early Pyrrhonist's use of *tuphos*: see Chapter IV, n. 3; and Decleva Caizzi, 1980.
- 4 Cf. Dummett, 1979, a paper also referred to (for rather different reasons) by Annas and Barnes, 1985, 93, 96.
- 5 Frede prefers to speak in terms of a second-order attitude the Sceptic has *to* his beliefs, rather than a difference in the content of the beliefs: 'what fundamentally distinguishes the skeptic from other people is not the beliefs he has, but his attitude towards them' (1979, 199: see further below, 286ff.). But this is not substantially different from my distinction in terms of scope.
- 6 For those disposed to doubt the coherence of that last remark, it is worth noting that similar manoeuvres have been made in scientific methodology: the hard-nosed Imre Lakatos counselled us to *accept* induction as a procedure without *believing* it (Lakatos, 1975).
- 7 On impulse in general and its role in Stoic action theory, see the texts collected in LS 57.
- 8 For an admirably clear and detailed exposition of the ramifications of the Stoic theory, see Inwood, 1985.
- 9 On the scope of *phainomena*, see classically Owen, 1961. Burnyeat, 1980c, 126–7 (cf. 131), is at pains to stress the point that appearances can include purely mental phenomena, *contra* Stough, 1969, who is inclined to interpret the Sceptical criterion of 'following the appearances' in a narrowly perceptual manner. Stough, 1984, 141, n. 6, takes issue with this, pointing out that the only text Burnyeat cites (*M* 7 390) occurs in the course of a discussion of Protagoras, and need not be taken *in propria persona*. But Burnyeat adduced that text only *exempli gratia*—and our text (and others) tells decisively against the narrow reading of appearance.
- 10 Most obviously in the case of the Ten Modes: we are 'compelled' (*anankozometha*, *anankē*) to suspend judgement in the case of the First, Sixth and Tenth Modes (*PH* 1 78, 128, 163); the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Modes 'drive' (*eisagein*, *sunagein*) us to *epochē* (89, 99, 117, 123); the Seventh Mode 'brings us round' (*periagoi*) to *epochē* (134); only the Eighth and Ninth Modes suggest inferential manoeuvres.
- 11 Burnyeat's view, succinctly stated, is that the Cartesian revolution involved three innovations: (1) 'that truth can be obtained without going outside subjective experience'; (2) that one can know one's own subjective states; and (3) 'that one's own body became part of the external world' (1982b, 32). (1) is enlarged upon by McDowell, 1986. For a rebuttal of (1) and (2), see Everson, 1991a. Groarke, 1990, 131, further attacks thesis (3); but he fails to see that the texts upon which he bases his claim are dialectical in nature.

Chapter XVIII The Sceptic Way of Life

- 1 Nor is it clear that Sextus either does, or needs to, describe the yielding of the apprentice Sceptic to sceptical therapy as itself being voluntary. Herein lies the nub of my disagreement with the interpretation of Burnyeat, 1980c.
- 2 Stough, 1984, 147–8, expresses something similar to this view.
- 3 The word *prolēpsis* is carefully chosen by Sextus: it is used by the Dogmatists to refer to general concepts which are formed naturally and not as the result of instruction. Cf. *PH* 2 246:

it is I think sufficient to conduct one's life empirically and undogmatically and in accordance with the common observances and preconceptions, suspending judgement about those things said as a result of dogmatic subtlety and furthest removed from ordinary usage.

On the term, see Stough, 1984, 147, and n. 18.

- 4 I am grateful to Mark Gifford for suggesting this parallel.
- 5 It is worth underlining the Sceptical point behind calling the slogans merely *phōnai*, or utterances: the Stoics standardly distinguished between articulate and inarticulate *phōnai*, the latter being common to all animals with only humans having the power of the former. It is precisely of a piece with the nature of the Sceptical *apangelia* to insist that his expressions strictly speaking say nothing—they are mere utterances.
- 6 The drug metaphor is not, however, proprietary to Sextus: cf. Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 14 18 21. The whole paragraph is instructive, since Aristocles also holds that Sceptical self-refutation is not merely the benign thing the Sceptics themselves take it to be, but a shattering blow at the coherence of their whole programme: 'this at any rate is silly on all counts: when they say that, just as purgative drugs expel, along with the residues, themselves too, so similarly the argument that requires everything to be non-evident destroys, along with other things, itself too. For if it refutes itself, then those who employ it would be talking nonsense. Better that they keep quiet and not open their mouths.' Aristocles further complains that the analogy is not a strict one, since while the purgatives really are expelled, in the case of Sceptical argument, it 'needs to subsist in the soul, staying constant, and constantly being believed; for this alone is what would be making them non-assenters' (ibid. 22). A subtle defence of the Pyrrhonists' consistency in cheerfully accepting apparent self-refutation is given by McPherran, 1987; McPherran concentrates particularly on the 'Proof against Proof'.

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Abbreviations

Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie=AGP

Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt=ANRW

Canadian Journal of Philosophy=CJP

Classical Quarterly=CQ

Journal of Philosophy=JP

Philosophical Review=PR

Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy=OSAP

Phronesis=Phron.

Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy=BACAP

Proceedings of the British Academy=PBA

Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society=PCPS

Rheinisches Museum=RM

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