The Influence of Pyrrho of Elis

and the

Pyrrhonian Praxis of Aporetic Language

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<u>Abstract</u>

This thesis aims to develop a specific understanding of Pyrrhonian scepticism that follows an analysis of ancient scepticism as it began to form in the teachings of Pyrrho of Elis, moved into the Academy, and reached its greatest clarity in Sextus Empiricus. The focus of the thesis is to expose an understanding of Pyrrhonism as offering an approach to finding a less troubled life by way of habitual alteration of everyday language.

The discussion of Pyrrho centers on several key passages that indicate a specific attitude towards the human condition, towards the way beliefs are generated, and towards the way language can be utilized to refine the generation of beliefs. Further, comparisons are made between Pyrrho and Plato regarding *aporia* and how central uncertainty and wisdom through awareness of ignorance were to both of these thinkers.

Turning to the Academic tradition, the thesis strives to underscore the unargumentative, ascetic aspect of Pyrrhonian scepticism by showing the fundamental differences between the ascetic, language oriented Pyrrhonians, and the eristic, argumentative Academics. Looking at Arcesilaus and then Carneades as examples of the Academic tradition, it is shown how the focus on finding the untroubled life as well as the language praxis found in Pyrrho's teaching are diminished and supplanted by dialectical argument.

The final chapter briefly examines the revival of Pyrrhonism by Aenesidemus, showing that he appeared to be aware of the language practice that Pyrrho espoused, as well as the tangent that Academic scepticism took from Pyrrho's original intentions for living a less troubled life. A detailed discussion of Sextus Empiricus is contained in the third chapter, which revolves around a treatment of the five *tropes* of Agrippa, includes an explanation of several concepts key to understanding Sextus and an elucidation of the sceptical utterances central to the linguistic practice that has once again been reinstated. Ultimately Pyrrhonism is found to be a philosophy of revealed experience, such that she who wishes to live a more tranquil life needs to practice what Pyrrhonism teaches in order to experience its effects, beginning with *aporia* and *epoche*, and ending fortuitously in *ataraxia*.

Introduction and Overview

This thesis develops a specific understanding of Pyrrhonian scepticism that follows an analysis of ancient scepticism as it began to take form in the teachings of Pyrrho of Elis, moved into the Academy, and reached its greatest clarity in Sextus Empiricus. The specific understanding aimed for considers Pyrrhonism as being attentive to the habitual use of everyday language by an individual, and how beliefs and convictions of individuals become implicitly intertwined with the language used to express them. This is problematic in the eyes of the ancient sceptics and Pyrrhonists in particular, as they do not find convictions or beliefs to be found or justified easily. Further, though phrased in a way lacking Pyrrhonian finesse, Pyrrhonists do not think (*feel* is perhaps a better word, for reasons that will become clear) that holding strong beliefs and convictions allow one to be unperturbed by troubles or to live a happy life – goals handed down from the Cynics before them. Beliefs tend to do the opposite: create divisions among opinions and people alike, fabricating notions of 'us' and 'them'. What is more, beliefs tend to be assumed to be grounded in unimpeachable fact, especially old ones, engrained from childhood or from generations past. The Pyrrhonian worry, in an allegorical nutshell, is that a childhood belief can be the seed of an adult prejudice. A single conviction combines with a new one in the future, joining with yet another, creating belief - a new 'us' and 'them', a new line in the sand - from potentially nothing, which is yet still assumed to be unimpeachable. The Pyrrhonian answer to this, and the specific understanding that is the aim of this thesis, is to adopt a discrete use of language which avoids the production and dissemination of beliefs and convictions, thereby giving

way to the revelatory and innately ascetic Pyrrhonian path to the happy life. Discrete language praxis consists of making all of one's statements and locutions in accord with an aporetic attitude; that is, to speak with no inclination to claim what one says is known. The specific mode of aporetic language changes slightly with the development of scepticism over time, but can generally be understood as the shunning of making absolute claims about reality, the true nature of things, or one's ability to know these things, in everyday speech.

There is a connection between this approach to using language and some 20th century thinkers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorl. These philosophers and linguists developed a theory that an individual's language determines that individual's thought. This theory, called linguistic determinism, is deeply connected to this thesis in that aporetic language can be seen to be a forerunner of, or even dependent upon, linguistic determinism. The full scope of the connections between aporetic language and linguistic determinism is not clear given that the ancient sceptics did not cash out their theory in these contemporary terms. It is quite clear, nevertheless, that aporetic linguistic practice shows an interest on the part of the sceptics in language and how our use of language can influence and obscure our beliefs and what we believe we know.

However, the focus of this thesis is more upon how the Sceptical school of thought developed between the third century BCE and the third century CE, and how contemporaneous schools of thought influenced the sceptics and vice versa. The investigation into how connected the Sceptical way is to linguistic determinism would be a fruitful discussion, and I feel that a good starting point would be to recognize that the

relation between language and world is a reciprocal and continual one in that both one's language and one's world are constantly changing and evolving, sometimes together, sometimes not. Short of this brief foray, linguistic determinism is set aside.

It is paramount to note that the Pyrrhonists do not attack those who hold such convictions, nor do the Pyrrhonists argue with those who try to justify beliefs. Rather, Pyrrhonists view the problems created by holding beliefs and convictions as essentially personal problems; the Pyrrhonist is more concerned with her own affiliation with her own beliefs. This is to say, Pyrrhonism is a deeply personal approach to living happily and is not antagonistic or intended for dialectics. This is accomplished through the shedding of beliefs via the habituation of the previously mentioned use of language, aimed at oneself and not at an interlocutor. If indeed this form of language use is ever 'directed at' or used upon another, it is almost certainly carried out in a pedagogical way meant to teach the uninformed of the Pyrrhonian way.

The discussion of Pyrrho contextualizes the entire thesis and centers on several key passages that indicate a specific attitude towards the human condition, towards the way beliefs are generated, and towards the way language can be utilized to refine the generation of beliefs. The germ of the specific understanding of Pyrrhonian scepticism that will be drawn out is an attitude generated through aporetic language practice. Pyrrho's ascetic, aporetic disposition is developed and maintained within language so as to address language use itself, and more importantly, to address the troubling effects that language has upon our conscious and unconscious ontological beliefs and opinions. He does this largely through conscious effort, to speak of things as being 'no more' this than that, having the attitude of this phrase underlie most every statement. To be clear, the

teaching of Pyrrho offers a deeply habituated way of speaking, rooted in a recognition of the limits of human experience, to reduce the number and impact of troubling beliefs about the true nature of things. Exposed through select passages on Pyrrho's teaching as well as anecdotal records of his life, the linguistic praxis of maintaining *aporia*[1] for the benefit of reducing deceptive beliefs is the foremost concern of the present effort.

The first chapter draws comparisons between Pyrrho and several Platonic dialogues in which *aporia* is shown to be a state of mind essential to beginning any inquiry. For example, in the *Meno*, Socrates espouses utter uncertainty on his part as to whether virtue can be taught, and brings Meno to experience *aporia* himself before trying to help him birth his own ideas. In *Theaetetus* Socrates casts several theories of knowledge into uncertainty, and by never offering a clear argument for what knowledge truly is he ends the entire dialogue in *aporia*.

Discussion of the soul is also found to be an area of comparison between Pyrrho and Plato, and allows for a quick exposition of how one such as Pyrrho, who 'determines nothing,' can seem to speak openly about the soul and yet not be inconsistent with his avoidance of dogmatism. Following Democritus, Pyrrho suggests that much of human experience and truth is based on custom and conventions. To speak about something such as the soul, Pyrrho is merely following what is customarily understood, so as to make sense to those with whom he speaks; he follows customs and appearances, but withholds from assenting to them being true as they appear. Accordingly, the thesis that Pyrrho offers an aporetic attitude maintained in language is reinforced, as things such as the soul are 'no more' real than not real, and are merely spoken of as conventions of language.

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[1] See glossary entry on *aporia.*

Furthermore, the way in which Pyrrho teaches is shown to be a pedagogy of revealed experience, as Pyrrho teaches by living and practicing what he preaches. He does not argue for it, nor does his philosophy revolve around argumentation. All evidence of his position is either from him explaining how he feels that one can live a happier life, or anecdotal examples of things he did or stated. Little is given by way of direct argument. Based upon this approach to teaching, a 'pedagogy of the sage' or teaching through revealed experience, is developed to elucidate further Pyrrho's *modus operandi*.

The second chapter focuses on the development of scepticism as it moved into Plato's Academy under the headship of Arcesilaus. Through him, and furthered later by Carneades, the ascetic, the aporetic disposition central to Pyrrho's approach to the human condition, as well as Pyrrho's pedagogy, are exchanged for a desire to argue. The Academic sceptics are not concerned with finding the good life, maintaining the pedagogy to do so, or with aporetic language use, nearly as much as they wish to engage in argumentation. This is made clear by the misappropriation of Pyrrho's 'no more' locution into an eristic[2] weapon, such that it is no longer part of a linguistic practice for maintaining *aporia,* but the arrowhead of dialectical arguments aimed at throwing down interlocutors. Not only is the end of Pyrrho's scepticism substituted for another, but the very path he walks is disregarded for another.

In addition, Arcesilaus and Carneades further distance themselves from Pyrrho's linguistic praxis by offering criteria for living a good life (by the reasonable and by the plausible, respectively) which are only offered when their suspension of judgement is charged with inaction. That is, they offer a way of living only when charged with having

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[2] See glossary entry on eristic.

to do so, and even then, it is generally understood that they offer such criteria dialectically and do not appear to practice it. This chapter discusses many similarities between the Academics and Pyrrhonians, with particular attention given to the Academic's assault on Stoic *kataleptic* impressions, but the eristic focus of the Academics and the apparent disappearance of the concern for reducing troubling beliefs in the end serve as a contrast against which to highlight the features of Pyrrhonism itself.

The third chapter begins with Aenesidemus' revival of Pyrrhonism and criticism of the Academic tradition. Aenesidemus revives the aporetic linguistic praxis that originated with Pyrrho and died with the Academics. He brings the desire for finding a happier life as well as the language practice back into focus and adds his own relativizing tincture to the locutions available to the sceptic. Aenesidemus does this by compiling a list of *tropes*[3] or 'ways' to suspend judgement that are generally understood as arguments. They are not simply arguments, as they are literally *ways* of speaking to maintain *aporia* and suspended judgement. If the *tropes* were simply arguments, then Aenesidemus' criticism of the Academics and self proclaimed revival of Pyrrho's work would be hollow. He is reviving Pyrrho's aporetic practice and pedagogy, and is criticizing the Academics for their focus on argumentation.

The *tropes* of Aenesidemus are discussed in brief and their merit as both arguments and locutions like Pyrrho's 'no more' locution are weighed. Ultimately Aenesidemus reinvigorated the language practice of Pyrrho, which aimed at reducing the number of troubling beliefs that an individual creates for himself or herself regarding the true nature of things.

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[3] See glossary entry on *trope.*

The final part of the third chapter is dedicated to understanding the position of Sextus Empiricus, widely regarded as one of the last bastions of ancient scepticism. The discussion of Sextus focuses on the five *tropes* of Agrippa, and provides a detailed exposition of several key concepts, including *phantasiai*[4], apprehension, *epoche*[5], and *ataraxia*[6]. A similar treatment of the *tropes* is given here as was given in the previous chapter in that the use of them as locutions or utterances is underscored by the linguistic praxis that Sextus is found to take quite seriously. Indeed, his writing itself inculcates the aporetic disposition in language that Pyrrhonism recommends, as Sextus rarely makes determinations about anything beyond *phantasiai*.

Sextus strives to expose the experience of *aporia* and *epoche*, which result in *ataraxia,* by reducing the number and impact of beliefs about non-evident things. Much like Pyrrho, he allows for customs and appearances to guide the sceptic through life, but he suspends judgement as to whether appearances lead to knowledge in the absolute sense. The *tropes* are intended to do this, not so much as arguments but as *ways to speak* that suspend judgement and reveal the experience of uncertainty, similar to what Socrates aimed to accomplish in the aporetic dialogues.

By maintaining the experience of *aporia* and the suspension of judgement via language practice, the Pyrrhonians offer a philosophy that is distinct in that it finds the uncertainty of human experience to be a source of tranquility. They do not say that they are utterly devoid of troubles, nor do they in fact outright claim that Pyrrhonism does in fact reduce troubles. They offer a practice or quietude that appears to reveal a happy and less stressful way of life that can only be disclosed, if at all, through actual practice of

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[4] See glossary entry on *phantasiai.*
[5] See glossary entry on *epoche.*
[6] See glossary entry on *ataraxia.*

aporetic language. To speak no longer as if you know is the core of Pyrrhonian language

praxis, and the pleasant result of this is a reduction of dogmatic beliefs which create more

strife than they create happiness.

Chapter One

1. Pyrrho's Aporetic Linguistic Praxis

Scepticism has changed a great deal since its genesis in Western philosophy.

Indeed the contemporary, everyday use of 'being sceptical' as doubting or dis-believing

certain things, while reflecting on some connection to the tradition of philosophical

scepticism, grasps only a very narrow view of how philosophers have been 'sceptical'

throughout the ages. Scepticism has even become synonymous with being cynical or

vitriolic, and this is a travesty that should be corrected if a better understanding of what

scepticism has to offer is to be achieved. Scepticism originated as a philosophy

concerned with the individual living a good or happy life. It developed out of the sea

change as the Hellenistic period focused more on the happiness of the individual in the

world rather than on grand political systems of the previous era. It is not, as is so often

misconstrued, a philosophy troubling over determining absolute truth from absolute

falsehood, or making grand metaphysical claims or refutations about reality. Early

scepticism was closer to a mix of asceticism, quietism, and phenomenology, and though

some branches of scepticism later turned away from these, I would argue that this here-

and-now focus was Pyrrho of Elis' (3rd – 2nd century BCE) – widely regarded now as the

earliest bona fide sceptic – entire goal. Later sceptics who revived his philosophical aims

carried Pyrrho's goal forward. Pyrrho did not care as much for argumentation as many of

the schools of his era did, and he appeared genuinely concerned with exploring how one could live a happy life. The here-and-now focus of Pyrrho is evident in the way language-use is central to his aporetic way of life. I argue that his sceptical, aporetic disposition is made and maintained within language to address language use itself, and more importantly, to address the troubling effects that language has upon our conscious and unconscious ontological beliefs and opinions.

After this outline of Pyrrho, comparisons and contrasts are drawn between him, Socrates, and Plato, specifically about the varying uses of *aporia*. Furthermore, I shed light on the soul as a common ground that Pyrrho shared with his philosophical contemporaries, showcasing not only the common use and presence of the soul in Hellenistic thought, but also that Pyrrho's use is a prime example of his practice of following appearances, customs, and conventions so as to make sense despite total *aporia*. All of this is in effort to highlight my understanding of Pyrrho's scepticism: a phenomenological, almost post-structuralist linguistic approach to maintaining an open, undogmatic, unbiased, and ultimately unperturbed disposition towards the human condition.

To begin however, a more accurate description of ancient scepticism is needed. Separating the origins of scepticism from the general modern understanding of it might be easier if there were a definitive 'first sceptic' in the pantheon of philosophers, but when sceptical thought first began is hardly agreed upon as many ancient philosophers held skeptical dispositions, including Plato, Aristotle, and many before them. These include, though not exhaustively: Parmenides, who claimed that reality is not entirely as

it appears to us, nor as we think about it[7]; Democritus, who thought that reality was atoms moving in void and all else is just a matter of belief and convention[8]; and Metrodorus of Chius, who understood that "none of us knows anything, not even this whether we know or do not know."[9] Perhaps the most venerated grandfather of scepticism is Pyrrho of Elis, though it seems, as will be discussed, that philosophers before him such as those named above, largely influenced his philosophy of doubt, particularly Democritus and his statement regarding convention and custom developing 'truth'.

While many of these ancient precursors to Pyrrho contained in their thought many seeds of what would become scepticism, we might turn to the origin of the word 'sceptic' to clarify how the ancient sceptics carried forth their philosophical stance. The Greek '*skepsis*' from which 'sceptic' is derived implies an investigation or inquiry into something.[10] The inquiry of the sceptics might be into any given thing – metaphysical or epistemological truths – but it is most certainly conducted in the realm of language, language being the medium for making propositions and claims about knowledge and justifying beliefs. A sceptic to the ancient Greeks was someone apt to inquire into things and not quickly settle on a given conclusion.[11] A doctor and self-proclaimed sceptic by the name Sextus Empiricus, who wrote in approximately the late second to early third century CE, is the main source regarding the Pyrrhonian variety of scepticism. He provides an excellent comparison of what is his own later skepticism with other

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[7] Parmenides, H. Diels, *Die Fragment der Vorsokratiker*, ed. W. Kranz, 6th edition, (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1951). See also Michael Frede, *Chapter Eight: The Sceptics* in *Routledge History of Philosophy, vol II, From Aristotle to Augustine,* edited by David Furley, (London: Routledge, 1999), 257.
[8] Frede, 257. Quoting Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione,* 325a 23 ff.
[9] Frede, 257 quoting *PE* XIV, 19, 9, *DK* B1. Note: Diogenes (9.71-72) outlines several sceptical thinkers including Homer, Archilochus, Euripides, Xenophanes, Zeno of Elea, and Democritus.
[10] Frede, 253.
[11] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism in* "Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition," Translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 1.12.

contemporaneous philosophical views and in doing so offers insight into what it was to be a sceptic. Though Sextus is at the tail end of the sceptical movement of the Hellenes (really, the beginning of the Roman period), and his flavour of skepticism is different from that of those before him, he offers insight into these previous forms of scepticism as well as his own, and his works *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Mathematicians* are among the most complete works on ancient skepticism. As he explains at the outset of the *Outlines*, there are three approaches to inquiry represented by three different philosophical camps. There are the dogmatists, or those who think they have found answers to their inquiries; there are the Academic skeptics, or those who think or believe that inquiries cannot be resolved; and lastly there are the Pyrrhonian skeptics, who do not give up on inquiry.[12]

Dogmatists, insofar as ancient scepticism was concerned, were those who claimed to know something with absolute certainty. To speak or theorize as if the world were indubitably made up of water, that everything in the world fits into a precise number of categories, or that this world is a mere reflection of a more perfect one, all fall under the moniker 'dogmatic'. These dogmatic thinkers, by claiming to know something, cease their inquiry into that thing by the very fact that they assume it, or understand it, to be true and that reality actually is the way they claim it to be. This may be an epistemological claim about how we can know, or a metaphysical claim about the nature of the universe – in any case, the important thing here is that the claimant is no longer inquiring into the truth of her claim, since it is now assumed or understood to be known.

Cynical or negative doubt like that of the Academic sceptics appears to be largely how modern everyday thought tends to construe all of scepticism. That is, scepticism at

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[12] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.1-4.

large is believed to be the denial of a truth claim due to the preconceived conclusion that certainty and truth are simply not available or graspable. This point is a sharp one and needs to be understood, as it arises often in ancient sceptical thought, especially in later criticism of the Academics. To claim that X is true or can be known, and to claim that X is not true or cannot be known, are both fundamentally *claims to a truth about X.* Academic skeptics varied greatly, as will be discussed, but like the dogmatists, they generally ceased their inquiry into many epistemological or metaphysical questions. They did not do so because they felt they had resolved their inquiry and beheld a 'positive' truth about reality (i.e. everything is made of water, or X is P) but they felt that inquiry and certainty were not humanly available to us (i.e. X is $-P$). Essentially, where as a dogmatist claimed to know X, Academics claimed that we *cannot know X.* Later sceptics, who felt that the claim to know X and the claim to know that X cannot be known, both amounted to claiming to know something about X, derisively dubbed the former 'negative dogmatism'. Academic scepticism developed in Plato's Academy with scholarchs like Arcesilaus (3rd -2nd century BCE) and Carneades (2nd – 1st century BCE), who reacted to a great extent against dogmatists who claimed to have 'resolved their inquiry', which included Stoics, Peripatetics, Platonists, and just about any who did not profess a skeptical outlook.

     The Pyrrhonists, 'revived' by Aenesidemus in the 1st century CE, reacted in turn against the negative dogmatism of the Academic sceptics, and refused to assent to a resolution, or assent to the belief that no resolution is possible. From this perfunctory and very general comparison of dogmatists (anyone who claims to know something), Academic sceptics (those who claim nothing can be known), and Pyrrhonian skeptics

(those who do not claim to know something for certain), we can grasp the thrust of scepticism – it is a recognition of the limitations of human experience and knowledge, though not *necessarily* a negation of the possibility of knowledge or reality. This, combined with the tendency of Hellenistic philosophies to regard as deficient a philosophy that cannot be practiced as a path to a good life, demarcates the essential difference between ancient scepticism and modern scepticism. Modernity has pared away from the term the focus on improving the life of the individual that the ancient sceptics, particularly the Pyrrhonists, held to be their very goal.

What did the ancient sceptic delimit, however? Epistemological claims about what knowledge is and how justified we are in laying claim to it? Metaphysical claims about reality and what is true or false in it? Did the ancient sceptics inquire into how and what we know, or about the truth of the nature of things? Once again, different sceptics seem to have different aims for their inquiry, and a clear answer to this general line of questioning is not available, though we might look to interpretations of Eusebius, a Christian scholar in the 3rd century, to show how an either epistemological or metaphysical reading of what he records can lend to a better understanding of ancient skepticism as a whole. He writes on the thought of Pyrrho, who is largely held as the beginning of a coherent form of scepticism, and a general understanding of the origins of scepticism is what we are here looking to gather. It will become evident that Pyrrho was not as keen to prove or disprove metaphysical or epistemological theories as much as he wished to illuminate a happy way of life, as his aporetic linguistic practice categorically avoids making such claims.

In his *Preparatio Evangelica,* Eusebius discusses what he has read of Aristocles regarding the philosophy of Pyrrho of Elis as handed down through Pyrrho's pupil, Timon. Therein Eusebius reports on three questions that Timon posited as necessary for one who is looking for happiness in life: "First, what things are like; second, what our disposition ought to be with respect to them; and finally, what will be the result for those who are so disposed."[13] Timon states that Pyrrho's answers to these are that things are equally "indifferent and unmeasurable and undecidable,"[14] and that following from this our senses and opinions niether lie nor tell the truth, and we should not trust them. Rather, we should be:

> […] undogmatic and uncommitted and unswayed, saying of each and every thing that it no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not […] the result for those who are in this disposition will first be speechlessness and then freedom from disturbance.[15]

As Harold Thorsrud points out, the ancient sceptics were peculiar not for their aporetic stance on inquiry, but for the way they find this disposition in itself to be a path to happiness in life, or at least to freedom from disturbance.[16]

As he further indicates, Pyrrho's aim here seems to be to "relieve us of poorly founded confidence and the disturbing desires that it produces."[17] That is, we do not *know* things, we cannot say to know a thing absolutely, and we need to recognize that

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[13] Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.* 14.18, 758d, I used the text in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition.* Translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Harald Thorsrud, *Ancient Scepticism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 25.
[17] Ibid.

very fact. In recognizing the reality that we do not know things as we so often assume we do, we can live our lives undisturbed by the troubles that these assumptions generate – troubles such as creating further divisions between people, beliefs regarding right and wrong, good and evil, all of which are based on belief but assumed to be based on truth. The disturbances that Pyrrho avoids are those problems generated by assumptions carried forward by their absorption into language usage. If we consistently remain undogmatic about what we actually know about the words we use to make propositions and claims about how the world is, then we will avoid many of the disturbances that they cause. For example, it is widely assumed that death is a bad thing to happen to someone. Many arguments and beliefs have been set out throughout history attesting to this; belief systems about an afterlife, reincarnation, and still more beliefs about how to live this life to prepare for death. The majority of these beliefs *assume* knowledge about death, and operate their arguments and language with the presumption that the person who holds a given belief also holds the underlying knowledge about death, when in fact no one is privy to such certainty about death. Perhaps the beliefs themselves are harmless enough, but when conflicting beliefs meet, whether in an individual who is contemplating them or between people who uphold conflicting beliefs, then disturbances certainly arise. Conflicting beliefs and ideals are the hallmark of every major war and conflict through human history; this much is as obvious as is the need to avoid such conflict. The deeper disturbance is that the antecedent beliefs (e.g., about death), only *assumed* in the language necessary to convey them, are not as sturdy a foundation as the consequent beliefs (i.e., about the nature of an afterlife) further assume them to be.

As already indicated, scholars[18] have wrangled with the question of whether Pyrrho intended his scepticism as specifically epistemological or metaphysical, with particular attention being given to the above passage from Eusebius. The linguistic focus I am taking in interpreting Pyrrho's intentions mark the metaphysical or epistemological difference as less crucial, since either can be assumed in my understanding of Pyrrho. His focus is in preventing uncertain knowledge becoming the foundation for beliefs, and he wishes to do this via an aporetic practice of language. Thus, he is aporetic towards epistemological claims as much as metaphysical ones, and desires to alter the dogmatic dispositions we have towards these by exposing the *aporia* at the roots of many of our beliefs.

Richard Bett offers insight into interpreting the passage in either direction, focusing on the Greek terms *adiaphora, astathmeta,* and *anepikreta* in Pyrrho's answers. Interpreting these into English as 'indifferent, unbalanced, and indeterminate,' gives them a metaphysical orientation according to Bett, while interpreting them as 'indifferentiable, immeasurable, and indeterminable' gives them an epistemological reading.[19] He goes on to say that, while the metaphysical reading – which would have Pyrrho speaking about the nature of the external world - may seem to entail the epistemological reading concerning the nature of human knowledge, "the two claims are certainly not equivalent; the first claim is about things, irrespective of any cognitive relation which we may stand to them, and the second is about that very cognitive relation."[20] Bett draws lines of

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[18] Richard Bett, *Pyrrho, his Antecedents, and his Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Translated by Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Benson Mates, *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[19] Bett. 18-19.
[20] Ibid., 19.

comparison to Pyrrho's use of 'thing' (*pragmata*) to both Aristotle's use of it in

Metaphysics as well as Plato's use of it in several Platonic dialogues, notably

Parmenides, where *pragmata* are associated with *doxa*, or the everyday, non-theoretical

opinions people have. He states that these terms concern "those opinions that take the

familiar world as it appears to us in ordinary experience as fully real, as a source of

truth."[21] In this light it seems that Pyrrho may indeed be speaking one way or the other,

either metaphysically or epistemologically, but the 'undogmatic, uncommitted,

unswaying' disposition that he advocates is underscored by a practice concerned with

how one ought to speak about things, "saying of each and every thing that it no more is or

is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not."[22] This practiced linguistic

disposition is one of the strongest and most common threads throughout all forms of

ancient scepticism. It is perhaps the most unrecognized aspect of their entire philosophy,

and does not rest solely or specifically on an epistemic or metaphysical claim. It is a

disposition not uncommonly taught in the era, as most every philosophy's aim was to

guide a person to the good and happy life. Pyrrho is offering a way of life, through his

aporetic disposition and language practice, that avoids the disturbances caused by the

assumption and subsumption of certainty into language. No such certainty is available

for many things, yet everyday language does not differentiate; we talk about what it is 'to

know' that the tree outside is a birch tree in the same way in which we talk about justice

and virtuous action. Pyrrho wants to show that by stepping back from certainty and

altering the dogmatic phrases in everyday language to be more accepting of uncertainty,

many of our troubling beliefs fade.

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[21] Bett, 24.
[22] Eusebius, 14.18.

1.1 *Ataraxia* in Epictetus and Epicurus

This avoidance of disturbances and anxiety, or *ataraxia*, is the focus of several schools of thought, including those of Epictetus and Epicurus, for whom philosophy was also intended to direct one towards living a good life. Giving a brief account of their utilization of *ataraxia* will help illuminate the term as it was generally used.

Epictetus, a proponent of Stoicism in the 1-2st century CE, advocated *ataraxia* as essential to living the *eudiamonic* or happy life, along with 'freedom from passions' (*apatheia*) and 'good feelings' (*eupatheia*). *Ataraxia* was viewed as a mental state of tranquility, that was integral to the whole of Epictetus' path of learning which involved being content with the faculties one is given, as well as acting virtuously, which the Stoic thought was necessary to realize a *eudiamonic* life.

Much earlier, in the 3rd century BCE, Epicurus developed his own philosophy largely concerned with regulating pleasure. Anxiety was viewed as the greatest obstacle to attaining pleasure, particularly regarding one's concerns for the future. *Ataraxia* was the state of mind achieved by those who were able to banish anxiety and focus on reducing the number of their desires to maximize the amount of pleasure they receive from fulfilling them. In essence, *ataraxia* was an individually achieved revelation, a state of mind that was perhaps taught by a teacher, but achieved within one's self, with the intention of reducing anxiety.

Thus, both the above brief outlines of *ataraxia* show that it was not a word of singular meaning to Greek thought. *Ataraxia* is a state of mind primarily, and is a state of mind underscored by tranquility, being without troubles, and imperturbability. It is also

seen as a goal that one can aim for and attain, and even as a necessary step towards living a *eudiamonic* life. Lastly, and perhaps implicitly understood, *ataraxia* is a customary term for the Greeks. It is a regularly used word to describe that state of mind of being without troubles and being unperturbed. All of these are held in common within Pyrrho's views on scepticism, particularly the last, as it is by customs and conventions that Pyrrho feels everything is 'known'.

<u>1.2 The Role of *Epoche* and *Ataraxia* in Pyrrho</u>

Diogenes Laertius records Pyrrho saying "that nothing was either honourable or shameful, just or unjust; similarly for all cases he said that nothing exists in truth but that men do everything on the basis of convention and custom; for each thing is no more this than that."[23] By this, we get a glimpse into the focus of Pyrrho's *epoche* (generally understood as 'suspension of judgement'), and how he found *ataraxia*. He seems to focus on ethical or moral questions concerning honour, justice, good, and bad, suggesting that he felt that what we think we know of these things is in fact (or, at least as likely to be) merely customary or conventional ways of thinking and speaking. This concern feeds into his unease for how our beliefs are generated by things that are not known for certain but are still assumed to be known.

What is known of Pyrrho's stance on *ataraxia* is obscure, as it is only through second, third, and fourth-hand accounts such as the passage from Eusebius (copied from Aristocles writing on Timon who was recording Pyrrho's teachings) where it is stated that *ataraxia* follows for those who adopt *epoche* and an aporetic disposition. Pyrrho

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[23] Diogenes, *Life of Pyrrho* 9.61, I used the text in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition*, Translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).

recommends that *epoche* be less about epistemological or metaphysical things as such, and more about the practice of language for the alteration of language. He does not aim to argue with people over these things; he wishes to express the suspension of judgement and suspension of belief in everyday speech, so that the 'to know' language of knowing, for example, the tree outside is a birch, or that the car is a particular shade of green, does not intermingle unconsciously or implicitly with the language used to convey thoughts about the nature of justice, goodness, or genuine philosophical claims about the nature of reality. This is so that when a disagreement occurs, we do not become perturbed, or more importantly, develop loyalties to and hatreds of beliefs or opinions that contradict our own beliefs or opinions - beliefs and opinions we potentially have held by nothing other than custom and convention.

This is Pyrrho's *ataraxia*, and it follows from having and maintaining an aporetic disposition and no longer being vested in the truth or falsity of ontological underpinnings of what we state about the nature of things in language. Pyrrho is neither a solipsist nor a nihilist; he wishes us to say what we perceive, feel, and understand. He only wishes us to "determine nothing dogmatically […] but rather follow appearances."[24] That is, to be aware that the truth of all of what we say is not as graspable and fixed as our ability to signify it in language makes it out to be. He wishes us to avoid the troubling effects of implicitly adopting beliefs and values in our use of language. To alter one's use of language to reflect an aporetic stance, 'saying of each and every thing that it no more is than not is, or both is and not is or neither is nor is not,' is to follow Pyrrho's recommendation of *epoche* and to be less troubled by the limits of the human condition than are those who claim to know. By 'those who claim to know', (i.e. dogmatists) I

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[24] Diogenes, 9.106.

mean those who implicitly deny or do not recognize the limits of human knowledge by utilizing 'to know' in an unqualified sense.

Other philosophies also recommended *aporia* as a route to a happier or more virtuous life. Plato's teachings in the dialogues are not only aporetic but also can be seen to recommend an aporetic stance to Socrates' interlocutors. Scepticism is distinct in that it finds the practiced aporetic disposition of maintaining one's metaphysical and epistemological limitations constantly present in one's everyday speech as that very path to a life of flourishing. The things sceptics wish to avoid are deception, falsehood, and beliefs based on either of these things. The sceptic feels his dogmatic opponents succumb to these false beliefs more often than not, and thereby suffer the irritation of arguing for their position or even simply hearing a contrary one to their own – things that the sceptic avoids by not having a dogmatic position to argue for or from. Pyrrho is recommending a deeply habituated mode of speech rooted in the recognition of the limitations of human experience so as to avoid these irritations. It is no small thing that Pyrrho maintained that speechlessness, or *aphasia*, is the first result of a sceptical disposition, and that freedom from disturbance, or *ataraxia*, follows. Disturbances arise from ceasing to inquire into the most basic aspects of our ontological beliefs and assuming the answers to have been found; as soon as openness to inquiry ceases, falsehood can however innocently, be assumed, believed, and acted upon, and are reflected in and amplified by their assumed 'truth' in everyday language. Aristotle's first principles and Plato's hypotheses serve as examples of what Pyrrho tries to avoid, though we must be careful here. Pyrrho approves of the inquiry, even of taking up hypotheses or first principles for the sake of inquiry. Rather, it is when the language used in the inquiry

is *no longer of inquiry*, but of having found something true and certain and taking that as a new starting point, that Pyrrho feels becomes a stumbling block in the road of living a happy life. When the first principle is no longer clearly maintained as a possibility but is spoken of as true and real is when Pyrrho becomes uneasy about the beliefs that develop from a principle that is assumed to be true. Someone who is genuinely not sure if the world is made up of water will not make a statement that assumes such a premise, nor will he go on to make further metaphysical or epistemological claims based upon that presumed knowledge about the world. This person will not do this if they follow Pyrrho's recommended practice because Pyrrho forces one to maintain an aporetic disposition in language itself. Inquiry always stems from this disposition. As soon as language becomes openly dogmatic, saying *X* is *X*, rather than *X* appears to be, or may be *X*, potential falsehoods can be assumed true, or truths assumed to be false. Language, being the medium of making claims, propositions, and assenting to beliefs, becomes more resilient to the falls of developing certainties and beliefs out of falsehoods by recognizing the limits of human knowledge and justification. This is a point to be developed later; here I only wish to highlight the recommended linguistic praxis of an aporetic disposition as the germ of Pyrrho's path to living a good life.

This disposition of Pyrrho's is reportedly unique to him, as Diogenes Laertius writes that Pyrrho came to profess it after learning under a certain Bryson son of Stilpo, as well as Anaxarchus. Pyrrho is believed to have be influenced by a journey to India where he allegedly spoke with gymnosophists.[25] Pyrrho introduced

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[25] Diogenes, 9.61.

the idea of ungraspability and suspension of judgement […] For he said that nothing was either honourable or shameful, just or unjust; similarly for all cases he said that nothing exists in truth but that men do everything on the basis of convention and custom; for each thing is no more this than that.[26]

Diogenes further reports that Pyrrho required friends to follow him around to prevent him from falling off cliffs or being trampled by wagons, as he allegedly did not believe his senses, though he continues to say that Aenesidemus spoke of Pyrrho as only theorizing about suspending judgement, and did not live improvidently. I take the reports of Pyrrho being willing to walk off cliffs if not for his friends to be little more than a joke at his expense, but find there to be more to Aenesidemus' report than Diogenes gives credence to. Certainly Pyrrho theorized about his disposition of suspending judgement, and perhaps he did not live and act out that suspensive attitude to the extent of walking into traffic, but in between theorizing and acting is saying, is language, and *that* is where the praxis of Pyrrho's attitude of suspending judgement and of *saying* of things that they are 'no more this than that', makes its mark. Whether Pyrrho doubted sensation or the reality of the external world, or thinks that we should actually have these same doubts seems to become secondary to his focus on the practice of maintaining the ramifications of these doubts in everyday speech. Language itself is defined by 'convention and custom,' and Pyrrho may indeed have been pointing to this connection; that is, that language is governed by convention and custom, but that the convention and custom of a person and a people are also governed by their use of language. What is a word if we do not all signify the same thing by it? What is a thing if there is no customary word for it? There

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[26] Ibid.,

is a schism between the customs and conventions we have for language, and the reality

we assume them to possess. Nothing is more honourable than shameful, more just than

unjust: we have merely taken the words for these from customs and let them be grasped

as truth in reality, when no such grasping is really occurring. As mentioned earlier as an

example, 'death' is the root of a great many beliefs concerning how people should live

and what may occur after death. What 'death' and its entourage of beliefs 'is' changes

with the customs and conventions of different groups of people; one group thinks death is

bad and believe that you do not actually die but continue in an afterlife; another group

may think death is not so bad since it believes that you reincarnate every time you die.

At the root of it all, however, is the assumption of knowledge about death that pertains to

reality itself – and each group who has a belief to uphold tends to think its belief is

known. Thus, disturbances arise whereas following Pyrrho's aporetic disposition would

have prevented them. This is not to say that the Pyrrhonist does not follow customs, but

that she does so without giving assent to the beliefs behind the custom.

The importance of customs is echoed further in another account of Diogenes,

where a dog attacks Pyrrho and someone reproaches him for panicking.[27] Pyrrho replied

that it is "hard to shed completely one's humanity, but that one should struggle against

circumstances, as much as possible in one's actions, but if not then at least in words."[28]

The reproach for showing emotion or 'humanity' here seems opposed to what Pyrrho's

recommended aporetic way of life is, as he does not recommend casting off *pathos* in the

passage from Eusebius. However, this passage does address the outcome of *ataraxia* that

Pyrrho professed. The aim is not to divest or neglect oneself of *pathe* forced upon one by

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[27] Diogenes 9.66.
[28] Ibid.

something like a dog attack, but to shed the thought, and the language that follows it, that

the dog attack, or falling off a cliff, is in reality good or bad. It seems to me that Pyrrho

would indeed be struck by the fear of walking off a cliff, but to *speak* of the ensuing

death as absolutely bad or good, he would not assent or dissent, but would suspend

judgement; hence the joke. In the same section in Diogenes' account of Pyrrho, he

speaks of Pyrrho doing things that did not follow custom, such as washing pigs, lending

to the idea that even within customs he did not regard things as truly good nor bad.

Pyrrho is willing to draw from custom and convention for direction much like

Democritus did, though still with a critical eye and always from his aporetic disposition.

He will follow customs, both in action and in language, in accordance with those customs

he finds himself a part of so as to be able to function both as a person and as an active

linguistic agent. He does not put any belief in these customary actions or words he uses;

I would say he uses them so as to participate in the world, and make sense of his own

pathe, but he refuses any dogmatic understanding of them being based on any certain

knowledge. It seems that if Pyrrho were born in the Early Middle Ages in Europe, he

would probably have been Catholic, and if he lived in India, he would probably have

been Hindu. In either of these examples, the point is that he would have adopted the

customs and the beliefs of the world in which he found himself. Perhaps that is Pyrrho's

aim, however: to show that all around the world humanity's 'truths' and beliefs are

founded on customs and conventions. The crucial difference is that Pyrrho never wants

to let go of the fact that the very foundations of those beliefs are nothing more than

epistemological and metaphysical assumptions, solidified by the operation of language to

articulate those very assumptions, mixed with customs and beliefs from his background.

Lending to the above, Diogenes tells a story allegedly told by Posidonius, speaking of Pyrrho being on a ship caught in a storm at sea, with all passengers aboard frightened by the storm. Pyrrho was calm and pointed to a pig on the ship eating from its trough unperturbed by the storm, saying of it, "the wise man ought to repose in such a state of freedom from disturbance."[29] The pig in this anecdote is an allegorical example of Pyrrho's wise sage. The pig is wise because it is free of the conventions of language and the assumptions about reality that these conventions develop in those who adopt them as true, and is therefore able to be free of any worry about the goodness or badness of the outcome of the storm because of the adoption of *epoche* due to every thing being indifferentiable/indifferent, immeasurable/unbalanced, and indeterminable/indeterminate. While the pig is also free from the metaphysical, epistemological, and ontological aspects of the storm such as convictions about the dangers of the storm, or wondering why storms always strike every ship he sails on, these aspects are not available to his sensibilities, or at least not available to the same degree as to a being with language. One may argue that 'we cannot know for certain that pigs do not think in a language,' but the counter to this criticism is that I maintain this allegorical pig to represent Pyrrho's wise sage, and that Pyrrho's sage sustains an aporetic disposition within language with regard to epistemological and metaphysical certainties. This shows that the point is not that the pig *lacks* language, but that the sage lacks *conviction* or *belief* in the ontological certainties that language foists upon its users. Language develops unintentional and unconscious convictions in its users, and Pyrrho wants us to step back from language and those convictions, by altering and becoming more aware of the ways we use language.

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[29] Diogenes, 9.68.

Thus far, in developing a general account of the roots of scepticism, I have focused on Pyrrho of Elis and several key passages essential to understanding his philosophy of finding the happy life through the recognition of the limitations of human experience. The first of these passages contained the three questions and answers from Eusebius concerning what things are like, how we should be disposed towards them, and what the result of such a disposition would be. Several approaches have been examined with regard to Pyrrho's answers, and overall I have found the best understanding to be that Pyrrho recommends a mode of speech that reflects an underlying, or at least perfunctory, doubt regarding both our ability to know things as well as things themselves. Pyrrho's disposition of *epoche*, or suspension of judgment, is underscored by a deeply habituated practice of language reflected in the use of phrases and utterances like 'no more this than that' which result in freedom from disturbances. Pyrrho aims to alter the tendency of language users to assume the nature of reality as something fundamentally known. Such fundamental knowledge is assumed by the operation of language itself, and Pyrrho's recommended mode of speech, to 'say of each and every thing that it no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not,' aims to maintain an aporetic disposition, or suspended judgement, in everyday speech. By doing this, the way language foists convictions and beliefs on its users is reduced, and the disturbances that these assumed beliefs develop – notably the disturbing notion that many of one's beliefs are not founded on anything more solid that convention and custom – are correspondingly reduced.

Pyrrho's aim is to alleviate poorly founded beliefs – beliefs about reality developed out of nothing but conventions and customs of language, which have become

assumed *to be* reality. To fall off a cliff and die is assumed to be bad. In this situation, to die is 'known' via custom to be bad which in turn is taken up as necessarily true in everyday language. Pyrrho disagrees and would put his aporetic disposition into action to show it is no more good than bad, and that falling off the cliff is in itself also neither bad nor good. He brings his philosophical scepticism to bear in his daily life and daily speech with the intention of not falling to assumptions that the very use of language implicitly demands. We are accustomed to thinking that being in a storm on a small boat in the middle of the ocean is a bad thing because of the antecedent assumption that death is an inherently bad thing; Pyrrho undermines the implicit assumption of language and its effect of embossing the language user with presumptuously founded knowledge by always demanding the user consciously to qualify his or her statements so that *aporia* and not dogma, becomes the disposition of the language speaker.

Micheal Frede remarks that Pyrrho is not in fact a sceptic if one takes him as saying "that in reality [things] are neither good nor bad, and that it is just in people's belief that they are just or unjust."[30] This criticism extends to his *epoche* in that it is found to be inconsistent or nonexistent because Pyrrho does assent to the inherent inapprehensibility of reality.[31] Given the Hellenistic stance on philosophy as necessarily concerning a path to the good life, and Pyrrho's concern for reality, how we think about reality, and how we operate language as it concerns reality, perhaps he is less the grandfather of scepticism than he is of phenomenology or post-structuralism. He is more concerned about individual existence, and living a good life, than with proving a metaphysical or epistemological theory wrong or right. Whether we wish to have Pyrrho

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[30] Frede, 260.
[31] Bett, 39.

in the sceptical camp or the post-structuralist camp, the language-oriented reading of Pyrrho developed thus far may be seen to depend on understanding Pyrrho's doubt as Bett assumes here; namely, that Pyrrho does not suspend judgement on a fundamental claim about reality, but *asserts* that reality is inherently inapprehensible and recommends suspension of judgement there from.

This sort of assertion is what Sextus Empiricus later dubs 'negative dogmatism' and because the Academic sceptics gave assent to such reasoning, Sextus cast them out of what he considered as constituting proper scepticism.[32] While some passages on Pyrrho seem to suggest that suspending judgement is his most central tenet over and above any singularly epistemological metaphysical reading of him, perhaps the strongest example against this is in Eusebius, where Pyrrho is said to have expressed that, "It is necessary above all to consider the issue of our knowledge. For if by nature we know nothing, there is no need to consider other things."[33] This line appears to cast Pyrrho in a particular light. That is, if Pyrrho is being negatively dogmatic and claiming that we know nothing by nature, then the inference that we ought to suspend judgement from this initial claim seems to obtain. That is, if Pyrrho does not think we know, then that doubt serves as the reason to suspend judgement. Essentially, Pyrrho's assent to the claim that nothing can be known is the cause for his recommendation that we maintain a state of *epoche*. This is problematic, as it appears to be inconsistent; Pyrrho seems to be claiming to know that we cannot know, and uses this claim to justify suspending judgement.

If we suppose *epoche* is Pyrrho's first priority, such that he is already suspending judgement on the claim that we know nothing rather than claiming to know that we

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[32] Sextus Empiricus, PH 1.4.
[33] Eusebius, 14.18 758c.

cannot know, we might wonder as to why he is already suspending judgement. There seems to be no reason given for Pyrrho's call for a disposition of *epoche*, as was given in the previous approach where suspension of judgement followed the dogmatic claim that humans by nature cannot know. If he suspends judgement first, why does he?

As it happens, there is a disagreement on the interpretation of the Eusebius passage. Some scholars[34] argue that the line

> […] Pyrrho declares that things are equally indifferent, and unmeasurable and undecidable, *and that for this reason* neither our senses nor our opinions tell the truth nor lie; and so we ought not to put our trust in them […] [35]

should be altered to:

> […] Pyrrho declares that things are equally indifferent, and uunmeasurable and undecidable *on account of the fact that* neither our senses nor our opinions tell the truth nor lie; and so we ought not to put our trust in them […] [36]

This alteration reverses the inference, where a metaphysical claim originally rooted the epistemological claim. That is, "making the assertion about the nature of things now becomes a consequence of the assertion about the status of our sensations and opinions,

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[34] *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, translated by Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[35] Eusebius, 14.18 758d, my emphasis.
[36] Bett, 25, my emphasis.

not a reason for it."[37] In the first reading, things themselves are not graspable. In the

proposed alteration, it is our senses, or perhaps *pathe*, that prevent apprehension. Bett is

against this alteration, as he maintains that a metaphysical reading does not require the

alteration and the epistemological reading does not benefit by it.[38]

       If Pyrrho were intending to advocate for a specifically metaphysical scepticism,

claiming that things themselves are 'indifferent, unbalanced, and indeterminate'

(following Bett's metaphysically oriented interpretation of *adiaphora, astathmeta,* and

anepikrita in the Eusebius passage), it is only because of the indeterminate (indeterminate

is a good stand-in for the cumbersome 'indifferent, unbalanced, and indeterminate')

nature of things themselves that our senses 'do not lie nor tell the truth' and hence why

Pyrrho recommends *epoche*. Thus he would be claiming that things are unknowable; that

our faculties for perceiving things are not to be doubted, but the things they perceive are

in themselves unknowable, and that 'for this reason' we should *epoche* on our

judgements about their reality. Alternatively, but still understanding Pyrrho as being

specifically metaphysically sceptical about the nature of reality (where things themselves

are indeterminate,) for him to claim that things are indeterminate 'on account of the fact'

that our senses or opinions do not lie nor tell the truth – thereby reversing the inference,

as Bett indicated – changes nothing of the metaphysical doubt Pyrrho espouses. Whether

it is because our faculties and opinions reflect the indeterminate nature of reality and for

this reason require our distrust, or because our faculties and opinion themselves give to us

only indifferent, unbalanced, and indeterminate input about reality and on account of this

should be distrusted, the end is the same. That is, Pyrrho says that the result of *epoche*,

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 25.

rather than some belief or another about the nature of reality, results in freedom from disturbances.

If Pyrrho were not advocating a metaphysical scepticism but a solely epistemological scepticism regarding the indifferentiable, immeasurable, and indeterminable nature of human knowledge, he would be claiming that we should not trust our faculties and opinions 'for the reason' that our faculties and opinions reflect the indeterminable nature of our knowledge and therefore do not lie nor tell the truth. The alternative interpretation, still understanding Pyrrho as being specifically epistemological in his doubt, has Pyrrho claiming that we should distrust our faculties and opinions because human knowledge is indeterminable 'on account of the fact' that our senses and opinions themselves do not lie nor tell the truth.

Ultimately I agree with Bett, as overall the alteration does nothing to further the understanding of the passage insofar as either reading is concerned, and especially regarding whether Pyrrho was making a fundamental assertion - whether about the nature of things or of our ability to know them - rather than suspending judgement. In essence, Pyrrho could be making one of three suppositions: the metaphysical claim that things are essentially indeterminate; the epistemological claim that we as humans do not have the ability to determine things; and lastly, a combination of the two, claiming that things are indeterminate and we cannot even know them anyways. In any of these cases, Pyrrho is laying down a dogmatic claim for the ground for suspending judgement, and the altered interpretation of the Eusebius passage serves only to highlight this. Pyrrho is negatively dogmatizing about either position. However, *epoche* and an aporetic disposition are far more central to Pyrrho's philosophy, and are what stand out in his legacy above anything

else. He was not nearly as concerned about the specific arguments – whether he was
targeting metaphysical or epistemological uncertainty – as he was about the linguistic
practice and maintenance of suspended judgement and an aporetic disposition. Why
would he make suspension of judgement so fundamental, yet make a dogmatic claim,
whether it be a metaphysical or epistemological claim, a reason for not making dogmatic
claims? This does not seem to follow with the aporetic language practice that essentially
shuns the making of such claims, but also simply contradicts itself.

One possible way we might conclude that Pyrrho is in fact suspending judgement
on all claims and not being inconsistent is to think of the novice sceptic developing into
the sage Pyrrho and so many others of his time recommend that we become. By this
pedagogy of revealed experience, Pyrrho teaches by living and practicing what he
preaches. In this way, the novice sceptic would begin his or her sceptical way of life with
the negatively dogmatic metaphysical or epistemological first doubt acting as the impetus
for suspending judgement. The negatively dogmatic first doubt ("humans by nature
cannot know") being the outright claim that either things themselves are unknowable
(metaphysical), or that we cannot claim to know that we know them (epistemological).
Pyrrho can be said to have made this same 'first doubt' – the dogmatic claim that reality
or knowledge is indeterminate or indeterminable – as the reason for maintaining his
aporetic disposition. As our sceptic develops and expands her aporetic disposition, she
will develop this position to include her original first doubt. She looks to her own
assumptions and reasoning, and now looking at them from a more undogmatic,
unswaying, and aporetic disposition, she realizes that her first doubt – to say, believe, or
opine that reality or knowledge is indeterminate – is a dogmatic statement not in line with

her aporetic disposition, and extends the 'no more' locution to include it. The shunning of dogmatically phrased statements is the basic function of linguistic praxis; alternatively, aporetic language is the embracing of uncertainty and statements phrased around a disposition that is comfortable with undecidedness.

Developed more fully later in the tradition, scepticism eventually advances the idea of itself acting as a medicinal purge, wherein it cleanses one of dogmatic maladies as it also purges itself out with them. Just as the novice sceptic, in becoming the sceptical sage, released herself from her foundational first doubt, so Pyrrho's dogmatic scepticism purges itself until all that is left is an aporetic disposition maintained by undogmatic, unswaying linguistic praxis. This line of thought certainly developed from Pyrrho, or at least Timon, as Diogenes notes that Timon maintained in the *Pytho* the utterance 'no more this than that' meant to determine nothing and to refuse assent. As Diogenes records, both this utterance and the

> utterance of 'for every argument there is an opposing argument' also concludes to suspension of judgement, for when facts are disputed, but there is equal force in the [opposing] arguments, ignorance of the truth follows. Even this argument [i.e., that every argument has an opposing argument] has an opposing argument [namely, there is an argument which has no opposing argument] so that when it has destroyed every other argument it turns on itself and is destroyed by itself, just like purges which first purge the foreign matter and then themselves are purged and destroyed […] [39]

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[39] Diogenes, 9.76.

Applying this purging concept to the aforementioned development of Pyrrho's sage, we can see that in the maturing view of the novice sceptic, first beginning with a negative dogmatic claim that instigates the novice's reasoning for *epoche* and desire for an aporetic disposition, and developing through the practice of stating things as being 'no more this than that,' the sceptic pares away the initial dogmatic doubt as well as any other dogmatic doubt, leaving nothing but a disposition of suspending judgement. Ergo, via Pyrrho's linguistically maintained aporetic disposition, dogmatic convictions, whether positive in sense that they assent to *X* or negative in that they deny *X*, are abolished from linguistic practice. Dogmatic doubt may have started the sceptic on the path, but only *aporia* remains.

The Pyrrhonian practice of aporetic language finds comfort in statements that are apprehensive, or more accurately, that suspend judgement. Once aporetic language becomes habit, and the Pyrrhonist's disposition becomes one of *aporia* and *epoche*, then *ataraxia* fortuitously follows, since the sceptic is no longer vested in beliefs and convictions regarding the nature of reality. He no longer has these beliefs because at thelevel of language, he has entered the practice of maintaining *aporia* and *epoche* regarding reality. *X* is no longer stated as being *X*, it is stated as appearing to be *X*, with the metaphysical and epistemological possibility of it being something other than what it is stated to be remaining open.

Moreover, through Eusebius, Pyrrho states that *aphasia* or speechlessness comes first then followed by *ataraxia*. This is the path recommended by Pyrrho for those who wish to be happy. By adopting an aporetic disposition via the use of language reflecting one's understanding that one may in fact know nothing – 'saying of each and every thing

that it is no more than it is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not' - the initiate

first arrives at not being able to say anything, or not wanting to assert anything. The

initiate essentially drops out of language as a speaker. Whether *aphasia* is a necessary

step towards achieving *ataraxia* is not entirely clear in Pyrrho, nor is *ataraxia* explained

much beyond 'freedom from disturbances'. Perhaps we might view *aphasia* as the

turning point for the initiate-come-master, in much the same way we might view the first

negative dogma of the initiate as his or her first step as a sceptic. *Aphasia* strikes the

initiate down and out of language, the novice no longer making any assertion whatsoever;

denying language the pleasure or power over his or her ontological views. Yet, much

like Plato recommends coming back down the line, reentering the cave, or more

emphatically, himself 'descending' to give voice to the *Republic*, the initiate returns to

the active, aporetic disposition maintained prior to becoming struck dumb, but now

without the original negative dogmatic assertion as a foundation for suspending

judgement. Rather than being armed with a foundationalist understanding of reality

through the Forms, or whatever interpretation one wishes to take on Plato, the full-

fledged sceptic has done the opposite and purged even the foundation of her aporetic

disposition and is now an ontological, epistemological, and linguistic nomad, unfettered

by any dogma short of what she may assent to or deny in language – and even that

remains always open. If the sceptic maintains his or her aporetic stance in language,

always reflecting a lack of ontological dogma through the tripartite utterance about the

nature of each and every thing being 'no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or

neither is nor is not,' then the sceptical sage will remain unopinionated, without

inclinations, and will not waver about these things, and will come to *ataraxia*.[40]

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[40] Note: 'unopinionated, without inclinations, and without wavering' are Richard Bett's (pg 16) alternate

Therefore, we might understand Pyrrho as suggesting a way of life that engages language as a practice for an aporetic disposition towards claims about reality or knowledge that would otherwise perturb us. He wishes to use the very medium that controls our ability to make meaning and sense, to contain just how much we let language speak itself. I might say that 'stealing is morally wrong' as a dogmatic claim regarding the nature of things, and Pyrrho's point is that it is assumed in uttering such a statement that either I can and do know something about what is moral and immoral in the world, or that the immorality of such an act is apparent in the nature of things. Someone might say that a particular tree's leaves are green, or that a root canal is painful. Whether taken epistemologically or metaphysically, all these statements are assertions made through language about the nature of things, and I believe that Pyrrho opposes the assumption made in these utterances in that the *way* that one would say them, or the *fact* that one says them, implies that the utterance is founded in knowledge rooted in an ontological certainty that is assumed to be established by language, or pre-established in order for language to make sense. This is to say that Pyrrho is fighting against the assumptions that language has access to some 'knowledge' about the nature of reality that does not in fact exist, but also that language-use itself furthers this sort of presumptuous use of nonexistent knowledge. In order to make sense, language assumes this sort of sure-footed knowledge that Pyrrho clearly does not think is available. He thinks all is 'just custom and convention,' and that what is only so by convention – whether it is a cultural practice, language practice, etc. – is not entitled to be held up as knowledge in the absolute sense. Pyrrho feels that assuming such certainty in the utilization of language

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translations of Inwood's 'undogmatic, uncommitted, unswaying' in Eusebius.

takes away from one's ability to enjoy life, as one presumption grows from a different assumption, and so on and so forth until one is further from the sort of truth assumed to be had than if no presumptuous, dogmatic theorizing had occurred at all. The layers of presumptions and assumptions, each one a potential falsehood or deceptively persuasive hypothesis, leads one away from a disposition of suspending judgement and closes one off from being open to possibilities outside the scope of convictions and utterances already held and made. Where someone like Aristotle, or any given 'dogmatist', wishes to build up a system of 'knowns' or axioms on which to place a virtuous or happy life, Pyrrho thinks the better way is to look at what one is already standing upon and to realize that so much of that is only convention and custom, and not anything like the absolute and stable knowledge that it is customarily assumed to be. He demands the ontological certainty and trust of such utterances and 'knowns' be pulled out from under them as much as possible and as often as possible, that "one ought not to suppose that that which persuades us is true."[41] Truthful opinions and perceptions are as persuasive as untruthful ones. So that when a disagreement occurs whether between people or within one's own soul, we do not become perturbed, react overly emotionally, or develop loyalties to and hatreds of beliefs or opinions that contradict what we may have happen to have held previously by nothing other than custom and convention. This is *ataraxia*, the result of having and maintaining an aporetic disposition and no longer being vested in the existence or non-existence of the truth of ontological underpinnings of what we state about the nature of things in language. Pyrrho wishes us to say what we see and feel and understand, but to be aware that the truth of all of what we say is not as graspable and

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[41] Diogenes, 9.94.

fixed as our ability to signify it in language makes it out to be: 'if not in actions, then at least in words.'

1.3 Plato's Socrates as Pyrrho's Sage

At the outset of presenting the position of Pyrrho of Elis it was mentioned that Pyrrho's sceptical or aporetic approach to a happy life was not unheard of in his time. Others, such as Plato, expressed many of these same sentiments in his dialogues through Socrates, and Socrates probably espoused them himself in his life. As Socrates famously maintained in the *Apology,* "this man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless."[42] The Platonic dialogues, particularly the early ones, quite often express aporetic positions, or even flat out deny the ability of humans to possess wisdom much in the same way that Pyrrho expresses his initial negative dogmatic doubt about the nature of things. Plato often attacks hubris through Socrates' conversations, and as Gregory Shaw notes regarding *Alcibiades I*, "the worst kind of evil [is] said to be caused by those who claim to understand the best things: goodness, justice, and nobility."[43] It is one thing to argue about the best dancer in the room or the stupidest show on television, but to have convictions or beliefs about justice, or what is moral, is another thing altogether. I might think reality TV shows are foolish and carry that conviction out into the world, expressing it and spreading it every time it comes up in conversation, and the repercussions for me and those with whom I share my

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[42] Plato, *Apology* 23b, I used the text in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M.Cooper, translated by G.M.A Grube (Indiana: Hackett Publishing 1997).
[43] Gregory Shaw, "After Aporia: Theurgy in Later Platonism," *Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* 1, no. 5 (1996) 3-41, at 12.

conviction will be small and limited. If I do the same thing with a conviction about justice – say that capital punishment is good – not only am I reinforcing my own surface conviction about capital punishment, I am implicitly and unconsciously engaging and reinforcing the underlying convictions (about life and death) as well, all of which may 'no more be than not be.' In bringing together *elenchus* in conversations to birth the ideas of others and his supposition that he knows nothing, Socrates is a reflection of Pyrrho's sage; he does not propound anything other than the thought that he knows nothing, and engages in language only to bring out *aporia* in his interlocutor.

In *Alcibiades I*, Socrates explicates this position well, asking "don't you realize that the errors in our conduct are caused by this kind of ignorance, of thinking that we know when we don't know?"[44] As Westerink notes, the explication of *aporia* is done in a systematic fashion throughout many dialogues: *Alcibiades I*, *Gorgias*, and *Phaedo* in dealing with virtue; *Cratylus* and *Theaetetus* in dealing with epistemology; *Sophist* and *Statesman* in dealing with the external world; the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* in dealing with theology and love; and in *Philebus* which deals with the Good.[45]

Socrates' argumentation as characterized by the method of *elenchus* is not geared towards finding an absolute truth. It is about digging through falsity and finding the most acceptable hypothesis regarding the soul and proper living.[46] For Plato and perhaps for Socrates, *aporia* is a necessary cleansing step towards understanding *ta erotika*, which was more indispensable than reason in Plato's greater scheme of things, and is the sole

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[44] Plato, *Alcibiades I* 117d, in Plato: Complete Works, edited by John M. Cooper (Indiana: Hackett Publishing 1997) 574.
[45] L.G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo,* vol. 1 (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1976) at 15, in Gregory Shaw, "After Aporia: Theurgy in Later Platonism," 6.
[46] Shaw, 5.

thing Socrates ever claimed to grasp.[47] *Ta erotica* is the art of loving, or the movement of the soul toward the good, with the philosopher being for Plato the greatest lover of the good. As Gregory Shaw's succinct summary of Platonic *paideia* states it, while "Plato's *paideia* was intellectually rigorous, it was even more demanding as a discipline of the heart, for it required souls to endure the insecurity and inferiority of not knowing. Yet from their conscious *aporia*, such souls began to follow a more ancient way."[48] The consistent 'shock' of *aporia* maintained the purity of the soul allowing for the nurturing of *eros*; without *aporia,* the soul is unable to focus solely on the good and becomes fixated on other things.

Turning to several of the Platonic dialogues, I wish to highlight the fundamentally aporetic stance Plato often takes. In the *Phaedo*, I focus on the arguments for the existence of the soul and the 'second voyage'; in the *Meno* regarding the paradox of knowledge; and in the *Theaetetus* on perception and knowledge. The nature of Plato's practice of *aporia* is such that it is a necessary starting point for the education or *paideia* of the soul. Thus I am not engaging the texts in full, but showing how key *aporia* and the function of the soul are to Plato's *paideia* and how central they are in each of the texts. Furthermore, I address the way in which Pyrrho can speak of such a thing as the soul and be consistent in his claim to determine nothing. This serves to situate Pyrrho's use of *aporia* and offers an avenue of understanding with which to further grasp aporetic language practice by showing that Socrates was very similar in his approach and use of *aporia*.

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[47] Ibid., 6.
[48] Shaw, 8-9.

<u>1.4 Pyrrho and Plato's *Phaedo*</u>

In the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates posit the realm of Forms as the route by which

his second voyage must take – a route by way of words, or *logos*.[49] It is Socrates' second

voyage because his first was one attempted within the visible world, and confined to

mechanical suppositions and opinions regarding the causes of things. That is, the first

was an attempt to explain causes by other causes rather than by something that explains

the cause of things *qua* cause. Just before explicating his second voyage Socrates gives

an account of this as exemplified by Anaxagoras, who claimed that the cause of anything

was Mind. However, Socrates found that Anaxagoras did not speak of Mind at all, and

was "unable to distinguish the essential difference between the real cause of a thing, and

that without which the cause never could be a cause."[50] The second voyage posits the

Forms as the ground in which the visible world 'participates,' and corresponds to the

argument for the immortality of the soul. Being only the 'second best course', however,

the hypothesis definitely underscores the aporetic stance that Plato still fundamentally

maintains; he is offering the Forms as a hypothesis. Echoing my interpretation of

Pyrrho's wariness of words, Socrates states that

> Accordingly, it occurred to me that I must have recourse to words, and in them
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> carry on the investigation of the true nature of things. Now perhaps the
>
> illustration that I employ to a certain degree does not correspond with the reality:
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> for I do not altogether admit that any one who pursues his researches after things
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> in words regards them in mere reflections any more than one who goes straight to

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[49] Plato, *Phaedo*, Translated by E.M. Cope (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1875), S48, 78.
[50] Plato, *Phaedo* 75-77.

the real object: but be that as it may, this is the way in which I started; and having laid down any conception which I judge to be most incontestable in each case, I assume as true whatever seems to me to be in accordance with it […] [51]

Thus, the second voyage is a turning away from a materialist, physically or doxastically-oriented mode of explanation for the true nature of things and a turning toward the intelligible, or beyond-physical explanation of things. The hypothesis is however spoken of without utter conviction or belief. As remarked a few short lines later,

> […] to this one thing I hold simply and artlessly and perhaps foolishly, that it is nothing else that makes it beautiful but that ideal beauty – whether we are to call it presence or communication, or in whatever way or by whatever means the connection is brought about – for on this latter point I can no longer pronounce any strong affirmation, but only to the extent that it is by the absolute beauty that all beautiful things are made beautiful. For this seems to me the safest answer […][52]

The Forms, and the way things are connected to them, are posited from an unsure position, which is only given as 'the best one can do'. Plato is maintaining Socrates' aporetic stance and putting forth the Forms, as well as participation, only as hypotheses. Further, in the previous quotation he is recognizing the realm of words, or *logoi*, as not

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[51] Ibid., 78-79.
[52] Plato, *Phaedo*, 79.

necessarily a good reflection of reality or of what one is speaking about. This is precisely Pyrrho's fear and what he avoids by maintaining his position of suspended judgement *in the realm of logoi* so that he is never letting what may only be a poor reflection of the true nature of things become a foundation for further utterances or beliefs.

1.5 Pyrrho, the *Meno*, and The Soul of The Hellenes

In the *Meno*, the first question Meno asks of Socrates regards whether virtue can be taught. It is answered by Socrates through a definitive underscoring of Socrates' ignorance and *aporia* regarding the subject. The soul is assumed to exist however, and is spoken of throughout the dialogue as something t customarily o be assumed to be part of everyone's ontological makeup. In this next section I hope to continue to show the role that *aporia* plays in Socratic dialogue and draw lines of comparison to the aporetic disposition espoused by Pyrrho. Furthermore, I want to show that the conventional function that the soul played in practically all philosophy at the time – so much so that even one such as Pyrrho, who inquired into everything and demanded everything 'no more' be than not be, allowed it in his own discussions. To begin we shall look at several passages from the *Meno* that shows Socrates employing his method, starting with the following line that demonstrates Socrates' outright claim to ignorance.

MENO: I do not; but, Socrates, do you really not know what virtue is? Are we to report this to the folk back home about you?

> SOCRATES: Not only that, my friend, but also that, as I believe, I have never yet met anyone else who did know.[53]

Plato, using language not unlike that suggested by Pyrrho, and exceptionally similar to that of Sextus Empiricus in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, points to the many difficulties in pinning down both what virtue is in itself, and how it is applied in its particularity. Plato employs statements about things being 'no more this than that' though perhaps less generally than Pyrrho, as found in the following passage.

> SOCRATES: When you speak like that, do you assert that the round is *no more* round than it is straight, and that the straight is *no more* straight than it is round?
> MENO: Certainly not, Socrates.
> SOCRATES: Yet you say that the round is *no more* a shape than the straight is, nor the one more than the other.
> MENO: That is true. [54]

These are certainly not equivalent to the sceptical utterances That Pyrrho recommends; yet the similarity is striking. The aporetic effect is meant to be the same, and Meno expresses this shortly thereafter.

> Socrates, before I even met you I used to hear that you are always in a state of perplexity and that you bring others to the same state, and now I think you are

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[53] Plato, *Meno*,71c, translated by G.M.A Grube in *Plato: Complete Works*, 872. My emphasis.
[54] Plato, *Meno* 74e.

bewitching and beguiling me, simply putting me under a spell, so that I am quite

perplexed. Indeed, if a joke is in order, you seem, in appearance and in every

other way, to be like the broad torpedo fish, for it too makes anyone who comes

close and touches it feel numb, and you now seem to have had that kind of effect

on me, for both my mind and my tongue are numb, and I have no answer to give

you.[55]

Meno both expresses his view of what Socrates seems to do, namely create doubt and

sow *aporia* in others, but also describes the effect that this *aporia* has on his soul as one

of numbness. Though not precisely the same as the speechlessness of *aphasia*, Meno's

numbness once again resounds of Pyrrho's novice sceptic developing into an aporetic

sage. Meno's inactivity in the face of finally experiencing *aporia* at the hand of Socrates'

doubtful questioning is the sign of his readiness to move forward in Plato's *paideia*. I

spoke earlier of the novice sceptic's experience of *aphasia* as a stepping-stone towards

ataraxia. Both Plato and Pyrrho begin with *aporia*, and both have aims that continue

after this is attained, neither resting in any sort of naïve realism. Focusing on Pyrrho, we

find that he turns his sceptical disposition upon his own views, notably his intial first

negatively dogmatic doubt regarding the nature of reality as unknowable, which he

overturns and extends his suspension of judgement to include. Plato does not assume the

aporetic state the same way as Pyrrho. Plato takes it as a position one must attain to

move forward in his continued argument for the existence of the soul, knowledge despite

flux, and hypotheses regarding the Forms, none of which have anything to do with a

continued maintenance of suspending judgement. Only Pyrrho made suspended

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[55] Ibid.*,* 80a-b.

judgement the priority, finding that maintaining an aporetic disposition, and *not* making claims about the nature of things, whether as hypotheses, theories, or otherwise, aided one in finding the happy life. This was because as much as Plato may strive to only hypothesize his Forms, once one begins to speak of things being such-and-such a way, and not 'no more this way than that way', utterances build upon utterances, views and beliefs develop from these compound utterances, and soon enough the fundamental epistemological and metaphysical uncertainties about the nature of things which first caste the philosopher into *aporia* are forgotten. This is precisely what develops disturbances within one's soul – opinions and convictions developed out of falsity as much as truth – and are exactly what Pyrrho wished to avoid by maintaining *epoche* and *aporia*. The *aporia* becomes something the philosopher may still *say* she maintains, but just like the theories that she begins to espouse and uphold were theories she once maintained *as only theories*, the *aporia* she once maintained also only becomes theoretical, and not actually practiced. Thus the would-be sceptic succumbs to allowing the mere speaking of things being such-and-such a way - be it the participation of Forms, the first principles of being, or what have you – to shape what she actually thinks.

1.6 Appearances, Customs, and The Soul of the Sceptic

The soul has come up several times already, and demands addressing in light of Pyrrho's scepticism, and the central role that the soul played in Greek philosophy and daily life. As much as the soul was commonplace in Greek speech and the understanding of the self, Socrates' development of the soul would be too much for Pyrrho to give assent to. We have gone over a great deal about the soul insofar as Plato and Socrates

may have spoken about it, and the sceptics were as prone to speaking about the soul as any other. Pyrrho would assent to the suggestion of the soul insofar as a recipient of *pathe* or a customary thing to speak of, much in the same way it is common custom today to speak of the mind, but anything about the nurturing of the soul would 'no more be than not be'. Even regarding *pathe*, as impressions on part of or all of the soul, Pyrrho would have no more agreed than disagreed and have given way to nothing more than what is conventional. To go by appearances, customs, and conventions was not to assent to the truth or reality of a thing, like the soul, but to allow it so as to continue to make sense and relate to others, so long as it was always maintained as no more being than not being in proper aporetic linguistic practice.

As a customary or conventional thing to speak of, Pyrrho certainly would have spoken of the soul, as later sceptics such as Sextus continued to, especially as something defined in contrast to the body but a part of one's self, and which survives after death. Tarrant indicates that the idea that the soul experiences "good or bad fortune in another world [after death] was deeply implanted in the Greek consciousness."[56] I do not wish to engage in the Platonic debate about the soul, but show that the soul was a thing spoken of by philosophers and ordinary people alike, and that there are several interesting similarities and differences between Pyrrho, Socrates, and Plato with regard to the soul and *aporia*. Much like debates rage today about mind and consciousness in everyday conversations as well as academic circles, it was not completely agreed upon as to what the soul was precisely, though many sophisticated accounts were made. The debate as to the nature and existence of the soul continued even within the Platonic tradition itself

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[56] Harold Tarrant, *The Last Days of Socrates*, translated by Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 104.

between figures such as Plotinus and Iamblichus.[57] Even keeping within Plato's own writings on the soul it is hard to attribute a single view on the soul to him (compare *Apology*, *Republic* book *IV*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo*). A strong line of comparison between Pyrrho and Plato can be found in the *Apology* (81c-e), where Plato seemed to be delineating a certain understanding of what the sage, as opposed to the ordinary person, would find in the afterlife. The philosopher's soul, having grasped the Ideas and realized the realm of *doxa* and *pragmata* for what it is (in Plato's understanding) only after achieving *aporia*, will stand out "among the living as Homer said Tiresias was among the dead, namely, that "he alone retained his wits while the others flitted about like shadows.""[58]

The ordinary soul, not having travelled Plato's path of *paideia*, neither achieving *aporia* nor realizing the Ideas, is essentially caught in the realm of *doxa* and particular *pragmata*, and will presumably not enjoy the same good existence as the philosopher's soul in the afterlife. Pyrrho would not have assented to the Ideas as lending to grasping the truth of the nature of things any more than opinions would; rather, customs and appearances, which are perhaps more like opinion than Idea in Platonic terms, are all either the philosopher or the ordinary person function within anyways. It is the ordinary, everyday, and customary use of a word that is key with Pyrrho. He may only *epoche* on the existence of the soul, but he still speaks of it as a customary or conventional thing, as he seemed to think, "that men do everything on the basis of convention and custom; for each thing is no more this than that."[59] It may well be that the soul no more is than is not – but practically speaking, the 'soul' is a customary way to convey certain ideas,

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[57] See Gegory Shaw, "After Aporia: Theurgy in Later Platonism."
[58] Plato, *Meno* 100a.
[59] Diogenes, 9.61.

especially regarding our ontological situation, and therefore Pyrrho will have it in his discussions and inquiries. His philosophy ideals with the everyday, and can only function within the customs and conventions – ranging from speaking about the soul to the operation of language itself – of those it wishes to help. Pyrrho's aporetic disposition operates within customs, especially linguistic ones, so as to: make sense to those whom it is intended to aid; and second, to alter how sense itself is made. This 'altered sense' is precisely what an aporetic disposition creates; it alters the assumptions that a person makes, reducing the number and the reinforcement of them by forcing a person implicitly to question or qualify everything that he says through the explicit utterance of the kind 'no more is than is not'. The soul is a good example for this, as Pyrrho did most likely *epoche* on its actual existence, but equally as likely continued to speak of it as something that existed at least according to custom.

Thus for Pyrrho, the soul 'no more is than is not', and the soul of the Platonic sage would 'no more' enjoy a potential afterlife than the soul of the ordinary person. Plato left behind the state of *aporia* to lay claim to knowledge about the nature of things, such as the soul, and the afterlife, both of which Pyrrho would engage in discussion about, but without leaving his suspension of judgement, and never departing from his practice of maintaining aporetic language towards those things he speaks of. To do so would be to begin habitually developing belief and opinions in things for which no belief or opinion is necessary. Furthermore, to speak of knowing about the soul or mind would be to go against his very purpose of maintaining *aporia* and avoiding discursive statements that are epistemologically or metaphysically non-evident and which may in turn give rise to troubling beliefs or assumptions about those statements. That being said,

the similarities between Socrates, Plato's Socrates, and Pyrrho, are striking. Pyrrho

simply did not wish to go further – that is, to speak of a hypothesis as true, and not

always qualify it as aporetic – as Plato did, and found the aporetic disposition lent itself

to a more contented life than striving for and assuming truth.

1.7 Pyrrho and Plato's *Theaetetus*

The final Platonic dialogue I wish to look at is the *Theaetetus*, and it is perhaps

the most relevant dialogue in both content as well as its execution regarding Socratic

aporia and the question of human knowledge. As Timothy Chappell notes, Plato's

dialogues have been taken to go through distinct stages; the early 'Socratic Dialogues'

(*Laches*, *Charmides*, *Alcibiades* I, *Euthyphro*, *Lysis*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major*) are

distinguished largely by their aporetic nature.[60] Later, after several 'transitional'

dialogues such as *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, Plato begins to move away from both the

aporetic disposition as well as the strict question-answer style most associated with

Socrates. The *Theaetetus*, being one of the last dialogues written, returns to the aporetic

style of the early dialogues, and in inquiring into the nature of knowledge, determines

three things that knowledge is not, without ever conclusively pointing to what knowledge

in fact is.[61]

The first theory of knowledge posited is that 'knowledge is perception', which is

tantalizingly close to what later sceptics, and even Pyrrho, were willing to act or assent to

without belief or assumptions regarding any presence of some 'absolute' truth. As it is

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[60] Timothy Chappell, "Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus," Stanford University.
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-theaetetus/ (accessed September, 2013).
[61] Ibid.

meant here, however, the idea that knowledge is perception is precisely what sceptics would not assent to, and becomes of great importance in Sextus' discussions on 'apprehension' in the final chapter. Just as with the soul, the sceptics would go with the appearance, custom, or convention of knowledge, but never assent to it being anything more than appearance or custom. It is important only to note that Socrates refutes this Protagorian conception of knowledge in several ways, notably by relativizing arguments and differentiating between 'perception' and 'appearance', and encourages Theaetetus to try again.

Theaetetus' second attempt begins as follows: "well, Socrates, one can't say that it is judgment in general, because there is also false judgment—but true judgment may well be knowledge. So let that be my answer. If the same thing happens again, and we find, as we go on, that it turns out not to be so, we'll try something else."[62] Echoing Plato's language for hypothesizing the Forms in *Phaedo*, it seems that here Socrates is leading Theaetetus to give birth to his own views by way of first realizing his own ignorance, that is, by first bringing him to *aporia*, and then having him posit his theories as things that may stand, or may stand in need of replacing. *Aporia* is the birthing ground for hypotheses as it is unbiased and preserves an open disposition, which is mostly Pyrrho's aim with his aporetic disposition; that is, never to cease an inquiry and remain open to the possibilities that other hypotheses may fit, or that no answer may solidify. This is once again a place of contrast and comparison between Pyrrho's sage and Plato's Socrates: Socrates appears to be recommending *aporia* to Theaetetus solely as a place to begin an inquiry into knowledge; Pyrrho, on the other hand, has *aporia* and *epoche* as the

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[62] Plato, *Theaetetus*, translated by M.J. Levett & Rev. Myles Burnyeat, in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper (Indiana: Hackett Publishing 1997) 157-235, at 207.

preferred state of mind *to be maintained* despite any hypothesizing. Socrates himself appears to espouse Pyrrho's take on *aporia*, though without the accompanying suspension of judgement. Perhaps this is Plato moving forward himself from Socrates' position, acknowledging Socrates' influence and the importance of *aporia*, but following Nausiphanes' advice, "that while one should acquire the disposition of Pyrrho, one should follow [one's] own theories."[63]

Plato presents five angles from which Socrates refutes Theaetetus' second definition of knowledge, revolving around accidental or untrue opinions and ultimately ending in the example of Athenian court. In this example it is shown that a lawyer cannot possibly give all the facts to the court and give them knowledge regarding the case, but he can persuade them despite the lack of knowledge, thus showing that an opinion not touching on knowledge can convince people all the same.[64] This reflects Diogenes' account of Pyrrho maintaining that, "one ought not to suppose that that which persuades us is true," and again shows a similarity in thinking and *aporia* between Pyrrho and Plato in that falsehoods can become the basis for beliefs and convictions as readily as can truths.[65]

Theaetetus gives his third and last attempt at defining knowledge, and gives it as a modification of his previous hypothesis: knowledge is true opinion with an account, or *logos*.[66] The account, initially put forward and refuted by Socrates in his dream analogy, is then divided into three possible alternative explanations. The first is *logos* as speech, or statement; the second is *logos* as the enumeration of the base elements of a thing; and

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[63] Diogenes, 9.64.
[64] Plato, *Theaetetus* 200d-201c.
[65] Diogenes, 9.94.
[66] Plato, *Theaetetus* 201c-d.

thirdly *logos* is proposed as a sign or *diaphora* of a thing.[67] Once again the arguments

utilized by Plato through Socrates refute these attempts to knowledge as not amounting

anything more than opinion. This criticism follows throughout the attempt at pinning

down a conception of *logos,* whether it is opinion of the thing at hand, the elements of the

thing at hand, or opinions differentiating the thing at hand from what it is not. The

Theaetetus ends in *aporia*, though not without Theaetetus having been drawn to a

fundamentally virtuous aporetic disposition from which he is already seen to be positing

a hypothesis and correcting it under criticism.

The midwifery of Socrates elicited this change, as Theaetetus states, "I am sure,

Socrates, that you have elicited from me a good deal more than ever was in me."[68]

Midwifery is, I believe, analogous to the ongoing process of maintaining an aporetic state

via linguistic practice. This is expounded in the following dialogue, where Theaetetus

admits that he has not heard that Socrates practices the art of midwifery:

> SOCRATES: But I do, believe me. Only don't give me away to the rest of the
>
> world, will you? You see, my friend, it is a secret that I have this art. That is not
>
> one of the things you hear people saying about me, because they don't know; but
>
> they do say that I am a very odd sort of person, always causing people to get into
>
> difficulties. You must have heard that, surely?
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> THEAETETUS: Yes, I have.
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> SOCRATES: And shall I tell you what is the explanation of that?

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[67] Ibid., 201-210.
[68] Plato, Theaetetus 148a.

THEAETETUS: Yes, please do.

SOCRATES: Well, if you will just think of the general facts about the business of midwifery, you will see more easily what I mean. You know, I suppose, that women never practice as midwives while they are still conceiving and bearing children themselves. It is only those who are past child-bearing who take this up.[69]

Socrates describes the art of midwifery as being observed by others as 'causing people to get into difficulties,' which is quite often how scepticism is described. Further, he states that one who already holds to opinions or theories cannot help others to genuinely develop their own. Only by being unburdened, or 'past bearing', can a midwife of theories bring a theory out on another without adding his or her own tincture of theory to it, thus spoiling the original and genuine theory of the person giving birth. One who has achieved *aporia*, and is able to maintain it in dialogue, is able to elicit the views and thoughts of one's interlocutor. The Pyrrhonian sage is more focused on his or her own views and thoughts, rather than achieving an objective idealism, but the comparison is still a strong one. Theodorus attests to Socrates' ability to elicit the views of his companions numerous times. This ability is further reflected in several places in the *Meno*: where Socrates is said to 'numb' his interlocutors; where he is said to bring Theaetetus to his wit's end; and where Socrates evokes anxiety in him. In line with maintaining an aporetic stance, Socrates does not seem to recommend holding onto the theories or conclusions that one may come to in speaking with him, as his ability to move

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[69]Ibid., 149a-b, 166

Theaetetus through the motions of labour seem quite objective and less interested in

Theaetetus' findings than in the art of midwifery itself.

Perhaps maintaining an aporetic stance was the extent of Socrates' teachings, and

Plato did indeed view this position as a vantage point from which to leap and posit the

Forms, and it is in the aporetic dialogues such as the *Theaetetus*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo* that

this difference between Socrates and Plato becomes most evident. This supposition, true

or not, makes a comparison between Pyrrho, Socrates, and Plato much easier and clearer;

Pyrrho and Socrates, both philosophers who wrote nothing and had their views carried

forth by their star pupil, both sought after a way of life that was defined by a practice of

being aware of one's own ignorance. It is hard to say where Socrates ends and Plato

begins, just as it is even harder, with the increase in obscurity, to say where Pyrrho ends

and Timon begins. It may be possible that one can maintain *aporia* regarding one's

theories regarding the nature of things, though I think this greatly limits what, precisely,

those theories regard. That being said, the conclusion of Nausiphanes that one ought to

have one's own views but maintain the disposition of Pyrrho, suggests that this is

precisely what Plato tried to do: maintain an aporetic disposition, yet still make

fundamental metaphysical and epistemological claims from such a position. Unlike

Pyrrho's sage, who, with his honed suspension of judgement, turned upon his own first

assumptions and purged them, Plato looked outward, seeing the aporetic disposition as a

vantage point only from which to start, not end. While not necessarily contradictory, so

far as Socrates is concerned, if one claims to be always in a state of *aporia*, but also

strives to uphold some hypothesis that assumes the nature of things to be a certain way,

whatever theory is being upheld will only be "simply and artlessly and perhaps foolishly"[70] carried out. Pyrrho would agree.

Pyrrho does not think that certainty in knowledge about the nature of things is something we know we have, even if we have it. Like Democritus, Parmenides, Metrodorus, Xenophanes, and Socrates before him, Pyrrho thought that philosophically striving for such truth lead one away from the *eudaimonic* life that the philosopher originally set out to find. Rather than struggle for such a lofty goal, Pyrrho found that giving up the struggle and maintaining an aporetic disposition towards such philosophical claims to the nature of reality resulted in the disappearance of a great deal of perturbation which otherwise hindered a happy life. He did this by constantly maintaining these epistemological and metaphysical uncertainties in the forefront of his use of language. By never allowing himself to be caught up in the dogmatic reality that language customarily assumes, Pyrrho never is caught up in struggles for the truth of things either in ordinary language or in philosophical discussion.

Consider this. A law firm advertizes that if you are injured at work, it will always fight for justice and get you a big monetary settlement. The implicit assumption in this statement is that money can stand in for justice, that justice for a workplace injury can be found in an exchange of money. Perhaps this is widely agreed upon by enough people that it becomes customary for a society to endorse such a practice, even if little to no thought is laid out by anyone as to what justice itself may or may not in fact be. Soon enough, even the question of what justice is becomes lost in the radio and television advertisements that already espouse the assumed reality that enough of a monetary exchange can get you justice. No one questions it as it has gone from a mix of implicit

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[70] Plato, *Phaedo* 79.

linguistic and doxastic belief to just a plain societal custom. A simple criticism of this is

that Pyrrho might be seen to recommend, to an extent, accepting customs and

conventions as one must to participate in society or language (and indeed Pyrrho did

participate in both) and that Pyrrho would accept this as any other convention. However,

he would do so *without belief*; he washed pigs and did things that custom would normally

frown upon according to Diogenes. Taking Pyrrho's attitude toward conventions to his

use of language, he would still not assent to the belief, opinion, or custom that money has

anything to do with justice, "For he said that nothing was either honourable or shameful,

just or unjust; similarly for all cases he said that nothing exists in truth but that men do

everything on the basis of convention and custom; for each thing is no more this than

that."[71] Pyrrho would immediately recognize the assumption in such a statement, and

though he would not deny its potential for being true, he would argue for the uncertainty

of such a proposition, and the question of *what justice is* would never be lost, nor would

the answer ever be assumed to be found.

1.8 Chapter One Conclusion

The discrete, habituated, and aporetic use of language has the effect of never

losing the uncertainty of knowing precisely what something like 'justice' is in itself. In

doing so, the ongoing state of *aporia* reduces the number of beliefs and convictions one

has. The reduction of beliefs and convictions regarding what is real or true in exchange

for *aporia* and suspension of judgment is the path that Pyrrho recommends as bringing

about a happier life that is less disturbed by beliefs and convictions by the very fact that

one who follows the sceptical way has fewer beliefs.

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[71] Diogenes, 9.61.

The discussion of Pyrrho in this chapter has centered upon several key passages that indicate a specific attitude towards the human condition, towards the way in which beliefs are generated, and towards the way that language can be utilized to refine the generation of beliefs. The specific attitude is one of maintaining an aporetic stance in the use of language and the way one makes propositions, such that dogmatic statements do not give rise to dogmatic beliefs and convictions. Further, comparisons have been made between Pyrrho and Plato regarding *aporia* and how central uncertainty and wisdom through awareness of ignorance were to both of these thinkers. Pyrrho's ascetic, aporetic disposition, echoed in Socrates' language in several Platonic dialogues, is made and maintained within language via sceptical utterances so as to address language use itself, and more importantly, to address the troubling effects language has upon our conscious and unconscious ontological beliefs and opinions.

If the teachings of Pyrrho are to be summed up in as few words as possible, it would be as follows: if one wishes to try to live a less easily disturbed life, one should try to speak in such a way that emphasizes the uncertainty that one feels about the things one encounters in life. For with the recognition of the uncertainty of knowledge comes wisdom, and with practice of uncertainty comes freedom from disturbance.

Chapter Two

2.1 Introduction: Academic Scepticism

Where the first chapter focused on Pyrrho and the origins of Pyrrhonian

scepticism and aporetic language, the second chapter follows chronologically the next

major development in scepticism, Academic scepticism. The overall aim of the chapter

is to contrast and compare Pyrrho's brand of scepticism with that of the Academic

sceptics, with the goal of furthering our understanding of aporetic linguistic praxis.

Comparisons are first drawn from what has been discussed in the last chapter about

Pyrrho and Plato to Arcesilaus, the first sceptical head of the Academy. The differences

and similarities between Pyrrho's scepticism and that of the early Academy are

highlighted with particular focus given to the argumentative nature of Academic

scepticism, as well as the greatly altered change in goals that followed this new-found

focus in argumentation. Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism are even at first flush

obviously very different, but by focusing on the language practice as being central to the

Pyrrhonian way, the differences become more apparent.

The head of the Academy many years after Arcesilaus, Carneades is introduced as

an example of the widening gap between Pyrrho's scepticism and that of the Academy.

Such concepts as *ataraxia* and even *eudaimonia* take a definitive back seat to dialectical or even sophistical argumentation under his headship. His *to pithanon* ('to the probable'), as well as Arcesilaus' *to eulogon* ('to the reasonable') arguments are found to be unworkable in any way but as dialectical argument; that is, arguments offered up as mere responses or refutations to positions held by other schools, the Stoic school in particular. The language practice of Pyrrho is completely absent from the philosophy of these Academic sceptics, as evidenced by their argumentative focus, as well as the adaption of the phrase 'no more' – so central to Pyrrho's sceptical language – to being a dialectical ploy.

Pyrrho's focus on the practice of language for the reduction of beliefs and disturbances in a person's life – whereby beliefs are thought to lend to the development of disturbances regarding the convictions surrounding those very beliefs – is emphatically wiped from the drawing board during the years in which Academic scepticism is the foremost form of scepticism. As will be made clear, the Academics were concerned about arguing and about being right more than they were concerned with a way of life, and if one thing is clear about Pyrrhonian scepticism, it is that Pyrrhonism is mainly concerned with a linguistic praxis solely related to a way of life.

2.2 Scepticism up to this Point

Sextus Empiricus was shown earlier to draw distinctions in attitude between three general philosophical modes in the opening sections of his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. These divisions include: the dogmatists, who ceased philosophical inquiries as they thought they had found the answers to their inquiries; the Academic sceptics, who settled

their inquiries as they thought the inquiries could not be answered; and the Pyrrhonian sceptics, who did not settle their inquiry as they thought the inquiries neither solved nor unsolvable. I interpreted Pyrrho as falling somewhere between what Sextus would have labeled as Academic negative dogmatism, and Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement. That is, Pyrrho began in negative dogmatism, claiming to know that the nature of reality was such that it was inherently unknowable, or that our inability to apprehend reality lead to it being inapprehensible, from which Pyrrho moved to suspend judgement on all things *including* the initial claim. Pyrrho maintains a disposition of *aporia* by always practicing language in such a way that *epoche* is forefront – never stating that things are any one way more than another, or that a thing is any more than not – avoids much of the troubles that arise from persistently claiming to know things. The troubles arise largely from the connection between belief and knowledge that language foists upon its users, namely, that one believes to have justified one's underlying beliefs regarding the propositions that one makes.

Take for example, a renowned physicist talking about quantum theory. He states that "we know this because of quantum theory," and goes on to explain what he thinks we know about the world. Rather than explain the nature of the theory, or even delimit the knowledge claim to "we may know," he assumes the knowledge as given, and we take him at his word – that is, we hear his claim. This has repercussions in at least two directions: first, his language as it is spoken to himself no longer admits to the possibility of being wrong and speaks to a certainty that Pyrrho dismissed; second, his language as it is spoken to others does not admit to fallibility either.

The theorist's assumption of knowledge is troubling in that he is essentially being dishonest to himself, and dishonest to others who happen to hear him. As we might recall from the Socratic dialogues discussed in the previous chapter, theories and hypotheses do not and should not be taken for incontestable knowledge, and should always remain open to being replaced by a more fitting hypothesis. As an expert on the topic of his propositions, our quantum theorist should be openly aware of the potential shortcomings of his theories, and therefore more aware of the limits of his knowledge. This awareness of the limits of knowledge should not be mere lip service to theoretical epistemology. As the Pyrrhonians would have it, the awareness of the limits of knowledge should be a practice that permeates the very propositions that describe attempts *to know*. Becoming blind to the possibility that one's theories, opinions, and beliefs might not be the infallible truth that one assumes them to be, is the root of all the strong convictions and beliefs that remove one from living a happier and less disturbed life.

More to the point, while the quantum theorist may (hopefully) in fact be aware that 'to know' in the absolute sense that language suggests in the use of that verb is not the 'know' that he intends; both he and the others who hear him only hear his language as operating with that absolute sort of 'to know'. It was found that fallible language is precisely what Pyrrho aimed for in his language practice. By fallible language I simply mean language that does not make absolute claims to knowledge, but rather focuses on *aporia*. However, an explicitly fallible 'to know' of which Pyrrho would approve (whereby uncertainty of knowledge is more important than certainty of knowledge) is less powerful in developing beliefs and convictions in another person than a dogmatic or infallibly uttered 'to know' would. A person who is trying to sell you a car will get much

further in convincing you of his beliefs by saying he definitely knows *X* about the qualities of the car than if he uncertainly claimed *X* about the car. The same stands for the quantum theorist; he and almost any person making a proposition is in some way trying to *sell you* what he or she is saying. Any theorizing or discussion developed from what someone has 'infallibly' stated (that we *know* something because of a theory, or that the salesman *knows* you will love the heated seats) will continue to carry that tone of absolute knowing for no better reason than that the custom of language forces its users to speak and hear in absolutes. This custom or habit of language, where infallibly stated propositions are assumed as true or more true than uncertain ones, will develop further theories and hypotheses that continue to build a chain of assumed 'infallible' theories and hypotheses into a body of assumed knowledge. In this way, 'knowledge' is built ever higher but no mind is given to the unstable foundation that has become obscured. Pyrrho started with the claim that denies absolute knowledge, and then from the achieved state of *aporia* that followed from this, he expanded his aporetic stance and *epoche* to include that first claim, thereby no longer denying human knowledge or that things can be known, but suspending judgement.

Thus, we can see that this sort of language, operating only with infallibility, does not belong in any sort of genuine inquiry, and the belief that develops from this sort of disingenuous inquiry can be founded as much on falsehood as on truth. Hence Pyrrho wanted our language, especially that of inquiry, to reflect the potential fallibility of our thinking and avoid the promulgation of beliefs and theories based on falsehoods and deception.

<u>2.3 Arcesilaus And the Early Academic Sceptics</u>

Lines of comparison were also drawn between Pyrrho, Plato, and Socrates, concerning *aporia* and the customary discussion of the soul in both everyday and philosophical contexts. The connections between these three are reinforced in the thought of the founder of the Academic brand of scepticism, Arcesilaus. A heavily sceptical thinker, he became head of what is now considered the Middle Academy around 273 BCE, left no writings, and consequently little is directly known about him save what has passed through exchanges of interpretation. His scepticism was directly drawn from Socrates, and to a lesser extent Plato, and developed in opposition to Stoic epistemology.[72] Arcesilaus took up Socrates' maxim for achieving wisdom through the recognition of *aporia* (that is, recognition of one's own ignorance), and championed the dialectical method of Socrates to reduce one's interlocutors to *aporia* and never espousing a view of one's own. That Pyrrho also influenced Arcesilaus is attested to by Numenius, who further stated that Arcesilaus seemed to endorse an absolute form of *epoche*, or suspension of judgement, much like Pyrrho was said to have pioneered.[73] It would seem that contemporaries of Arcesilaus even had a hard time telling which philosophical camp Arcesilaus gave his allegiance to, as Numenius reports

> Being equipped from one source and another, Arcesilaus persisted in refuting everything, just like a Pyrrhonian except for the name […] The Sceptics called him a sceptic, just like themselves, since he abolished truth, falsity, and plausibility. Thus, because of his Pyrrhonian arguments, he was called a

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[72] Frede, 263.

[73] Numenius, 736d, I used the text in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition,* translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).

Pyrrhonian, but out of deference to his lover [Crantor] he let himself continue to be called an   Academic.[74]

Cicero also gives a clear example of Arcesilaus bringing about a sceptical direction to the Academy, though without mentioning Pyrrho. Cicero claims that Arcesilaus followed Democritus - whom we have already shown to have had great sway over Pyrrho's thought - in that Arcesilaus "denied that there was anything that could be known, not even that very thing that Socrates thought was left for him to know [namely, that he knew nothing]."[75] And furthermore, in the same vein of showing the sceptical roots of Socrates and Plato, Cicero writes, "They call it the New Academy, but it seems to me to be Old, at least if we count Plato as belonging to the Old, for in his books nothing is affirmed and there are many arguments on both sides of an issue, everything is open to question, and nothing is said with certainty."[76] Thus, Arcesilaus is a strong link to Pyrrho and Plato, connecting Pyrrho's central tenet of *epoche* to Plato's Academy after his death.

While the connections between Arcesilaus, Pyrrho, and Socrates, particularly on the importance of *aporia*, seem clear enough, Diogenes Laertius claims that Arcesilaus was the first to suspend judgement on account of the equal strength of contradictions among arguments. Further, he credits Arcesilaus with moving the doctrine of Plato towards a more eristic method, presumably away from or at least modifying Socratic *elenchus*.[77] This suggests that Arcesilaus was familiar with Pyrrho's suspension of

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[74] Numenius, 731b-c.

[75] Cicero, *Academia* 1.45, I used the text in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition,* translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).

[76] Ibid., 1.46.

[77] Diogenes, 4.28. *Eristic*: to argue or debate, particularly for no reason other than to argue. *Elenchus*: also called 'socratic method'; the method of getting at the truth through question and answer.

judgement, but moved away from the aporetic praxis of language that Pyrrho espoused

(though not *aporia* itself) by having the utterance 'no more this than that' metamorphose

into an eristic weapon used to show the contradictions among arguments. By this

Arcesilaus clearly distances himself from the language practice of Pyrrho, as the

utterance is no longer functioning as a practiced phrase for maintaining epistemological

and metaphysical uncertainty in daily life. Arcesilaus leapt into the fray of language not

to find the truth, and certainly not in the same ascetic spirit that Pyrrho did, but to attack

those who thought they had found it, and to reduce them to *aporia* with equal

argumentation (*isostheneia*). Pyrrho only aimed to develop a way to the good life

following an almost ascetic path and living the sagacious life of his philosophy.

Arcesilaus openly attacked any position, including any that he may have been seen to

hold, carrying forward Pyrrho's method of suspending judgement on everything, as well

as the aporetic stance shared by Pyrrho and Socrates, speaking of the 'wise man' only as

a dialectical or rhetorical trope. The language and intention of *epoche* remained largely

unchanged, but the practice of language had become an outward weapon against others

rather than praxis for expressing and maintaining one's own *aporia*. Where Pyrrho

focused on practicing a specific language to improve his life that in itself was

incompatible with holding an infallible position, Arcesilaus aimed to use language to

argue at every opportunity as if his position were, for the moment at least, infallible.

The move away from Socratic dialogue that Diogenes reports seems somewhat

off the mark, as Arcesilaus did seem to conduct his arguments using much the same

'question and answer' method of Socrates. The difference is that where Socrates wished

to birth theories, Arcesilaus wanted to refute them immediately.[78] This difference may be mostly attributed to the presence of such schools of thought as Epicureanism and Stoicism, the latter of which the sceptics were entangled in debate with for many years, which was largely begun by Arcesilaus. While Arcesilaus upheld universal *epoche* and did not assent or dissent to any argument or conclusion being true or false, much of his dialectical argumentation was targeted at Stoic epistemology. The animosity toward Stoic theory appears to be the most defining feature of Arcesilaus' thought, along with the fact that he argued on either side of any argument, and did not espouse any view himself. Cicero points to Aristotle as being one of the first to argue both sides of an argument, but with the intention of setting everything down that could be said, rather than to reduce the whole effort to *aporia*.[79] As Numenius puts it,

No one knew about Arcesilaus' stand any more than they knew about which side the son of Tydaeus was on […] He did not have it in him ever to express one and the same position nor, for that matter, did he think such a thing at all worthy of a shrewd man […] Like a hydra, he decapitated himself and was decapitated by himself […]" [80]

 The hydra-like atttributes of Arcesilaus had the effect of him appearing to his opponents to espouse beliefs that were opposite and contrary to those he argued against, most notably those held by the Stoic Xeno of Citium.

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[78] Frede, 266.
[79] Cicero, *On Goals*, 5.10.
[80] Numenius, 730b-d.

The Stoics argued that nature provides humans with faculties enough to form

kataleptic impressions, or impressions which "given the way they come about, cannot fail

to be true," and provide for us a solid foundation for knowledge.[81] Recall that

impressions were regarded as impressions on the soul, and both were generally accepted

in philosophical and everyday speech. In *Against Colotes*, Plutarch outlines how the

sceptics were willing to speak of the soul, stating,

> there are three movements in the soul, that of presentation, that of impulse, and
> that of assent. Presentation cannot be removed even by those who want to, but it
> is necessary that those who meet with objects should be impressed and affected
> by them; and impulse is awoken by presentation, and moves man to act with
> respect to what is appropriate to him, as though a tipping of the scales and an
> inclination occurred in the leading part [of the soul]. Now, those who suspend
> judgement on all matters do not abolish this second motion either, but they use
> impulse, which naturally leads a man towards what is presented as being
> congenial to him […] For the argument for suspension of judgement does not
> interfere with sense-perception, nor does it introduce into our irrational
> experiences and movements some change which disrupts our faculty of
> presentation. All it does is remove opinions; the rest it makes use of in
> accordance with their natures.[82]

[81] Frede, 265.
[82] Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1122b-c, f, I used the text in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition,* translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).

Though not Arcesilaus' exact account of the soul, if there is one, the above is an acceptable general account of how the sceptics would have utilized customary beliefs to dialectically engage their opponents. The above account of the soul appears to be a joining thread in ancient scepticism, having its root in Democritus, flourishing in Pyrrho, and coming to maturity in Sextus Empiricus centuries later.[83]

Setting aside the general account of Arcesilaus and returning to his debate with Stoic epistemology to further understand his own position, we find that Zeno's epistemological theory building up to *kataleptic* impressions followed a form similar to the following: believing something is to give assent to an impression which gives itself to showing a thing in a certain way, whereby some impressions deserve assent and others do not. An impression deserving of assent gives itself to what it arose from in such a way that it is exactly as what it arose from. Thus, "your impression that this book is green deserves assent, if your impression has its origin in fact and if it precisely and accurately represents this fact."[84] Stoic epistemology used *kataleptic* or 'cognitive' impressions to build a theory of knowledge. As Sextus puts it some time later, a Stoic *kataleptic* impression "arise[s] from what is, and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is, of such a kind as could not arise from what is not."[85] This view was precisely what Arcesilaus targeted in much of his argumentation that has survived today. Cicero outlines a number of Academic arguments used against the validity of *kataleptic* impressions, including the possibility of deceiver gods and hallucinations.

One particular argument attributed to Arcesilaus against this line of Stoic thought concerns the viability of a *kataleptic* impression over an equally convincing but false

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[83] Sextus Empiricus, *PH*, 1.21-24.
[84] Frede, 267.
[85] Sextus Empricus, M 7.248.

impression.[86] Say you have a favourite pen on your desk, and you come into your office, recognize it, pick it up and use it, having the impression that it is your favourite pen such that you judge it to really be that pen. I enter the room and hand you what is in fact your favourite pen, having switched it out for a pen that looked exactly like it before you came in to the room. You believed yourself to be having a *kataleptic* impression, and thus 'knew' that this pen was your favourite one, but in fact a pen that looked exactly like your favourite pen gave you the same, but false, impression. This is how Arcesilaus argued that there is no such thing as a *kataleptic* impression. The point is that the Stoics said that *kataleptic* impressions were the foundation for knowledge, yet Arcesilaus points out that there is no way to tell a 'true' *kataleptic* impression from a false one.

Put another way, Sextus reports that the Stoics argued "there are three things linked to each other: knowledge, opinion, and, placed between these, grasping."[87] Knowledge is strong and unchanging, opinion is weak, and grasping is the assent to a *kataleptic* impression. They maintained that knowledge is accessible to the wise, opinion to the ordinary person, and grasping available to both. Arcesilaus argued that grasping is no midway point between knowledge and opinion, as grasping onto a *kataleptic* impression is available to both wise and unwise, and there is no difference between the grasping of the two. Thus, recalling Plutarch's discussion of the soul,

> a [*kataleptic* impression] is non-existent, first because assent occurs not with
> respect to a presentation but with respect to a statement, for assents are given to
> propositions; second, because there is no [*kataleptic* impression] such that there

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[86] Cicero, *Ac. Pr.* 49-50.
[87] Sextus Empiricus, M. 7.150.

could not be a false one just like it […] Since there is no [*kataleptic* impression], grasping will not occur either, for the assent has to be to a [*kataleptic* impression]. And if there is no grasping, everything will be ungraspable. Everything being ungraspable, it will follow, even according to the Stoics, that the wise man suspends judgement. [88]

The *kataleptic* impressions that the Stoics wished to show as generating the truth of propositions that articulate their content are shown to be ungraspable. Since Arcesilaus "agrees with Zeno and holds that the wise man's chief strength is that he is careful not to be tricked and sees to it that he is not deceived," he was able to argue that even the Stoic sage *would by his own argumentation* sooner resort to *epoche* than assent to mere opinion.[89] Arcesilaus' argument essentially reduces the Stoic conception of *kataleptic* impressions to something that cannot be proven to be anything more than opinion by the wise man any more than by the novice, and the Stoic sage by his own admission should rather suspend judgement than assent to mere opinion.

Arcesilaus can be said to have had *aporia* and *epoche* as central to his mode of argument, as the previous argument against the Stoics makes clear. Yet, because of the focus on dialectical argument, there is an apparent gap between the pedagogical teaching of Pyrrho and the antagonistic and argumentative nature of Acresilaus' Academic scepticism. The Academic arguments certainly worked towards reducing opponents to *epoche*, but did so with considerably less practical concern for the way of life that might follow the arguments. That is, the Academics offered the arguments for the sake of

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[88] Ibid., M. 7.154-155.
[89] Cicero, 2.66.

arguing a point with little or no underlying praxis for the way in which one might conduct one's life. Arcesilaus' argument for reducing the Stoic position to *epoche* is a definitive connection to the aporetic language praxis that Pyrrho taught and espoused. Pyrrho's aim to inculcate *aporia* and *epoche* is most evident in Arcesilaus' attempt to bring the Stoic interlocutor to experience *epoche* herself. The striking difference, however, is that Arcesilaus is willing to argue with the Stoic so as to bring about the experience of *epoche*, while Pyrrho would never argue, but would only try to teach his sceptical way of life.

The Stoics criticized Arcesilaus' position of universal *epoche* as being impractical and unlivable, generally known as the '*apraxia* charge' (*apraxia* literally means 'unable to act'). The charge of *apraxia* states that action requires belief at some level, and universal *epoche* is therefore impossible.[90] The person who claims to suspend judgement universally is, according to the charge, unable to act due to her claiming openly to not chose any course of action over any other. If she does act, then she contradicts her claim to universal *epoche*. Once again turning to the passage of Plutarch on the differences between presentation, impulse, and assent, as well as Sextus' point that assent is not simply given to presentation but to statements and propositions, Arcesilaus' response becomes manifest: one does not need to assent to mere opinions, but can react to presentations and impressions upon the soul in accord with the natural impulses that he or she feels. The impression or *pathe* that you are sitting in a chair does not require, nor is equivalent to, the proposition 'you are sitting in a chair.'

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[90] Thorsrud, 50.

Reminiscent of Pyrrho's fundamental cause for maintaining an aporetic disposition via linguistic praxis, one does not need to assent to the linguistic statement about the nature of things in order to perceive, or act on, impressions given.   Whereas Pyrrho concerned himself with the individual being happy, Arcesilaus focused on dialectically engaging dogmatists. Arcesilaus maintained that impressions are endless and scepticism does not deny that we are affected by them. Scepticism does not avoid anything in impressions themselves, but refrains from holding opinion as anything but opinion and avoids falsehoods and deception.[91]   Likened to Xenophanes' analogy of people searching a dark room for gold, by which gold is absolute knowledge, sceptics do not deny that we can feel like we have touched upon gold, or even that we do in fact have gold in our hands.[92] Rather, given the darkness of the room, sceptics suspend judgement on whether we can say for certain that what any person might grasp at is without a doubt, golden.

According to Sextus, Arcesilaus continued, however, and upheld that one who holds to universal *epoche* regulates choices and acts according to *eulogon*, or reasonableness, which leads to morally correct actions and a happy life.[93] *To eulogon* (the reasonable) was Arcesilaus' direct response to the *apraxia* charge, and combined with the argument given earlier against Stoic epistemology, which concluded that there are no presentations that can be perceived, these seem to be the reasons that Sextus defined Academic scepticism as different from Pyrrhonian. Namely, Arcesilaus appears to be denying our ability to grasp anything at all, which falls to Sextus' charge of

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[91] Ibid., 51.
[92] Sextus Empiricus, M 7.52.
[93] Ibid., M. 7.158.

negative dogmatism, and that Arcesilaus claimed to know that living according *to eulogon* brings about the good life, which is a clear claim to knowing something and therefore is just plain dogmatism. Several scholars maintain that this might be a specious interpretation of Arcesilaus.[94]

If we read Arcesilaus as engaging with Stoic epistemology dialectically, as we have been supposing he does as carrying forward the tradition of Socrates and Plato, he is responding to Stoic interlocutors *only to respond, refute, and cast them into aporia*. As Plutarch noted of the sceptical dialectic, "debates with those philosophers [i.e. sceptics] are carried out by the rules of dialectic and 'Such a word as you spoke, that you will hear as your answer.'"[95] A dialectical understanding of Arcesilaus seems to be germane to his indebtedness to the Socratic method and the Platonic tradition, of which he was, after all, the scholarch. Moreover, a dialectical understanding of Arcesilaus would be germane to understanding the influence that Pyrrho's suspension of judgement had on it, as Pyrrho ultimately aimed for *aporia* and suspended judgement on everything that might perturb one's soul, as did Arcesilaus in most every account of him. The charge of negative dogmatism regarding *to eulogon* is somewhat harder to shake, unless we assume it is a purely dialectical ploy as well, only put forward in response to an initial Stoic dogma.

A general account of Arcesilaus' philosophy can therefore be understood as a combination of Pyrrhonian suspension of judgement and Socratic dialectic method, but with a greatly diminished focus on the individual's life. He suspended judgement on

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[94] Mates, Thorsrud, Frede.
[95] Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1122b, I used the text in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition,* translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998). Plutarch quotes Homer's *Illiad*, a favourite of Pyrrho's according to Diogenes' account of Pyrrho.

everything and argued every side of an argument so as to cast his interlocutor into *aporia* and show that *epoche* leads to fewer falsehoods and deception. The majority of these arguments were against Stoic epistemology and therefore, though he was arguing dialectically, he was taken to be defending the positions he took up against it despite holding universal *epoche* in higher esteem. As with Pyrrho, Arcesilaus was aware the role language played in developing beliefs and opinions, though rather than recommend a way of utilizing language to maintain *aporia*, Arcesilaus aimed to beat opponents with language via dialectic expertise. It was reported that he

> was enchanting and bewitching with his verbal apparitions, as a result of careful preparation and practice, he would not allow that he or anyone else was in a position to know anything. He terrified and confused [others], and indeed took first prize for sophistic arguments and argumentative fraud, delighting in the charge, and priding himself marvelously on not knowing whether something is shameful or honourable, good or bad […]"[96]

Arcesilaus desired a route to *aporia* and *epoche* that was quite the opposite approach of Pyrrho's ascetic, *aphasic* path of the sage. In the previous example of the dogmatic physicist, Arcesilaus would rather beat the physicist outright in arguing what it is 'to know' than offer him a mode of speech to correct himself. This is indicative of the change in goals between Pyrrho and Arcesilaus; the former wished to make one's life better via *aporia*, whereas the latter wanted to argue whatever truth one thought one held into *aporia*. Pyrrho wanted to teach a way of life, and Arcesilaus wanted to argue. Arcesilaus engaged the game of language that dogmatists played themselves, showing

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[96] Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.* bk xiv, ch. vi, 730c.

that truth was not available to him nor his interlocutors even in their own terms, and that the most shrewd course of action was not to accept the conclusions of argumentation as anything other than mere opinion or sophistical wriggling, of which he was himself adept. This is what I believe to be the heart of Pyrrho's teaching; to alleviate poorly founded beliefs – beliefs about reality developed out of nothing but conventions and customs of language, which have become assumed *to be* reality and truth. Arcesilaus may have changed tack a great deal from his roots in Pyrrho and Socrates, but the fusion of these two influences along with his antagonistic designs against the Stoics did not lose this essential thread of alleviating poorly founded beliefs. However, as will be seen in Carneades, there is a fundamental difference between Arcesilaus and Pyrrho already touched on in Arcesilaus' mode of argument – essentially that he would *rather* argue than teach. Perhaps it is only a pedagogical difference, and Arcesilaus did aim to teach, but his method is far different than the ascetic nature of Pyrrho's teaching, which was about recognizing a crucial problem with how we operate language and how language in turn shapes our ontological views, and addressing this problem with altered language practice.

2.4 Carneades And the 'New' Academic Sceptics

Carneades took over the scholarchate of the Academy four scholarchs after Arcesilaus' headship, and largely took up the arguments of Arcesilaus as well as many of his eristic attacks on the Stoics. He left no writings, and most of what is known of him today is handed down from his followers, most notably Philo and Clitomachus. While Arcesilaus largely focused on attacking epistemological accounts such as the Stoic conception of *kataleptic* impressions, Carneades desired to cast into doubt more than just

what Stoics might argue, altering the direction of the Academy enough that his headship marked for posterity the beginning of the New Academy.

This being said, it is the influence of Carneades that appears to have inspired Aenesidemus, in the 1st century CE, to criticize the Academy of being little more than 'Stoics fighting with Stoics'.[97] Whether this was directly a criticism of Carneades or of those who followed him, the new direction of Carneades is clearly seen in the differences he espoused in his exposition of *epoche* as well as in his answer of *to pithanon* (where the sceptic's actions are explained as to be in accord with 'the probable,') in regard to the charge of *apraxia*, which will be explained in detail shortly. However, the dialectic and eristic focus started in Arcesilaus remains very much intact, ensuring a greater divide between Carneades and Pyrrho than between Carneades and Arcesilaus. The divide becomes increasingly apparent when compared with the aporetic linguistic practice that I have argued to be the central tenet of Pyrrho's teaching, and distinctly absent in the Academic tradition. Carneades represents the sceptical camp furthest removed from that of the Pyrrhonians, as his arguments are much harder to reconcile with the teachings of *epoche*, *ataraxia*, and the utterances, which are the core of Pyrrhonism. Carneades' rigorous account of *to pithanon*, claiming that a sceptic's actions are in accord with what is most probable, hardly seems to be a dialectical manoeuvre, and with only a minor indication of attention to how beliefs are generated, it is found that Academic scepticism under Carneades is about as far from the aims of Pyrrhonism as can be.

The discussion of Carneades' position is taken up for two reasons: first, to have a more rigorous report on the development of scepticism from Pyrrho to Sextus,

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[97] Photius, *Bibliotheca* 212, 170a, I used the text in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings Second Edition*, translated by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).

particularly within the Academic tradition itself, and second, to have a variation of

scepticism against which to compare the Pyrrhonian position as regards aporetic

linguistic praxis. To begin, Carneades continued to argue on both sides of an issue, but

no longer with the intention of *isostheneia*, or equal force of argumentation.[98] As

Michael Frede indicates, this move away from *isostheneia* may be a move to avoid the

dogmatic claim that *isostheneia* leads to *epoche*. To make the definitive claim that

isostheneia leads to *epoche*, is to make a dogmatic claim, and this is precisely what

scepticism avoids. A more plausible explanation might be found in looking at an

argument of Arcesilaus' noted earlier upon which Carneades built. Noted earlier in

Sextus (*M*. 7.150) the argument was a dialectical one against the Stoic conception of

kataleptic impressions, and concluded that there is no such thing as a *kataleptic*

impression as the Stoic wise man could not be proven to grasp a *kataleptic* impression

any more convincingly than an ordinary man could be proven to grasp one.[99] All that the

Stoic wise man could be said to grasp was opinion, which was previously reserved as

what only the ordinary man could grasp, and hence the *kataleptic* impression, which was

the basis of Stoic knowledge, was reduced to opinion. Carneades allegedly offered a

counterpart to this argument, which Frede summarizes:

> Carneades' argument, however, in addition to the first premiss, that if the wise
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> man ever gives assent, he will have mere opinions, took as a second premiss the
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> denial of Arcesilaus' conclusion, to infer the denial of Arcesilaus' second

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[98] Frede, 272.

[99] Recall the *kataleptic* impression of your favourite pen that was not actually your favourite pen, and could not be proven to be a *kataleptic* impression.

premiss, and thus conclude that even the wise man sometimes will have opinions.[100]

By this argument, Carneades indicates that the Stoic wise person may indeed hold opinions, thus arguing both sides of Arcesilaus' argument itself, yet still only offering the Stoic conclusions that were contrary to his own, as the Stoic must either: *epoche*, as by the Stoic's own admission the wise person never assents to opinion (only to *kataleptic* impressions); or have the wise person assent to mere opinion, as *kataleptic* impressions have been reduced to assenting to the most probable or plausible, i.e., *to pithanon.* Concluding with either *epoche* or *to pithanon*, Carneades presents us with a conundrum similar to that which Arcesilaus presented; is Carneades espousing *epoche* and simply arguing dialectically, or is he actually arguing that he assents to plausible opinions? To answer this, a more complete understanding of the finer points of what Carneades meant by his use of *to pithanon* needs to be achieved.

In his work *Academia*, which had a moral focus lacking in most other accounts of scepticism, Cicero points to the debate as to whether the wise person might hold an opinion despite not perceiving anything in truth. He reprimands Carneades for seeming to fall to allowing the sage to hold mere opinion (in Cicero's thought, though not relevant here, this is to make a moral mistake), and he points out that, "this thesis [*to pithanon*] was advanced as a debating point rather than as something of which he really approved."[101] In other words, Cicero thought that Carneades' position of claiming that

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[100] Frede, 273.
[101] Cicero, *Academia*, 2.78.

the sceptic's actions are in accord with what is 'most probable' was simply a rhetorical argument, with no connection to what Carneades carried out in his ordinary life.

Sextus is often less forgiving of Carneades' position, saying that Carneades firstly maintained that there was absolutely no criterion for truth, and only in being coerced to provide a criterion for life and finding happiness did Carneades give in to positing the criterion of *to pithanon*.[102] That is, Sextus does not here seem to follow the supposition that Carneades was arguing dialectically, and did suppose that Carneades in fact believed there to be a plausible presentation, particularly a "presentation which is at the same time plausible, uncontroverted, and thoroughly tested."[103] Further to this point, Numenius was recorded as indicating that Carneades did not think universal *epoche* was humanly possible.[104]

 Sextus continues to delineate his grasp of Carneades' position, explaining his understanding of Carneades' plausible, uncontroverted, and tested presentations in due course.

Beginning with plausibility, he states that presentations are *of* an object *to* a subject, and thus plausibility at root concerns the relation that presentations have with the object(s), and with the subject. In terms of a presentation's relation to the object, it is true or false; "true whenever it is in harmony with the object presented, false whenever it is in disagreement with it."[105] A presentation can also be apparently true or apparently false in relation to the subject, the former being labeled a representational or plausible presentation 'according to the Academics,' and the latter an implausible one. An

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[102] Sextus Empiricus, *M*. 7.265-266.
[103] Ibid., *M*. 7.166.
[104] Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.,* 736d.
[105] Sextus Empiricus, *M*. 7.167.

implausible presentation "does not naturally persuade us,"[106] much in the same way, it

seems, that a Stoic *kataleptic* impression or presentation is said to be as such in a way

that it could not be otherwise. Furthermore, Sextus states that Carneades, in developing

his criterion of *to pithanon*, differentiated 'apparently true presentations' in the subject

into 'obscure' and 'clear' presentations. Obscure ones are so due to such things as

"smallness of the object, or its considerable distance, or the weakness of sight," and do

not answer the criterion of plausibility.[107] Only a presentation that is apparently true and

sufficiently plausible plays a part in answering the criterion. Sextus noted this conception

of what is plausible displayed a great deal of variation, as any true, plausible presentation

can and may be superseded by another.[108] That is, considerable argument has gone into

finding a presentation that answers the critierion of *to pithanon*, yet that same

presentation can be superceded by another 'more' plausible presentation at any time.

Some plausible thing might be assented to as being 'known,' but it is open to being

replaced by something more plausible. Perhaps you think you see a fly on the wall. It is

a plausible presentation that gives you this thought, though upon closer inspection –

moving closer, or shining a light on it – so as to clarify any obscurity in the presentation,

you arrive at the now clearer and therefore more plausible presentation that it is in fact a

thumb tack in the wall. This is only the beginning of Carneades' account of *to pithanon*,

and it already seems to be making more claims than scepticism hitherto ever attempted.

Furthermore, he is actively engaging in precisely the same language that claims

absolutely 'to know' that Pyrrho had found to be the root of so many troubles in life.

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[106] Ibid. *M*. 7.169.
[107] Ibid. *M*. 7.171.
[108] Ibid. *M*. 7.173.

Pressing on, we gather from Sextus that Carneades had a variety of combinations for the composition of presentations, divided in both subject and object by truth and falsity, as well obscurity and clarity. Only objectively true, subjectively apparently true, clear presentations are plausible. It is apparent, as Sextus outlines, that Carneades thus spoke of a presentation as being 'plausible' in three ways; firstly as being true and apparently true; secondly as being false but apparently true; and thirdly as being true but appearing false.[109] Carneades then had different degrees of plausibility, with the clearest, most truthful and apparent presentations, (presentations being equivalent to 'impressions on the soul' following Plutarch's psychology of the soul,) being the most plausible. The psychology of the soul as given by Plutarch is reflected in Sextus' own explanation of presentation, whereby he states that a presentation is a phenomenon of the soul as relating to the perception and experience of a given external object.[110] That is, a presentation is an impression, or alteration, of the soul, due to the sensing of an external object. Thus there is variability in what appears to be plausible, though like Pyrrho, Carneades ultimately goes by appearances. He seems to be suggesting ways to clarify *pathe* and prevent falsehoods from being the basis of beliefs about what we experience, whether the deceptions or falsefhoods be of the senses or of propositions. He is doing this, however, by taking up a position and arguing, which cuts short most every line of comparison from him to Pyrrho, as Pyrrho's entire point is to not take up such a position.

Sextus marks this discussion of *to pithanon* as a first general criterion, the second being 'uncontroverted' presentations. This second criterion can be summed up as a consistency of the first, or of plausibility; a single object may appear to be your favourite

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[109] Sextus Empiricus, *M*. 7.174.
[110] Ibid., *M*. 7.161-162.

pen, and fill out everything plausibly to *be* your favourite pen, but if you know you never take it from home, and presently think you see it in a stranger's pocket while on vacation in Peru, the presentation that it may be your pen appears less thoroughly true. That is, it probably is not your pen. Presentations of things occur in concert with others, and the whole of them together need to be taken into account to plausibly behold a single one of them, "for that this man is Socrates we trust from [the presentation] all the customary characteristics belonging to him."[111] One of the characteristics of your pen is that that it never leaves home, just as one of the characteristics of Socrates was that he was old: seeing your pen outside your home, or a young looking Socrates, takes away from the plausibility of your impression of it being true. We must be careful here though, as Carneades is not simply speaking of external objects; he is also, and I would argue more so, referring to testing our opinions. The pen example is not just about the external object of the pen, it is also about the opinions you have about the pen – i.e., that it is your favourite one, and that you think it to be your favourite pen because you find it plausible (or not) to believe so.

The third and final general criterion that Sextus indicates that Carneades held is the tested presentation. Whereas uncontroverted presentation aimed at verifying a single presentation as 'in its correct or plausible place' amongst other things, a tested presentation aims to

> scrutinize diligently each of the presentations in the combination […] at the place
> of judgement there is the one who judges, the thing judged, the medium in which
> the judging occurs, [i.e.,] distance, interval, time, manner, disposition, and

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[111] Sextus Empiricus, *M*. 7.178.

activity, and we discern precisely the particular character of each sort of thing. [Thus we discern] whether the one judging has defective vision […] whether the thing judged is not excessively small [...and] whether the medium of judgement is an atmosphere that is not too murky […][112]

Carneades here means not just that things appear together plausibly, but that every thing is plausibly tested; the judger, the judged, and the medium of judgement are all analyzed to a satisfying or persuasive degree. 'Did you get a long look at you pen, or have a clear view of it?' 'Was it dark out?' 'Could you have brought it with you on vacation and dropped it?' Questions such as these as are asked so as to test the impressions we receive. Sextus offers an example of testing whether a coil of rope might be a snake.[113] In a bright room one might be able to see that the rope is not a snake, but in a dark room, and knowing that snakes sometimes tend to lie still, the judger may decide it prudent to test the coil of rope, as it plausibly appears to be a snake, and its situation is consistent with that appearance. A viable method of testing is certainly found in perhaps one of humanity's greatest champions of such things – the poking stick! – which can prod the would-be snake into either moving, or push it into the light for better inspection. Thus the plausible, uncontroverted, and tested presentation is something which Carneades and his school would assent to, with the importance of the presentation determining the level of scrutiny, such that something of little importance may only need to be plausible, whereas something as important as knowing whether there is a snake in your room, demands attention and testing.

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[112] Sextus Empiricus, *M*. 7182-183.
[113] Ibid., *M*. 7.187.

The result of the testing of plausibility is that whatever is found to be plausible is assented to. Carneades has an arduous criterion for assenting *to pithanon*, with hardly a mention of *ataraxia*. In terms of being opposed to Pyrrho's sceptical quietude, this makes sense, as anything arduous, specifically arduous arguments, only add to what *ataraxia* avoids. A sceptic who argues exhaustively first has a determined position from which to argue (dialectically or otherwise), and second, clearly lacks the aporetic disposition in language that inherently avoids such a definitive position.

It was previously discussed that an impression on the soul (*pathe)* deriving from both opinions and external objects, is not a deliberation, it is in fact the opposite. An impression is how something – that is, any given thought or percetion – strikes us: quite literally our *first impression*, to use a common English phrase. You walk in the room and immediately have impressions about what you experience therein; you do not deliberate on whether it is dark, or is a big room, or if there is a snake on the floor. You *are impressed upon* to think that it appears dark, is a small room, and that there appears to be a snake at your feet. The same stands for opinions. Someone tells you that his house is the tallest building in North America, and you are struck by an impression from that statement, and perhaps even begin to test the plausibility of it – could this person live in the CN Tower? Thus it is obvious that Carneades was taking up language in a way that Pyrrho not only refused to, but also thought was a major part of the problem with generating beliefs and convictions from false grounds.

Writing in the late 2nd century CE, we can see that Sextus understands Carneades as espousing *epoche* via the negative dogmatic understanding that nothing is graspable, until the pressure of requiring a way of living a good life deems it necessary to assent to

plausible things as has just been discussed. Cicero, writing in the 1st century BCE and much closer to Carneades' time, suggests that Carneades does still *epoche* in much the same way as Sextus did, but any answer that Carneades gives as pertaining to living a good life, or any view he may have appeared to have taken up in attacking any other position, was purely dialectical and was only taken up much in the same spirit of Arcesilaus and Pyrrho before him - to alleviate falsehoods and deception.

On one hand, Sextus appears to be suggesting what Harold Thorsrud describes as a sliding scale for opinions, with less plausible opinions being on one end along with stronger *epoche,* and more plausible opinions being on the other end of the scale with reduced or no *epoche*.[114] We can cautiously assent to some opinions, just as the sage in the argument was reduced either to assenting to opinions or to universal *epoche*. On the other hand, we can understand certain texts and interpretations of Carneades in the way we understood Arcesilaus, as arguing merely dialectically and suspending judgement universally, which is supported by his aforementioned move away from arguing for the *isostheneia* or 'equal force' of equal arguments, this being a dogmatic claim itself.

2.5 Connecting with Pyrrho

In terms of what I argued regarding Pyrrho's aporetic linguistic praxis in the previous chapter, Carneades does not see eye to eye with Pyrrho. This change started with Arcesilaus' move toward a more eristic method of arguing and attacking interlocutors, and is carried forward and amplified in Carneades. Pyrrho wished to alter language so as to prevent falsehoods and deception from being the foundations for beliefs and opinions and thereby prevent the troubles caused by them. He wanted to disengage

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[114] Thorsrud, 80.

from the dogmatic presumptions of language, the likes of which the physicist in the example adopted, so as to cut off the power that language has over how we develop our ontological views. Pyrrho wanted to alter, or at least be more aware of, what it is 'to know' or to say that one 'knows' something – namely, that we do not often know what we say we know, in the absolute way that it is assumed when we implicitly or explicitly say 'to know' a proposition.

The Academics, and Carneades moreso than Arcesilaus, did not wish to alter language like Pyrrho, but wished to engage in that very language of 'knowing' and beat the dogmatists at their own game, in their own field. Arcesilaus delighted in winning sophistic competitions and not knowing if something is good or bad, and Carneades was noted for continuing this sort of argumentation.[115] Pyrrho started his inquiries in the same way as did the Academics - or anyone for that matter – in language. Further, he, like the Academics, initially denied the indubitableness of our knowledge and sought suspension of judgement and *aporia*. Unlike the Academics, he turned upon this first dogmatic premise he had, and using his aporetic linguistic practice, suspended judgment on it as well. This has the effect of severing Pyrrho from playing the same 'to know' game that the dogmatists continue to assume implicitly in their language use. Unfortunately for the Academics, having explicitly taken up this sort of battle with the dogmatists, they also implicitly and unconsciously continue to uphold the same assumptions about what it is 'to know'. That is, despite their varying claims to *epoche*, they still tacitly value the same sort of knowing that the dogmatists do, this sort of language and knowing being precisely what Pyrrho's entire teaching warns against. This is something to be picked up at the end of the chapter, and furthered in the discussion of

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[115] Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.,* 730c.

the revival of Pyrrhonism. Suffice to say, I believe there is a reason that Aenesidemus and Sextus criticize the Academics in the way they did.

Despite Sextus' understanding of Carneades as being too dogmatic, his interpretation of the position of *to pithanon* can still be seen in the dialectical light in which Cicero prefers to cast him. Returning to this, Cicero indicates that truth, evidence, and plausibility are three separate things for Carneades, and that no assumption should be made equating truth with plausibility.[116] Carneades seems to share some of the views of Pyrrho, recollecting Pyrrho's 'going with appearances' as well as his acceptance (though not assent) to customs and conventions. *To pithanon* is a testing method for appearances, and could perhaps be a fleshing out of what humans naturally do when struck by less-than-plausible stimuli.

A strong link to Pyrrho's disposition is found in a passage in which Cicero appears to be criticizing Carneades and the sceptics for not seeming to discover anything despite all their inquiring:

> All right, then, I want to see what they have discovered. He [Carneades] says, "it is not our custom to set forth [our views]." Well, whatever are those mysteries? Why do you hide your opinion as though it were something to be ashamed of? He says, "it is in order that our audience should be guided by reason and not by authority […]"[117]

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[116] Frede 274. See also Cicero, *Ac. Pr.*, 34.
[117] Cicero, *Academia*, 2.60.

Here it appears that Carneades does in fact have some pedagogical aims outside of merely showcasing the shortcomings of dogmatic argumentation via dogmatic argumentation, and genuinely wishes 'his audience' to learn by something more than, at least, mere reliance on authority. Recalling the example in which the physicist was speaking about knowing something about reality because of quantum theory, a connection to Pyrrho can be made here at least pedagogically regarding the linguistic praxis of Pyrrho. I spoke of two forms of repercussions occurring from this sort of language: repercussions concerning himself and his own beliefs about what he says, and repercussions concerning those he speaks with and the beliefs that they draw from what he says. The latter is Carneades' 'audience', whom he wishes not to hear his opinions on things for fear of them taking him as an authority on the given subject, much like this physicist would be taken as an authority on what he is speaking about. By withholding his opinions, much to Cicero's chagrin, Carneades displays an awareness of how beliefs and opinions can be promulgated, truth and evidence notwithstanding. Though this is a slim passage, it is one of the few that shed a light on Carneades as something other than a stalwart and skillful rhetorician, though less concerned with developing an account for the happy life than is either Pyrrho or Arcesilaus.

This is the most closely related interpretation of Carneades that I can give with my linguistic interpretation of Pyrrho in mind. Carneades did not *epoche* to the same extent as did Arcesilaus, and certainly not as did Pyrrho. He developed but essentially carried on the Academic tradition of scepticism, attacking dogmatists who claimed to know something about the nature of reality by arguing the opposite claim that nothing can be known. He did not seem to suspend judgement on the claim that nothing can be

known, and was generally thought to deny that universal *epoche* was possible anyways.

We may wish to follow the dialectical interpretation of Arcesilaus where we found him

merely to be arguing with his interlocutors so as to cast them into *aporia*, and offering his

criterion of *to eulogon* as a method of living with universal *epoche*. However, this seems

less likely the case with Carneades, given his move away from universal *epoche* and how

much attention he gave to his account of *to pithanon*. Moreover, the modification of

Arcesilaus' argument against the Stoic sage, allowing the sage to assent to certain

opinions in accord with *to pithanon*, makes assent – however careful it may be – more

central to Carneades' position than *epoche*, and shows him to be far more concerned with

arguing than with *ataraxia* or *eudaimonia*.

Chapter Three

3.1 Introduction: Later Pyrrhonian Scepticism

"The idea that one is better off, in practical and emotional terms, adopting an
attitude of mistrusting or withdrawal than if one persists with a conventional,
optimistic attitude towards enquiry belongs to the Pyrrhonists and the Pyrrhonists
alone."[118]

In the previous chapters I have been developing an account of Pyrrhonian

scepticism, beginning in the 3rd and 2nd century BCE with Pyrrho and those who closely

influenced his aporetic teachings, and moved chronologically from him to the Academic

sceptics. However influenced by Pyrrho they were, the Academics developed throughout

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[118] Bett, 220-221.

the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE a philosophy rather different from the individual, aporetic linguistic practice of Pyrrho, having turned towards a more dialectical and eristic approach that focused on attacking, but also participating in, the sort of dogmatic language-practice that Pyrrho had aimed to purge. Pyrrho emphasized *epoche* for peace of mind, pedagogically suggesting that we say of things as being "no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not."[119] This rather long utterance I shorten throughout this thesis to 'no more', though always it refers back to the passage from Eusebius. I argue that Pyrrho thought that when we start speaking as if we knew things in the absolute sense of 'to know' rather than in a way that allows for uncertainty regarding what knowledge is and is said to be known, we allow customs, conventions, and language largely to direct our ontological views.[120] Moreover, we implicitly assume equally uncertain opinions and beliefs to be true or valid which underlie whatever proposition we claim 'to know', such that it is a double-edge assumption of sorts; not only is the truth of what we say assumed to be true, but the premises or beliefs which might support what we say are also assumed to be true.

This double-edged assumption appears to be how Pyrrhonians think everyday language tends to function with the development of beliefs: that is, Pyrrhonians think that dogmatic language tends to assume that beliefs are always founded on true and valid premises, but in practice beliefs are just as often founded on previously held, unfounded beliefs. Everyday dogmatic language practice and the knowledge it assumes to describe allows for the motion of belief-to-belief to happen under the guise that it is a motion of knowledge-to-belief. Aporetic linguistic practice specifically addresses the double-edged

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[119] Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.* 14.18.
[120] 'Ontological views' here simply indicates the beliefs and convictions that an individual or group has about being, especially regarding what things are in their nature and what can be known about them.

assumption that everyday language carries with it by forcing the speaker to remove the dogmatic assumptions from her propositions and utterances.

A simple example of this assumption of knowledge may be that I claim to know that it is good for every person to study in school so as to be the best citizen possible. Underneath this claim are several other claims that are assumed to be true: namely, that I know what 'good' is in a very universal sense; that I know what the 'best citizen' is within a certain societal structure; and that I know that there is a connection between education, people, and what is 'good'. The deconstruction of these secondary underlying claims are upheld by further tertiary ones, with each 'level' moving away from the individual's beliefs towards beliefs given to that individual through customs of culture, religion, etc.. However, the deconstruction is not the focal point here, it is rather the fact that the initial claim *can be said simpliciter* and all the underlying belief structures are assumed in everyday speech by the speaker and the listener to be intact simply because if they were not intact, then what the speaker said would not make sense. Moreover, that very statement can become the foundation for further beliefs and convictions, which is precisely what Pyrrho's linguistic praxis intended to address, and what Academic scepticism was found almost completely to ignore.

As already stated, the Academic sceptics did not have the same focus as the Pyrrhonians, and consequently they serve as a foil against which to compare Pyrrhonian scepticism as similar but having a very different *modus operandi*. The Academics had an eristic focus in that their scepticism had argumentative objectives, and consequently they cared comparatively little about experiencing a less troubled life. Having presented the origins of Pyrrhonism and the utterance 'no more' as the germ of his language practice in

the chapter on Pyrrho, as well as having shown how through the Academics scepticism moved away from the teachings of Pyrrho in chapter two, the aim of this third chapter is to highlight the revival of Pyrrhonian scepticism via Aenesidemus and to show that the linguistic practice is at the core of what is revived. Moving from there into the works of Sextus Empiricus, the chapter will focus on developing further the linguistic practice as it was carried forth by Sextus.

<p style="text-align:center">3.2 Aenesidemus and the Revival of Pyrrhonism</p>

Aenesidemus is believed to have written extensively in the 1st century BCE shortly after the death of Cicero, which accounts for Cicero's silence on his work.[121] He is also thought to have been an Academic sceptic himself and became disenchanted with what he believed to be the tendency of the Academics to dogmatize as much as those whom they criticized did. Both Sextus and Diogenes Laertius gave accounts of Aenesidemus, and the most complete record existing on Aenesidemus comes through the writing of the Christian scholar Photius in the 9th century. Photius gives an account of Aenesidemus' eight books *Pyrrhonian Arguments*, in which he states early on that Aenesidemus maintained that the Academics, particularly the newer ones, seem to be nothing more than 'Stoics fighting with Stoics.'[122] This seems to be in line with my earlier conclusion regarding the difference between Arcesilaus and Carneades; namely, the New Academy under Carneades widened the gap between Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism to an extent that Arcesilaus himself did not. However, the main points that I wish to show relating to Aenesidemus' revival of Pyrrhonism concern: the melding of the

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[121] Frede, 280.
[122] Photius, 170a.

Academic eristic method with Pyrrhonism; the refocusing of scepticism on discovering *eudaimonia* despite the sceptic knowing nothing; and most crucially, Aenesidemus' reconstitution of Pyrrho's locution 'no more' in developing *epoche* and finding *ataraxia*. All of this will be compared to the genesis of Pyrrhonism in Pyrrho, and will make connections to the aporetic linguistic praxis that has been found to be fundamental to Pyrrho's philosophy for leading a happy life. As will be found, Aenesidemus did intentionally revive the language practice of Pyrrho, bringing back Pyrrho's ascetic, existential focus on experiencing the least troubled life possible.

Though to provide a long exposition of Aenesidemus' ten *tropes*, or 'ways' to the suspension of judgement, is not necessary for my purposes, since emphasis will be given to the more succinct five *tropes* of Agrippa in the discussion on Sextus Empiricus, brief mention must be made as it is Aenesidemus who appears to have first fashioned such a list. Furthermore, I wish to draw a distinction between how the *tropes* are generally understood, and the way that they can be comprehended in terms of the linguistic approach thus far taken in understanding the efforts of Pyrrhonism. In other words, the focus is on how one might understand the *tropes* as an extension of Pyrrho's effort to reduce the troubling beliefs developed in language use, via the alteration of language use itself. This is not to deny the general understanding of them, but to supplement them, and show the practical use of them in daily life, which is an integral part to Pyrrhonism as a philosophy of life. As was drawn out in the previous chapters, argumentation is not a medium in which Pyrrhonism operates. Pyrrhonists do not design their philosophy around arguments aimed at others; rather, they develop a language practice that becomes deeply habituated, with the intention of curtailing the development of knowledge from

unfounded and ungrounded beliefs and convictions – beliefs and convictions that can otherwise be tacitly assumed to be true and valid. Pyrrhonism is an experiential and practice-based philosophy aimed at nothing more than aiding an individual in finding *ataraxia*.

Having been an Academic sceptic prior to announcing the Academics to be dogmatic despite their own denouncement of dogmatism, it is no small wonder that Aenesidemus would have seen the use in compiling arguments that lead to *epoche* – if the Academics have been shown to be one thing, it is to be organized and talented dialecticians. In making the list of *tropes* Aenesidemus essentially melded Pyrrho's priority of linguistic *aporia* with Academic eristic method, producing what is generally thought to be a categorical approach to disfiguring the foundationalist scientific method rooted in Aristotle, notably attacking the existence of truth, principles of reason, and meta-empirical inferences.[123] Basically, the ten *tropes* of Aenesidemus (as well as an additional set of eight attributed to him) aim to undermine the idea that the postulates of science can lead to definitive knowledge about the nature of things by arguing against the competence of our reasoning and senses.

In terms of the practiced linguistic *aporia* that Pyrrho's sage would have found agreeable and useful, each *trope* can be seen as an extended locution, proposition, or argument, which develops towards inculcating *epoche* in the speaker specifically, but perhaps the listener, or both. Recall that Pyrrho's intention was to control one's own language usage so as to rein in troubling beliefs and opinions that develop from language use itself. In this way the *tropes* are best understood as extended locutions or phrases for

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[123] Giovanni Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, edited and translated by John R. Catan (New York: University of New York Press, 1990), 100.

use in specific circumstances to maintain one's own aporetic disposition and *epoche*. To understand them as arguments that the Pyrrhonist actually put forth is to enter into the realm of dialectical argument and dogmatism. This is what the Academics were doing by arguing for things so as to disprove any theory, including the one they happen to take up in argument. They may not have believed the argument they took up, but by choosing to argue on the same grounds with the same implicit assumptions in language intact, they missed the ascetic, wariness of language that was germane to Pyrrho. Aenesidemus reworked *epoche* from the Academics, and with the *tropes*, "expressed, enriched, and determined in a conceptually more precise way the spiritual attitude which was previously Pyrrhonian."[124] I am wary of mentioning Pyrrhonism as spiritual or comparable to religion, as if to give Pyrrhonism some sort of religious connotation. That being said, if the *tropes* are simply to be taken as arguments, dialectical or otherwise, then the 'spiritual' disposition of Pyrrhonism and the *ataraxia* that so preciously follows an aporetic attitude maintained by language practice that reflects *epoche* would be sullied, as argumentation is quite contrary to the ascetic ways of Pyrrhonism.

The *tropes* are generally understood as a web of argumentation that Pyrrhonists use in debate, much in the same way that Arcesilaus used the utterance 'no more' to attack the positions of others. I wish to make clear that the reading of the *tropes* as phrases for the utterance of the sceptic wishing to maintain an aporetic disposition does not disparage the generally accepted reading of them as genuine epistemological arguments for the promotion of *epoche* and against the certainty of human knowledge. The *tropes* are certainly meant to invoke uncertainty and *aporia*, but not so much in debate with interlocutors as with altering the way an individual speaks so as to induce

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[124] Reale, 108.

epoche and *aporia* within him or herself. In brief, I wish to summarize the ten *tropes* of Aenesidemus as they are generally recorded between Sextus Empiricus[125] and Diogenes Laertius[126] so as to make the discussion of them clearer.

The first points to the numerous differences between living beings, particularly differences in their faculties of sense, underlining the fact that humanity's abilities for sensing have no higher or preferable place for determining true reality.[127] The second *trope* shifts scope and says that even with humans themselves there is great difference and variation between faculties and of feelings, and that no single person can be said to have a more preferable or true perception of reality than any other.[128] The third points to variety and difference in the senses of the individual, showing that what looks smooth to the eye can be rough to the touch, or pleasant to smell but horrid to taste, and that even within the individual no sense or combination of senses can be said to touch certainly upon reality.[129] The fourth *trope* indicates that due to differences of the conditions of perception, particularly in the perceiver such as age, health, disposition, temperature, that no person or condition can be said to be preferable or closer to touching upon the true nature of things.[130] A singularly good example is made by Diogenes Laertius on this point, where he states that not even the state of a madman is contrary to nature, and cannot be said to be more so (correct) than anyone else's.[131] The fifth *trope* underscores the differences amongst people regarding opinions and beliefs about moral values, gods, philosophies, and education, leading to *epoche* by showing that no one can be sure which

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[125] Sextus Empiricus. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, the list of *tropes* appears from 1.36- 1.147.
[126] Diogenes. In *Life of Pyrrho*, the list of *tropes* appears from 79-88.
[127] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.40-78.
[128] Ibid., *PH* 1.79-91.
[129] Ibid., 1.91-99.
[130] Ibid., 1.100-117.
[131] Diogenes, 9.80.

touches on truth and reality more than another.[132] The sixth *trope* states that appearances and our perceptions are never purely occurring of themselves, but mixed together with a plethora of other appearances and perceptions such that we cannot determine with any certainty one appearance and condition with how they affect any other appearance or condition.[133] The seventh *trope* outlines that distances, positions, and places affect our impressions of things, so that the same thing from different perspectives can appear entirely different, hence our impressions from any one or variety of positions can be preferred from any other.[134] The eighth *trope* shows how quantitative relations alter our impressions and perceptions of things; for instance, single grains of sand appear rough, but an entire beach of sand appears smooth.[135] The ninth *trope* states that the relativity of things to each other lends to how we know them, such that when we see something out of the context in which we find it familar, we do not immediately (or at all) recognize what we saw, and thereby cannot say that we know a thing by its true nature.[136] The tenth mode concerns itself with the frequency by which something occurs. It states that the frequency of a things occurrence alters our perception of that thing, such that rare things are held in greater esteem than common things; yet not everyone experiences the same frequency of things, whereby the same thing is considered rare and marvelous by some but common and mundane by others.[137]

Thus, all the *tropes* lead to suspension of judgment by showing in a variety of ways that our impressions, perceptions, and reasonings are fallible at best, and cannot be

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[132] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.118-123.
[133] Ibid., *PH* 1.124-128.
[134] Ibid., *PH* 1.129-134.
[135] Ibid., *PH* 1.135-140.
[136] Ibid., 1.141-144.
[137] Ibid., 1.145-147.

the basis of a scientific enquiry that can assume to 'know' in the strong or infallible sense. These can be taken as arguments actually propounded by the Pyrrhonist, though this would show a discontinuity between the Pyrrhonist's claim to determine nothing, or we can view them as locutions and phrases that the Pyrrhonist employs in concert with the utterance 'no more' so as to express her disposition of *aporia* (to herself or to others, depending on the scope of the utterance) and of determining nothing.

In the first chapter it was noted that Pyrrho's sage developed over time from a novice to a full-fledged Pyrrhonist. The same process stands to reason with the development of an aporetic disposition. The disposition is not a switch that can be flipped, but is rather the result of a conscious linguistic practice. One starts off with doubts and arguments and by either learning of Pyrrho's teachings or perhaps by natural disposition (which Sextus suggests in PH I) one finds oneself repeatedly thrown into *aporia*. The *tropes* can be seen then as useful arguments for those still developing their aporetic disposition and still feel the need to argue, or for those who do not see Pyrrhonism as being fundamentally critical of unrestrained language use. I would adhere to the former understanding, as to grasp Pyrrhonism as lacking the linguistic practice of avoiding the promulgation of troubling beliefs is to take up Pyrrhonism without full acknowledgment of its clear focus on *what the Pyrrhonists say of things*. The latter, argumentative understanding of Pyrrhonism is to miss the practical, life-oriented aspect of this philosophy. Perhaps, as with Pyrrho's sceptical sage, the novice sceptic begins with this latter understanding of Pyrrhonism as a method of eristic argumentation, but once the habit of speaking of things as no more being than not being settles in, and the novice Pyrrhonist finds it harder and harder to determine or speak of things (*aphasia*), the

Pyrrhonist moves beyond the argumentative understanding and accidentally falls into the *ataraxia* that follows suspension of judgement from an aporetic disposition.

Aenesidemus' reasons for choosing to revive Pyrrho's philosophy as a return to Pyrrho or to improve Academic scepticism are not entirely clear, though it is clear that he held Pyrrho's teachings in high regard. It is apparent that he is well acquainted with the thought of Pyrrho, as Photius outlines in the beginning of his account of Aenesidemus where he states

> The whole purpose of [*Pyrrhonian Arguments*] is to establish securely that nothing can be securely grasped, neither by means of the senses nor even by means of thought. Therefore, neither the Pyrrhonists nor the others know the truth in things; and those philosophizing according to another system, besides being ignorant of other things, are also unaware that they weary themselves and spend their time in continual agonies for nothing; they are ignorant of this very fact, that they have actually grasped nothing of what they believed they have grasped.[138]

Outlining the essence of what Pyrrho felt was at stake, Aenesidemus appears to be on the same page; he wishes to address the troubling repercussions of believing something to be known, when the certainty and 'truth in things' underlying a given belief are not available to us. Though this may seem to be starting in the same thread as the negative dogmatism of the Academics (especially that of Carneades), whom unequivocally maintained the nonexistence of knowledge, Aenesidemus is quick to indicate that one who follows

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[138] Photius, 169b.

Pyrrho, "besides being happy in other respects, [is] wise in knowing that nothing has been grasped securely… and is clever enough to assent no more to the affirmation [of these things] than to their denial."[139] Thus, we find the utterance 'no more' no longer employed simply eristically as the Academics had, but returned to being fundamental to a disposition of *epoche* as Pyrrho had used it. Photius records Aenesidemus as nearly mirroring the Eusebius passage on Pyrrho, using the utterance 'no more' for what appears to be the same intention,

[…] no [Pyrrhonist] has at all said that all things are graspable or ungraspable, but rather that they are no more like this than like that, or that they are like this at one time and like that at another, or that they are such for one man and not such for another and totally non-existent for someone else […] Further, nothing is true or false, plausible or implausible, existing or not; rather, the same thing, so to say, is no more true than false, plausible than implausible, is than is not; or, at one time is like this and at another is like that; or is like this to one person and not like this to another.[140]

By this passage we once again have *epoche* affirmed as central to the Pyrrhonist disposition, distinguishing their view from negative dogmatism of the Academics. The utterance 'no more' is used in a very similar fashion to that of Pyrrho through Eusebius[141], seeming to be an expression of *epoche* in which the sceptic does not affirm

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[139] Ibid.
[140] Photius, 170a.
[141] Note: "saying of each and every thing that it no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not[…]" Eusebius, 758d.

or deny things as graspable or ungraspable. Furthermore, the way Photius phrases the thought of Aenesidemus, as regarding 'what Pyrrhonists *say'* is of no small consequence in light of my linguistic understanding of Pyrrhonism a la Pyrrho. Both this and the dominance of *epoche* are bolstered several lines later, where Aenesidemus is said to have maintained that, "generally, the Pyrrhonist determines nothing, not even this, namely, that he determines nothing. We speak in this way, [Aenesidemus] says, not having any other way to tell what we think."[142] *Epoche* is undeniably central to Aenesidemus' scepticism, as his sceptic does not settle on determining the ability to determine things; *epoche* is held as a disposition towards the human experience. The way in which Aenesidemus consistently refers to the sceptic 'saying', 'determining', and 'speaking in this way', indicates that the speech of his sceptic was a cornerstone of his scepticism. I am not being tautological in this, saying what we all know - namely that language is how we express ourselves - I am saying that Aenesidemus' vindication of the Pyrrhonists' peculiar mode of speech suggests that *their very mode of speech* is integral to their disposition. The Pyrrhonists speak in this way – saying of a thing being no more than not being – not because she actually believes or determines one way or the other, no more affirming than denying, because short of *aphasia* (that is, not expressing anything: recall Pyrrho's aporetic sage in chapter one) there is no other way to express herself.

3.3 Aenesidemus, Relativity, and Language Practice

There is a striking difference between Pyrrho's utterance of 'no more' and Aenesidemus' use of 'no more,' and an analysis of this difference will better reveal the linguistic practice at the core of Pyrrhonism. This striking difference is the addition by

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[142] Photius, 170a.

Aenesidemus of numerous relativizing clauses, such as things being 'like this at one time and like that at another time,' or 'like this to one person, not like this to another person, and non-existent to someone else.' Scholars such as Richard Bett[143], and Jonathan Barnes[144] tend to set aside Aenesidemus' relativity as something separate from the body of scepticism, and perhaps rightly so. Relativity is not scepticism, as a relativist maintains something definite in saying something is a certain way. The relativist may limit the way an object can be said to appear for a specific subject, but in doing so *definitely* make a statement about the nature of that object. The *epoche* of Pyrrhonism, particularly that of later scepticism via Sextus Empiricus, shuns such definitive language as opposed to the very practice of aporetic language. However, I believe that Aenesidemus can be seen to have raised relativity in the same spirit in which later Pyrrhonism expressed it, thereby making Aenesidemus a strong chronological bridge spanning the gap between Pyrrho and later Pyrrhonism. Aenesidemus was a strong critic of the Academic sceptics, and his revival of the linguistic praxis of Pyrrhonism is the root of his revival of Pyrrhonism at all.

Richard Bett insists that Aenesidemus' utilization of the locution 'no more' is an intentional effort in relativity, stating that Aenesidemus is following an 'invariability condition' maintaining that '*X* is no more *F* than *not-F*' unless it is invariably so.[145] The sky is no more blue than not-blue unless it invariably appears to be blue in every convieable way and to every perceiver. I believe that this sort of relativity is evident in the additional clauses that Aenesidemus posits concerning things appearing differently according to time, place, and perceiver, but not in all instantiations of the phrase. Bett

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[143] Bett, 190.
[144] Jonanthan Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 113.
[145] Bett, 233.

seems to posit the invariability condition as Aenesidemus saying that unless X appears the same way to different people at different times (rather, all people at any time,) X cannot be said to be known in its true nature. I wonder, however, whether Aenesidemus intended the more Pyrrho-inspired version of 'no more' ("[…] that all things are graspable or ungraspable...they are no more like this than like that […]"[146]) as also an expression of relativity, and not an expression of *epoche*. Perhaps these additions of Aenesidemus are additions to the lexicon of utterances that he felt aided the Pyrrhonist in maintaining an aporetic disposition. If Aenesidemus were in fact following some sort of invariability condition as a criterion for knowledge, it would be much like an Academic's dialectical move: namely, to offer a rhetorical position from which either to refute other positions, or to show that very position to be untenable. Of course, this rhetorical position is one in which the sceptic does not vest any belief and is purely rhetorical, or dialectical. However, in the same stroke, holding such a position moves Aenesidemus into the same realm as that of the Academics, no longer minding one's own language so as to maintain *epoche*, 'saying of every thing that it no more is than is not' in order to avoid the tendency of language to assume and develop troubling beliefs for us, but rather having him enter into the fray – the implicit beliefs about and in language intact – of language that assumes 'to know'. *Epoche* becomes less the priority and argument takes the lead; concern for one's own *eudaimonia* and *ataraxia* take a back seat to proving a criterion of knowledge to an interlocutor, or even to oneself. The sceptic is no longer the unfettered nomad that Pyrrho's sage was described as in the first chapter, but is actually arguing for a position that she does not even believe.

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[146] Photius, 170a.

Several scholars weigh in on understanding Aenesidemus as either advocating relativity or scepticism. Harold Thorsrud says that Aenesidemus seems to offer either a relativism that affirms the impossibility of knowledge, or a scepticism that holds knowledge is not conclusively ruled out.[147] The former understanding is negative dogmatism akin to that of the Academics; the latter is closer to the sceptical *epoche* of Pyrrho. If it were not for the relativity that Aenesidemus seems to strive for, he would be almost precisely in line with Pyrrho's teachings. Both are concerned with changes and differences in the predication of things in individual circumstances, and both also mistrust the senses as a viable means of knowing true reality.[148] Both use the phrase 'no more' as an utterance meant to express the disposition of *epoche* that each sceptic finds him or herself in. If we take Richard Bett's proposed invariability condition as something Aenesidemus holds, (such that *X* is no more *F* than *not-F* unless it invariably appears so,) then Aenesidemus is clearly dogmatizing and engaging in debate in much the same way as the Academics. Bett states that Aenesidemus' *epoche* is compatible with his making relative qualifications about appearances, so long as Aenesidemus is understood to deny that appearances give access to the true nature of things.[149] That is, Anesidemus does not determine or believe that true reality is evident in appearances, and any statement about the relativity of appearances is already assumed by Aenesidemeus to not touch on true reality. Statements such as 'that printer is good for people who print photographs,' or 'Kilarney Provincial Park is beautiful in autumn,' Aenesidemus, it seems, would not have a problem with since they are qualified to certain people, places, and times, all of which Aenesidemus would have already maintained as being 'no more'

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[147] Thorsrud, 103.
[148] Bett, 214.
[149] Bett, 201.

than not-being. This brings a question to mind: why make relative qualifications of appearances against other appearances when one has already denied categorically that appearances give access to things in their true nature?

I may have an answer: in terms of the linguistic understanding of Pyrrhonism, it can be seen that Aenesidemus may have been attempting to expand the vocabulary of the sceptic beyond propositions being subjected to the utterance 'no more' by making them relative to circumstances such as time, place, and perceiver. This seems to be in line with his apology in Photius for the language of the Pyrrhonists, as well as the undeniable centrality of *epoche* at the outset of Photius' account of Aenesidemus. Moreover, Aenesidemus would qualify appearances against appearances because it was a quick way to vocalize and express the absence of any absolute sense of what someone may be claiming 'to know'. Rather than say that 'I know this printer is really good,' using 'to know' as if it meant knowing something essential and absolute about the nature of the printer, qualifying the statement to location, time, persons, or any appearance (so long as *epoche* is clearly held regarding the appearance) serves to diminish any absolute sense of how 'to know' is used regarding knowledge about the printer. As outlined in the opening Photius passage, Aenesidemus does this to avoid the 'agonies and weariness' perpetuated by believing to know something in its true nature, when in fact you only know that thing relative to specific conditions. *Ataraxia* is much the same to Aenesidemus as it was to Pyrrho, in that *ataraxia* follows on the heels of *epoche,* and falls upon he who ceases to dogmatize about what he experiences. The Pyrrhonian way of bringing this about is to cease using language in such a way that troubling beliefs develop out of things we say simply to express ourselves.

This understanding of Aenesidemus also shows that he may have dogmatized about the nature of appearances; namely, he determined that they do not lend themselves to knowing the true nature of things. This seems to go against the opening statement by Photius, that the Pyrrhonist 'does not determine anything'. Dogmatizing about appearances does not seem to be in line with much of what has been laid down about Aenesidemus' thought. Aenesidemus was more concerned with what the sceptic *says* in day-to-day life, and found a new and additional way for the sceptic to express it. He does allow more to be said about things, and this seems to draw criticism from Sextus Empiricus, who took this to mean that Aenesidemus was prone to dogmatizing about things. This criticism is not entirely unfounded, as will be discussed in the following section on Sextus.

Nevertheless, Aenesidemus did not revive Pyrrhonism simply through the reuse of the name of Pyrrho, nor simply by returning to a focus on *epoche* and *eudaimonia*, but by also a return to the mode of speech that Pyrrho embodied and taught as the medium for his scepticism. The *tropes* not only serve as arguments that some Pyrrhonists employ in debate to disparage the basis of scientific certainty, but also as at-hand locutions for the ascetically minded Pyrrhonist who is striving for a life undisturbed by beliefs and opinions foisted upon her by implicit assumptions in using language. Aenesidemus adopted the phrase 'no more' and added his own locutions of qualifying appearances to perceivers, locations, and particular times, saying that a proposition is no more true now than false at another time, or no more true to me than false to you, or no more relevant to me than utterly irrelevant to Albert Camus. As Harold Thorsrud notes, Aenesidemus held that we "do not need any special insight into the nature of things in order to live

well."[150] He turned to relativity to show that much of what is said in everyday speech can

be easily removed from the absolute sense of what is assumed in the verb 'to know' by

simple locutions reducing what it is 'to know' to mere relative propositions, while still

adopting the 'no more' locution in the way that Pyrrho employed it.

3.4 Later Pyrrhonism: Sextus Empiricus

Both Pyrrhonian and Ancient Scepticism as a whole are indebted for their

preservation through the ages largely to the work of Sextus Empiricus, considered the last

major proponent of Pyrrhonian scepticism. He was a medical doctor writing in or around

the first century CE who belonged to the empirical tradition of Greek medicine. This

tradition held that nothing could be affirmed or denied about the hidden causes of

illnesses, and even held that the causes of illnesses were inconceivable.[151] Scepticism

and the empirical method for medicine developed together a great deal, and many names

mentioned in ancient accounts of scepticism are believed to be the same individuals

mentioned in medical annals from the same time.[152] This being said, the portrayal of

Pyrrhonian scepticism that Sextus provides is definitively philosophical in nature, though

many of his examples are clearly pulled from his role as a medical doctor. He wrote two

works, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, and *Against the Mathematicians*, both of which are

expositions of the Pyrrhonian philosophy. The former is an outline of the Pyrrhonian

position which also attacks dogmatic philosophies of logic, physics, and ethics. The

latter is an extended antagonistic piece against dogmatic theories in the liberal arts, logic,

physics, and ethics. Though sources are gathered in this thesis from both, it is *Outlines of*

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[150] Thorsrud, 121.
[151] Reale, 129-130.
[152] Ibid., 131.

Pyrrhonism that I refer to the most, as it does double duty: it is both an explication of Sextus' system, but it also showcases his writing as itself strives to perpetuate a Pyrrhonian disposition. Sextus writes with an aporetic linguistic praxis always in mind. In this way, he amalgamates the argumentative nature of Academic scepticism with the phenomenological, language-based approach to living a happier life to which Pyrrho aspired many years prior. Sextus' methodical approach to aporetic language brings to fruition the sceptical utterances, which function to purge the sceptic's very speech of dogmatic phrases and bolster his state of *aporia*. The medicinal quality of scepticism is a recurring theme for Sextus, and the purgative nature that he describes it having is most evident in the language practice he espouses.

It is no small feat, as will be made evident, to write about a system that recommends a disposition of determining nothing, while at the same time tries to hold to that disposition. This explicit effort to adopt an aporetic disposition even in writing an account of Pyrrhonism, evidenced throughout the text by statements about 'what we say,' shows Sextus taking it upon himself to speak as a Pyrrhonian, for Pyrrhonians. His active use of aporetic language suggests a linguistic practice and pedagogical approach to forwarding the peculiar Pyrrhonian position of finding *ataraxia* in *aporia*. This approach to *ataraxia* through language practice and revealed experience cannot be over emphasized in Pyrrhonian scepticism and will be drawn out in this section. The approach to both language and revealed experience are strongly linked to the approach developed in the first chapter on Pyrrho, where we saw that he wished use specific phrases, particularly the 'no more' locution reported by Eusebius, to diminish the disturbing opinions and beliefs that careless language use foists upon its users. These beliefs

include explicit ones about external objects and our thoughts about them, but also include implicit beliefs such as the function of verbs that express a 'knowing' relation between subject and object, such as 'to know', 'to see', and as will be discussed, 'to apprehend'. Pyrrho did not concern himself with or make use of argumentation, and he projected his teachings by living them – a sort of pedagogy of the sage, or teaching by example. The attempt by Sextus to write a piece that explains the Pyrrhonian position that *includes* its own language in the scope of what Pyrrhonian sceptics recommend, is an indication that Sextus was not simply reporting on scepticism. Sextus was teaching by example as well, and shared in Pyrrho's awareness of how language contributes to burdensome beliefs and opinions as well as the desire to explicate Pyrrhonism as focused on revealing experiences. Sextus' ultimate goal is realized when the sceptic is able to suspend herself from a dogmatic way of thinking and achieve a dispostion of *epoche* and *ataraxia* through the practice of aporetic language.

Aenesidemus revived this approach after it had been largely lost in the Academic's eristically motivated desire to engage in language so as to beat their dogmatic opponents at their own game. By engaging in argumentation, the Academics neglected the central Pyrrhonian practice of maintaining *aporia* in one's very speech patterns. While they may have argued for *epoche*, they had lost the ascetic or 'spiritual' aporetic disposition towards the human experience that characterizes Pyrrhonism. Along with the revival, Aenesidemus' greatest contribution was to compile *tropes,* or 'ways' that lead to *epoche*. These are arguments for the promulgation of *epoche*, whereby the supposed sceptic employs the *tropes* to induce the suspension of judgement as a preferable option to the troubles of dogmatism. These troubles are still the same ones

that Pyrrho wished to avoid, namely, troubles concerning the very development of beliefs and convictions, that create division and strife themselves (my god versus your god, my country versus your country, etc.,) but also the dogmatic disposition that is the result of an unconscious, absolutist use of the verb 'to know.' Anesidemus' *tropes* cannot be solely understood as arguments, as this tends to miss the Pyrrhonian focus on human experience and the avoidance of argument. The focus on human experience is exemplified in Pyrrho's wariness of language and the way he took up habitual language praxis as a way to address language itself. Aenesidemus revived Pyrrho's wariness and language praxis in taking up the name 'Pyrrhonism.' Furthermore, Aenesidemus' criticisms of the Academic sceptics and their tendency to argue (engage in language to determine something) despite not believing the position that they argue, is an indication that Aenesidemus himself had intentions contrary to the argumentative way of the Academics.

Brief description was already given of the ten *tropes* of Aenesidemus, showing their use as practical linguistic phrases rather than as arguments for inducing *epoche*. By phrases I mean something that a person with (or striving to maintain) an aporetic attitude can say to express his attitude of suspended judgement, without determining something. To argue is to make a determination about something (that God is omnipresent, or that the sky is most certainly blue, for example) and this is not practically reconcilable with the central Pyrrhonian tendency of determining nothing. Both perspectives on the *tropes* however, are closely related to *epoche*; as arguments they are meant to induce *epoche*, and as practical everyday phrases they are *ways* of expressing a disposition that suspends judgement. I will carry out this juxtaposition of these two perspectives on the *tropes* so

as to not lose sight of either, as both are necessary to understanding Pyrrhonian

scepticism. Aporetic language praxis is better understood, however, by first

understanding the *tropes* in their use as ways to *epoche*, particularly in conjunction with

the sceptical utterances, which even more clearly highlight apoertic language practice as

the focus of the Pyrrhonian way.

 To understand Pyrrhonism, initially it is necessary to have the Pyrrhonian system

laid out in familiar terms including its principles (*epoche, aporia, phantasiai,*

apprehension), arguments (*tropes*), and goals (*ataraxia*). Pyrrhonism is not simply an

explanatory system or argument however. Pyrrhonism is experiential, and is more

concerned with how the individual *feels,* or is 'struck' by the things she apprehends.

Essentially, the Pyrrhonian sage would not argue, or even use language in the same way

that a novice Pyrrhonian or non-sceptic would. This position changes what the *tropes*, as

well as several other aspects of Pyrrhonism (which will be explained) do for the

Pyrrhonian sage as opposed to the novice or non-sceptic.

 The Pyrrhonian sage has settled into the habit of *epoche* and aporetic linguistic

praxis, and this inculcates *ataraxia* through the persistent experience of speaking from an

aporetic disposition. The sage is thereby more concerned with how she speaks, and she

uses language fundamentally differently than a non-Pyrrhonian would. She certainly

does not engage in argumentation nor simply view the *tropes* as arguments.

 For the novice, the practice of aporetic speech for the continued locution of

aporia is not yet a habit, and he might perhaps view the *tropes* in a more argumentative

light than the Pyrrhonian sage would. The juxtaposition between understanding the

tropes as arguments and as sceptical utterances is ultimately to highlight the difficulty in

maintaining the difference between them: to understand the *tropes* purely as arguments is to miss the ascetic language practice that Pyrrhonism culminates in, yet to understand them solely as utterances would be to miss the formative, pedagogical steps towards understanding Pyrrhonism at all.

In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* we shall investigate the *tropes* and their use as arguments for inducing *epoche*, while also explicating their roll in maintaining an aporetic disposition via linguistic praxis. Furthermore, the sceptical utterances that Sextus outlines will be analyzed, as these seem to be the strongest thread, along with the explicit Pyrrhonian disposition of the writing itself, connecting the practical aporetic linguistic praxis to Pyrrhonism's eponymous founder. Firstly however, an understanding of Sextus' own terms and the general position of Pyrrhonism must be laid out. This will be followed by an exposition of the five *tropes* of Agrippa, in which I develop an understanding of them as arguments for *epoche*. Lastly, I will turn to the sceptical phrases that Sextus outlines, as well as provide an explication of the *tropes* which focuses on understanding Pyrrhonism as espousing a particular approach to using language that began with Pyrrho, was ignored by the Academics, and was revived by Aenesidemus.

3.5 Outline of Sextus

In the opening chapter of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus produces the essentials of what Pyrrhonism is as a philosophy, beginning with the division of 'those who inquire' (outlined at the beginning of this thesis) into three groups: the dogmatists, who stop their inquiry because they believe that they know something; the Academics, who stop their inquiry because they believe that nothing can be known; and the sceptics (for the

remainder of the chapter I use 'sceptic' and 'Pyrrhonian' interchangeably), who do not

stop their inquiry since they find no suitable answer. Further, he states that the

Pyrrhonian sceptic assents to nothing that is uncertain, and that *aporia* and *epoche* come

about for the Pyrrhonian by the equipollence of propositions regarding objects of

perceptions and objects of thought.[153] Thus every proposition, or anything that can be

said about reasoning or perception, can be met by an opposite proposition of equal

strength, thereby making everything uncertain and resulting in *epoche* on the part of the

sceptic. As Sextus writes, "In short, he who dogmatizes, assumes as existing in itself that

about which he dogmatizes, the Sceptic, on the contrary, expresses his sayings in such a

way that they are understood to be themselves included [in his *epoche*], and it cannot be

said that he dogmatizes in saying these things."[154] Thus the role of the *trope*s as *epoche*-

inducing arguments and the sceptical phrases as routes to maintaining *epoche* are both

underscored, each of which will be addressed in due time. Prior to this exposition, a

handful of concepts that Sextus uses to express his position need to be examined,

including *phantasiai*, apprehension, *epoche*, and *ataraxia*. The first two of these

concepts separate Sextus from the sceptics before him, and though the last two concepts

are familiar to us from previous sceptics, it is through Sextus that they achieve a new

level of clarity.

3.6 Phantasiai

To begin, laying out several concepts central to Sextus' development of

Pyrrhonism is key. First are *phantasiai*, generally interpreted as impressions,

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[153] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.7, 14.
[154] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.14-15.

presentations, or appearances.[155] These are the combination of objects of perception and

objects of thought that compose human experience. Sextus outlines *phantasiai* in terms

of several schools of thought, giving the Stoic position as a *tuposis* or a shaping of the

ruling part of the soul by a sensible object, "just as a foot produces a footprint."[156]

Elsewhere, Sextus presents *phantasiai* as the Peripatetics understood them: a change in

the soul that he describes as "something – not yet determined – is approaching."[157] This

feeling, or *pathos*, is supervened by a *logike phantasia*, or a 'discourse-ready' *phantasia*

which unlike *pathos* or *a-logoi phantasiai*[158] can be expressed rationally, in language.

Phantasiai have a wide variety of uses in Sextus, as they can refer to: the externally

existing thing (*ta ektos hupokeimena*); the things that are (*ta onta*); what is (*to on*); and to

being (*to hupokeimenon*).[159] It is important to note that *phantasiai* are not thoughts or

objects themselves, however, as *phantasiai* are the impressions we get *from* objects of

thought and perception. Benson Mates also suggests a less popular translation of

phantasiai as 'fancy', whereby you might say that you 'fancy' something a certain way.

Something in the distance, perhaps a chair-shaped object, gives you the impression that it

is a chair; the perception as well as your conscious and unconscious thoughts as to what a

chair is, combine instantly to give you the fancy or *phantasia* that you are experiencing a

chair. That thing may or may not be a chair, but you suffer the impression, prior to any

rational thought on it, of it being a chair.

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[155] Mates, 30.
[156] Sextus Empiricus, *M* 7.220-221.
[157] Ibid., *M* 8.269.
[158] Note: Diogenes, 7.51 – *phantasiai* that are not *logikai* are *a-logoi* or irrational. Mates suggests that they are not so much irrational, but inexpressible (Mates 37) It seems to me the in the present context, pathetic or *alogoi phantasiai* are pre-logical, perhaps akin to emotions, and simply 'are' (*ta onta*).
[159] Mates, 39-40.

Avoiding dogmatism is always at the forefront of Pyrrhonism, and one may

wonder how Sextus would advocate *epoche* on all *phantasiai* and yet speak of the soul as

something that he does affirm as existing. This is the same problem that was assumed in

Pyrrho's discussion of the soul, and though the problem was a hypothesized one for

Pyrrho (his precise position being obscure) it is addressed more clearly in Sextus. Pyrrho

was shown to hold that humans do a great deal based on customs and conventions[160], and

Sextus holds a very similar Democritean tenet. It is one of four everyday observances

that he maintains that Pyrrhonians assent to without belief: i) guidance by nature, as we

appear naturally able to think and perceive; ii) necessitation by *pathos*, as we cannot deny

our feelings, particularly ones like hunger or thirst; iii) guidance by laws and customs, as

we must and do follow local points of view regarding these things; and lastly, iv)

teaching and learning an art or skill, as we must be active in a vocation or hobby.[161]

These fourfold observances are held so that the Pyrrhonian does not fall to the *apraxia*

(inaction) charge, and so he does not seem to contradict his *epoche* by appearing to

determine one choice of action over another. To speak of the soul, as well as how we as

humans appear to experience existence falls into two of the above observances; that of

following customs, and that of necessitation of *pathos*. As was argued for Pyrrho, Sextus

follows the customs and *pathos* regarding the existence of a soul insofar as it is a way to

speak about how we experience our lives. He does not, as should be clear, vest any belief

in what he says regarding the existence of souls or of the actuality of *phantasiai*.

Furthermore, in Book III of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, where Sextus discusses gods,

causes, motion, time, and a variety of other things argued about by dogmatists, he shows

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[160] Diogenes, 9.61.
[161] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.21-24.

that sceptics follow "an ordinary life without opinions,"[162] with regard to these things.

For example, concerning the gods, Sextus says that sceptics "say there are gods and we

are pious towards them,"[163] but only because they follow an ordinary life and do not

opine that gods certainly exist; rather, it is "inapprehensible whether there are gods."[164]

Sextus is merely expressing how things appear to him, and not determining anything

about the underlying nature of what impressed these appearances on him. *Phantasiai*

play a central role in Sextus, as they can be seen as that which human experience is

defined by: "those who say that the sceptics eliminate appearances seem to me to not

have heard what we have said. For we do not overturn that which, as a result of a state

produced by a presentation, lead us involuntarily to assent. But these are just what

appearances are."[165] *Phantasiai*, or appearances, are what we are conditioned to view as

our world, and give rise to our *pathos* regarding our situation therein, though Sextus

cautions us that they are nothing more than impressions. Honey appears sweet, but that it

is so, Pyrrhonists suspend judgement.

Lastly, I would make it clear that *epoche* is something that the sceptic falls into

due to the equipollence of *phantasiai* and the propositions that can be said of *phantasiai*.

It is not something the sceptic wills, or can stop or start doing on a whim. *Epoche*

becomes what the sceptic suffers because of the inapprehensibility of *phantasiai*. It is a

pathos, and not something that the sceptic particularly controls. Equipollence will be

explained in detail in the section on the *tropes*; suffice to say here that it is a balancing of

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162 Ibid., *PH* 3.2.
163 Ibid.,
164 Ibid., *PH* 3.11.
165 Ibid., *PH* I 19.

phantasiai and propositions such that the sceptic falls to *aporia* and *epoche* regarding the true nature of *phantasiai*.

3.7 Apprehension

The second concept that requires clarification, therefore, is apprehension. Translated from the Greek '*katalambano*', it literally means 'to grasp' or 'to catch hold of', and was central in the debate between the Academics and the Stoics over *kataleptic phantasia*, or apprehensive impressions.[166] Sextus appears to attack apprehension, particularly as the Stoics conjectured about it, as something that humans do not have for certain. Sometimes this is not entirely clear, as he addresses many views on apprehension including those of the Stoics and Peripatetics, while his own utilization of apprehension remain obscure. However, what has been said of *phantasiai* helps to clear this up, as the difference between *phantasiai* and the objects of thought and perception mark a fundamental distinction between what Sextus thinks we do and do not apprehend. To be sure, it was and is still debated as to what is apprehended: the external objects, as Cicero seemed to maintain[167], or the perceiver, who is 'dragged off to assent' by apprehension.[168] However, Sextus certainly did not think that the objects of thought and perception were grasped directly, as the account of *phantasiai* makes apparent.

To 'apprehend' is different than perceptual verbs like 'to see' or 'to hear' for Sextus, as for him 'to see' something does not mean to actually 'apprehend' it, and 'to see' is not treated as a direct relation between the perceiver and the object.[169] Modern

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[166] Mates, 43-44.
[167] Cicero, *Academia*, 2.145.
[168] Sextus Empiricus, *M* 7.257, quoted in Mates 43-44.
[169] Mates, 49.

language use does in fact carry this extensionality for perceptual verbs and assumes that when a duck sees a swan as a swan (*X* sees a *P* as a *P*,) the duck directly *apprehends*, (and by extension, knows,) it saw a swan. For Sextus, 'to apprehend' suggests a direct relation between the perceiver and the perceived, and absolute knowledge on the part of the perceiver regarding what is perceived. Apprehension is a direct relation, and carries with it the laws of predicate logic, such that a duck who apprehended a swan *knows* it apprehended a swan; that is, to say 'I saw a swan', or 'I apprehended a swan', both mean that the subject in the sentences *knows* about the swan in the proposition. This certainty, inherent to 'apprehension' in ancient Greek (and unfortunately inherent to virtually all perceptual verbs in modern language now,) is precisely what Sextus suspends judgement on, as objects of perception and thought are only *phantasiai*, and the objects themselves cannot infallibly be said to be 'apprehended'.

Moreover, for the duck to have seen the swan as a swan, such that the duck would utter the proposition that 'I saw a swan' (*X* saw a *P*), means that *X* already had the concept of a *P*, and applied it to the proposition regarding the impression it had, such that '*X* apprehended a *P* as *P*'. This means that *X* must already have known what a *P* was, implying that the truth of *P* "depends in part on [*X*'s] attitude toward the proposition or thought expressed by *P*."[170] Thus, when *X* designates *P* as *P* it is purely an extensional relation; that is, the designation derived from what *X* already knows of *P*, and may not relate at all to what was there to apprehend. This relation of *X* to *P*, where *X* claims to apprehend *P*, may have nothing to do with what *P* may in reality be, as it is entirely dependent on the relation of *X* to *P*.   Mates points out that "there will always be a gap in any argument that tries to infer […] one of these sentences from premises expressing only

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[170] Mates, 50.

an extensional relation between [*X*] and certain objects external to [*X*]."[171] Mates goes on

to indicate Sextus' formulation of the proposition 'X has a *phantasia* of *P*' as not

entailing this logical gap. Sextus' *epoche* regarding the absolute certainty assumed in

what it is 'to apprehend', and his position regarding *phantasiai* as appearing to develop

pathos (but not certainty) in us, distances him from making claims to knowledge that

logically confuse or misuse intension and extension. *Phantasiai* do not describe a direct

relation between the perceiver and the perceived object of thought and perception. A

phantasia is merely what strikes us as appearing, and by being unable to assent or dissent

to propositions that claim a direct relation of the perceiver to the perceived, Sextus forces

upon us the possibility that what we see, hear, think, touch, smell, (or any other

perceptual verb,) may be given too high an epistemic value in our propositions regarding

the nature of things.

3.8 What the Sceptics Do

By understanding *phantasiai* and apprehension (*katalambano*) we come to

understand how Sextus expresses his thoughts on what we perceive and how we appear to

perceive. We cannot say nor assume in our propositions that we have direct relations

with every object of thought or perception we encounter. Just because we saw something

or thought something does not mean we *know* that thing. He does not say that we

certainly do not know objects of thought or perception – that would amount to negative

dogmatism akin to that held by the Academics or Pyrrho's novice sceptical sage – but nor

can we say that we certainly do. This draws out two crucial points: first, *epoche* is a

pathos that the sceptic suffers due to being unable to determine things as being true or

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[171] Ibid., 49.

false (*aporia*); second, Pyrrhonism recommends that we adopt language that expresses that *we cannot determine things true or false, one way or the other*. Sextus does not just point to *epoche* as a logical conclusion and is done with it, but shows that the sceptic suffers *epoche* as an immediate impression on her soul, and that her language is tailored to not reflect apprehension of anything but *phantasiai*, and even then, she does so without holding any dogmatic beliefs regarding her *phantasiai*. Sextus does not question how *phantasiai* appear but rather, he questions what they correspond to, and whether our propositions can relate to how appearances really are. Clearly, Sextus does not think propositions can relate to anything other than appearances, or *phantasiai*. So long as propositions are made to operate within the scope of *phantasiai*, and one maintains a position of *epoche* regarding their apprehensibility (*katalambano,*) then Sextus thinks that no dogmas are being proposed, and the sceptic is only reporting a *pathos* of his immediate experiences.[172]

Sextus' sceptic would not utter the proposition 'I am cold and hungry,' as this makes a statement about the absolute certainty of the existence of the speaker being cold and hungry. Rather, the sceptic would say that 'I *feel* hungry and cold,' thus making the proposition be about the *pathos* that the sceptic feels forced upon him or her, and not about the true nature of the speaker, hunger, or temperature. Furthermore the utterance does not allow the perceiver to posit the truth of his hunger or temperature as dependant on what his or her attitude already is regarding 'hunger' or 'cold', as this has been shown to be a logical misuse of extensionality. Recalling the discussion on the psychology of the soul in the chapter on Pyrrho, Sextus' explanation of *phantasiai* (objects of thought and of perception) is such that an appearance or 'presentation' is a phenomenon of the

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[172] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.22.

soul as relating to the perception and experience of a given external object.[173]

Furthermore, recalling Plutarch's conception of the soul[174], it is evident that *phantasiai* cannot be removed from human experience any more than impulse can be removed, as they are inherent to our very nature. Our faculties of thought and perception present us with something, and we immediately suffer (*pathos*) it (an object of thought or perception, i.e., a book, or the thought of a book), as well as an impulse towards the *phantasiai*. Anything we *say* of *phantasiai*, or of the objects of perception and thought that impressed the *phantasiai* upon us, has a quality of assenting to the existence of the given thing – either the truth or reality of the presentation itself, or the object itself. Sextus wishes to *epoche* with regard to *what can be said* with certainty of objects of perception and objects of thought, but not the feeling of being imposed upon by one's own *phantasiai* of said objects.

To be sure, Sextus does not lay any claim to the existence of objects, either. Opinions and beliefs about *phantasiai* are to be pared away from the *phantasiai* themselves. What we can say about the chair you are sitting on deserves *epoche*, as do the colour, sturdiness, and its very existence as a *phantasia,* since none of these is more certain than uncertain, 'no more' true than false. The chair, and anything that can be said of the chair, deserves an attitude and language that reflect the uncertainty about the true

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[173] Ibid., *M* 7.161-162.

[174] Plutarch states "there are three movements in the soul, that of presentation, that of impulse, and that of assent. Presentation cannot be removed even by those who want to, but it is necessary that those who meet with objects should be impressed and affected by them; and impulse is awoken by presentation, and moves man to act with respect to what is appropriate to him, as though a tipping of the scales and an inclination occurred in the leading part [of the soul]. Now, those who suspend judgement on all matters do not abolish this second motion either, but they use impulse, which naturally leads a man towards what is presented as being congenial to him… For the argument for suspension of judgement does not interefere with sense-perception, nor does it introduce into our irrational experiences and movements some change which disrupts our faculty of presentation. All it does is remove opinions; the rest it makes use of in accordance with their natures." Plutarch, *Against Colotes,* 1122b-c, f.

nature of the chair – yet what the chair is for you immediately, here and now via *phantasiai*, does not and cannot require this same aporetic treatment. The sceptic does not expect you to suspend judgement as to the *phantasiai* you endure, as this leads to inaction (a*praxia*), but the sceptic does wish you to realize that what you can say with certainty regarding your *phantasiai* is far less evident than the immediate *phantasiai* in themselves. Sit in the chair, but do not talk as if you know something fundamental about the being of the chair as easily as you sat in it, because whatever you say may no more relate to the reality of the chair than does the *phantasia* of the chair.

3.9 *Ataraxia* and *Epoche*

Prior to addressing the *tropes*, which are instrumental in inducing *epoche*, I wish to address what *epoche* is in a more precise sense, and in turn reveal more about freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*), which 'follows *epoche* like a shadow'.[175] Suspension of judgement is akin to a *pathos* as it appears to be for Sextus something that the sceptic suffers due to the apparent inapprehensibility of things in their true nature. The sceptic lives by appearances (*phantasiai*), but does not opine or believe that appearances correspond precisely to how things are or might be in their true nature. The *tropes* are arguments or ways of thinking about appearances and the propositions that can be made about appearances that pit appearances and propositions of contrary meaning and equal weight against those appearances and propositions which a dogmatist might take up as true. As Sextus puts it,

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[175] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.29.

[People] of natural ability are disturbed because of the inconsistency in things,

and being doubtful which of the alternatives they should assent to, they came to

inquire into what is true and what is false in things in order that from a resolution

of their doubts they would attain freedom from disturbance. The main principle

of the sceptical system is that for every argument another argument of equal

[weight] is opposed. As a result of this we seem to arrive at a cessation of

dogmatism. [176]

And again, explicating Pyrrhonian scepticism shortly after,

For the sceptic, having begun to philosophize in order to judge presentations and

to try to grasp certain things as true or false so that he could attain freedom from

disturbance, tripped up on the equal weight of incompatible [claims]; thereupon,

not being able to make a judgement, suspended judgement. Finding himself in

this suspensive state, the freedom from disturbance with respect to beliefs

followed fortuitously. [177]

In these passages we find Sextus creating an image of the sceptic as someone who wished

at one point to know more about the nature of things so as to live a happier life. To begin

one's inquiry by finding the 'right' dogma is very much like the development of Pyrrho's

sage discussed in chapter one, when the novice sceptic begins with dogmatic intent but

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[176] Ibid., *PH* 1.12.
[177] Ibid., *PH* 1.26.

only eventually develops an aporetic disposition. Sextus' sceptic set out to learn the true nature of things, but in her inquiry she could not overcome arguments for one position regarding the nature of things with another argument, nor vice versa. The sceptic, who is not a Pyrrhonist until this present realization is made, finds herself unable to assent or dissent to any argument presented to her, and rather than dogmatically choose a single argument to assent to, knowing full well that it is no more viable than any other argument, suspends judgement. In suspending judgement, the sceptic suddenly finds that by no longer striving for knowledge regarding the true nature of things, and no longer arguing for one view against the other, the initial goal of living a happier and less disturbed life (*ataraxia*) befalls her. In a chapter titled 'On the General Modes Leading to Suspension of Judgement', Sextus states, "generally, suspension of judgement comes about through the opposition of things. We oppose [*phantasiai*] to [*phantasiai*], or ideas to ideas, or, interchanging them."[178] Thus sceptics oppose objects of perception with objects of thought, showing that propositions and arguments regarding them are no more reliable than any other *phantasiai* or idea one may have. Sextus offers several examples, such as a tower viewed up close appearing differently from far away, or an argument for providence based on the orderliness of the heavenly bodies that is equally opposed by the way that good people have bad things occur to them.[179] More examples are made in his exposition of the *tropes*, which all essentially carry forward the central mode of opposing appearances and propositions with each other to show that none convincingly overcome any other.

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[178] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* I, 31.
[179] Ibid., *PH* I 33.

The precise nature of *ataraxia* becomes more evident in the following passage, in which Sextus shows an example of how troubling beliefs and convictions can develop in a person, and how *epoche* addresses these problems and *ataraxia* follows.

> For one who believes that something is honourable or bad by nature will be disturbed; whenever the things he believes to be honourable are not before him, he believes he has inflicted upon himself the things that are by nature bad and he goes off after the things which, according to him, are good; and when he possesses them he stumbles into more disturbances because of his irrational immoderate elation, and fearing that things will soon change he will do everything he can so that he might not lose the things he believes to be good. On the other hand, the man who determines nothing in regard to things honourable or bad by nature does not flee or go after them excessively. For this reason he has freedom from disturbance.[180]

The sceptic does not believe that he knows what is good and bad beyond the appearance of things, and thereby he does not pursue the good or avoid the bad with the same fervour that a dogmatist might. Beliefs regarding the good and bad of non-evident things give rise to actions regarding those beliefs, actions that further engrain the initial beliefs and also bring about more beliefs (i.e. 'I believe that I do not have something good, therefore I believe that I must go and get what is good, and once I believe that I have it, I further

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[180] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* I 27-28.

believe that I should never let it change'). The beliefs ultimately lead one away from a less troubled life.

Relating back to what was developed in the sections on *phantasiai* and apprehension, we can recall that Sextus was shown to live by *phantasiai* but without belief or opinions regarding them as anything but appearances – that is, anything other than what they immediately strike him to be. Living by appearances for Sextus simply means living with how one suffers human experience: eating when you feel hungry, avoiding pain and seeking what strikes one as beneficial, but all *without* belief. To say something is inherently good is to go beyond what is immediately evident in *phantasiai*. Moreover, to make a knowledge claim also is to believe that something has been apprehended, that is, grasped with certainty, which Sextus also has shown to be beyond what *phantasiai* give to us. Humans cannot be said to apprehend conclusively (in the strict sense of the term) such things as goodness or badness; we only seem to grasp what we suffer via *phantasiai*, and the *pathos* we suffer from *phantasiai* is nothing other than immediate feeling, natural to our human condition.

From these passages there is also a sense that Sextus does not so much suspend judgement on every single minute thing, but focuses on those things that develop beliefs and opinions that disrupt our emotions and feelings. These latter things clearly include how we can speak about things, and what we can claim to apprehend about them. Sextus does not think the sceptic to be utterly undisturbed, and makes concessions that the sceptic is disturbed by hunger, thirst, and the like, but notes that these are matters of compulsion natural to the human experience.[181] He goes on to indicate that, "even in these cases, whereas ordinary people are distressed by two circumstances – by the states

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[181] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.29.

themselves and no less by the belief that the circumstances [under which the states are experienced] are bad by nature – the sceptic, by rejecting the additional belief that each of these is not only bad but bad by nature, will escape with more moderate states."[182] The sceptic then is not thought to shed completely all worries, nor is *ataraxia* thought to induce some sort of mystical apathy. *Ataraxia* is like *epoche* in that it is a *pathos* that befalls the sceptic, it is a feeling that overcomes the sceptic with regard to how *phantasiai* strike him: first he could not find a single argument or proof that any one proposition was any better or truer than any other and so *epoche* overcame him; then, once he ceased to strive either to argue for belief for a given proposition or from a position that adopted such a belief, *ataraxia* overcame him. The sceptic went from trying to find the true nature of things to feeling that the true nature was not apprehensible, to feeling less troubled because he was no longer searching for such a dogmatic idea of truth. Whereas a political dogmatist will argue for the Liberal party being the best choice, believing that the Liberal party makes choices that are good for people, the environment, and the country, a Pyrrhonian will back away from such claims. The Pyrrhonian does not find the connection between what the Liberal party, or any other party, does or claims to do as being evidently good or bad by nature, since what the party says and does are *phantasiai* and 'actual' goodness or badness are not apprehensible in *phantasiai*. Not being able to grasp anything about the true nature of the Liberal party's actions or propositions, the Pyrrhonist is dragged off to suspension of judgement, and in suspending judgement, is no longer fettered by desires or beliefs regarding the actions or propositions of any political party. The sceptic may vote based upon the appearances of things – 'it appears that the

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[182] Ibid., 1.30.

Liberal platform is sound' – but he vests no belief in the vote nor in the party for which he voted.

<p style="text-align:center">3.10 – The Five Ways to Epoche</p>

Having now given a general account of Sextus' scepticism and several essential terms and concepts central to his system, the *tropes* or 'ways' require some careful attention. These are arguments, or considerations that the sceptics use to induce *epoche*. Benson Mates points out rather aptly that the *tropes* should not be considered arguments in the strict sense, as they do not have definitive conclusions, but are designed to bring about the experience of *aporia* and *epoche*.[183] An example of this is a line from Epictetus wherein he states that one should try to "feel or reject the feeling that the stars are even in number. Impossible."[184] The *tropes* do not aim for a clear conclusion but try to raise more questions in the face of an initial question and try to induce the *pathos* of *aporia* and *epoche* in those who use the *tropes* but also in those who hear them.

The first set of ten *tropes* of Aenesidemus is methodically carried out in a latter pair of sets, one of two *tropes* and the other of five *tropes*. It is the set of five, attributed to an unknown figure, Agrippa, which will be analyzed here, as they are a development from the previous ten, and present together a system towards *epoche*. I have been juxtaposing two approaches to the *tropes* so far, suggesting they can be viewed as either arguments to induce *epoche*, or as utterances that the sceptics use to express their aporetic disposition. This has been done to underscore the difficulty in maintaining the difference between the two considering the Pyrrhonian position of determining nothing, and to also

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[183] Mates, 57.
[184] Epictetus, *Diss.,* I xxviii 2-3, quoted in Jonathan Barnes, *Toils of Scepticism*, 135.

show that the pedagogy of Pyrrhonism requires understanding of both approaches. It was noted earlier that Sextus balances these positions in the very exposition of the *Outlines*, as he both presents the Pyrrhonian position but also expresses it in his writing 'only as it appears to him.' The two 'ways' of Pyrrhonism (argumentative and linguistic) that I am indicating seem to be apparent to Sextus as well, as he indicates two ways of treating Pyrrhonism; the 'general way' and the 'specific way'. The general way is "that in which we set forth the basic features of scepticism, enunciating its fundamental idea, its principles and arguments, its criterion and its goals."[185] That is, the general way is the standard account of a philosophical position, giving aims, arguments, and principles. The second way he delineates as "that in which we argue against each part of what is called philosophy."[186] This, I believe, is the recognition of the two different approaches and attitudes towards language. First, the general or theoretical approach is the approach in which the sceptic's propositions about *phantasiai* concern theory and principles, whereby they lay out in general terms what Pyrrhonism is and what its goals are. The general approach can be viewed as the Pyrrhonian speaking about things in a non-Pyrrhonian sense, in that the Pyrrhonian will say things as if he is determining something. Secondly, the specific or practical approach to talking about *phantasiai*, initiated by Pyrrho's sagacious teachings, revived by Aenesidemus and carried now by Sextus, concerns the practice of those who have a Pyrrhonian disposition. That is, language is understood and utilized differently than the way it is utilized in the theoretical laying-out of principles and goals by someone who determines nothing.

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[185] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.5.
[186] Ibid., 6.

Essentially, in the general approach, the practice of aporetic language is not in fact practiced and is outside the scope of whatever the Pyrrhonian may be speaking about, whereas in the practical approach the aporetic language praxis is indeed practiced. To explain something as being a certain way is one thing ('I know I saw a swan'); to explain the same thing without saying that you actually believe it to be that way requires a specific approach to language ('I no more did than did not see a swan'). One cannot offer an argument in the plain or 'general' sense of doing so if one does not determine anything at all. The exposition of *phantasiai*, apprehension, *epoche*, and *ataraxia*, aimed at clarifying this; the sceptic is willing to argue about *phantasiai* insofar as they appear to him. The colour of a pen or even the nature of the gods is open for discussion in the mind of the sceptic because to him, so long as his language is following the aporetic practice of Pyrrhonism (the practical approach), he is simply speaking without belief of how things strike him. He is merely going with appearances, and reporting how he feels at the moment. Anything non-evident, such as the goodness of voting for one party over another, or the badness of falling off a cliff and dying, he will not engage with in terms of the general approach, as he finds himself suspending judgement about such things due to the equipollence of opposing arguments regarding them.

Therefore, the *tropes* should be understood as reports of *phantasiai* from the sceptic, without any belief or conviction regarding the reports as anything other than how the sceptic feels impressed upon by the *phantasiai* at the moment regarding the point at hand. The *tropes*, therefore, also follow a strict sort of use of language akin to that of Pyrrho and Aenesidemus, whereby certain locutions are said with a caveat regarding the intended meaning of a word. Perceptual verbs like 'to see', and 'to apprehend' are

distanced from 'to know' due to the gap that Sextus feels is present between perceived *phantasiai* and 'knowing' or apprehending something in its true nature. In following Sextus' elucidation of the *tropes* in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* it shall be shown how he presents them generally, but also how he espouses them specifically in the language of his writing.

3.10.1 The First Trope: *Diaphonia*

The first *trope* concerns *diaphonia*, or disagreement, and Sextus begins explaining it by stating that "we discover an undecidable dispute occurring for any matter purposed, both in ordinary life and among philosophers, as a result of which we are not able to choose something or reject it, and so we arrive at suspension of judgement."[187] It seems that Sextus is indicating that dogmatic propositions both in everyday situations as well as in circles of experts tend to disagree with each other, and that this induces *epoche*. Suppose you are in a room where eight different sociologists are arguing over the social ramifications of teachers using red pens to mark students papers. Some agree with each other on some points, but overall there are eight different and contrary opinions being proposed. You, whether a sociologist yourself or just a passerby, have the *feeling of* not being able to choose one view, absolutely, over any other.

Adopting *epoche* in the face of *aporia*, you develop an aporetic attitude toward such disputes, and neither assent nor dissent to there being a single clear answer. As Jonathan Barnes points out, "all disagreements are disagreements in opinion, and all disagreements in opinion are also disagreements of attitude; but not the other way

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[187] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.165.

around."[188] That is, attitudes, understood in the same vein as *pathos* in that they are

unavoidably part of being human, do not in themselves voice propositions and opinions,

and thereby do not disagree with each other. A Canadian and an American can walk into

a bar, and unless something is *said*, or opined, no disagreement can occur. Returning to

the sociologist example, a Pyrrhonian can walk in and not add to the dispute at all, as he

is overcome by the sense of *epoche* in the face of *diaphonia*.

It is interesting to note that Jonathan Barnes offers a 'Principle of Disagreement'

to encapsulate the *trope* of *diaphonia*. It essentially states that if there is a dispute then

one "ought not to accept or reject any proposed answer to [the dispute]."[189] While aiding

in the 'general' understanding of Pyrrhonism, offering this sort of strict principle (recall

that the general account of Pyrrhonism concerns principles) pulls too far away from the

'specific' understanding of Pyrrhonism and the *trope* at hand; that is, the *trope* is meant

to give the experience of *aporia* and induce *epoche*. It is not a principle in and of itself; it

is a *way* to *aporia*, not a knockdown argument.

3.10.2 The Second Trope: Infinite Regression

The second *trope* considers situations of infinite regress, where "what is offered

as confirmation of the matter proposed is itself in need of confirmation, and so on

infinitely, so that not having a starting point from which we can establish anything,

suspension of judgement follows."[190] The way of inducing *epoche* works hand in hand

with the *trope* of *diaphonia*, in that one can think of one of the sociologists in the

previous example offering an argument or 'confirmation' to end the dispute, which itself

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[188] Barnes, 15.
[189] Ibid., 25.
[190] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.166.

needs further argument and further confirmation. What the sociologist is doing is offering up *more* argument and more propositions about still more *phantasiai*. The sceptic feels this only adds to the feeling of *aporia* and *epoche*, and does nothing to assuage the feeling that no single answer to the dispute is any better than any other. To be sure, as Barnes points out, an argument that falls to infinite regress may in fact lead to a true conclusion.[191] That the argument at hand may somehow be true is not the sceptic's point; rather, the argument itself is not sound, as no person can follow through infinitely many regressions to find the argument valid, something that Aristotle explored already.[192]

The important thing for the sceptic is the immediacy of the dispute. The sceptic's search for the happy life has always been contiguous with the phenomenological and existential, by which I mean that whatever dispute is at hand or whatever argument is presented, is immediate to the sceptic. He or she is part of or present to the debate, whether it is through a circle of friends, a one on one discussion, or reading a paper, and the arguments strike the sceptic there and then. To the sceptic, to have an infinitely regressive argument thrown at you does nothing to justify a belief or opinion, and only throws more dirt on the pile and dust in the air. Moreover, one infinitely regressive argument is as strong as another, and the sceptic can provide an equally persuasive regressive argument to counter any regressive argument given. *Aporia* and *epoche* follow the experience of such arguments.

3.10.3 The Third Trope: Relativity

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[191] Barnes, 42.

[192] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House 2001), 72b 8-11.

The third *trope* concerns relativity and can be regarded as the lasting influence of the relativity that Aenesidemus put forth in his attempt to expand the sceptical phrasebook. Sextus essentially summarizes the ten *tropes* of Aenesidemus (particularly the eighth), stating that an "object appears to be of one sort or another in relation to what is judging it and to the things observed along with it, but as for its nature, we suspend judgement."[193] Sextus is pointing out that any given object may appear to different observers differently. It is interesting to note that Barnes dismisses this *trope* from his analysis of them, since he thinks that "it is a strange beast […and] belongs […] to a different species from the other four modes."[194] I made note of this in the section on Aenesidemus, as relativity was his focus in his ten *tropes*. Here it will be seen that relativity is not Sextus' focus, and that this *trope* does not do much work in inducing *epoche* itself, but leads to other *tropes* in order to do so.

To begin with an example of what Sextus means with this *trope*: an obscure, small, black disc flying through the air may appear to a hockey player to be a hockey puck; to a UFO enthusiast, a small spacecraft; to a ornithologist, a blackbird. Suppose the UFO enthusiast writes on his blog that small black objects flying through the air are probably visitors from another planet. The hockey player might write that what the UFO enthusiast says is foolish and that these objects are hockey pucks. The ornithologist may write, saying that it is the migratory season for some blackbirds this time of year, and that these birds are a more likely explanation than any other. The point in all this is that things appear, both in perception and in thought, relative to the subject. The way something appears, even if it is completely new to the subject perceiving it, can only be

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[193] Sextus Empiricus, PH 1.167.
[194] Barnes, 113.

expressed in terms already familiar to the subject, which was discussed in the section on apprehension and the problems that can arise with extension and intension.

To make the example less dramatic, perhaps one ornithologist who has spent ten years studying the Eastern blackbird is arguing with another ornithologist, who has spent nine years studying the Western blackbird, about what species of blackbird they both saw last night. Sextus' point is that one may be correct, but neither has apprehended anything in its true nature, and one perception of *phantasiai* cannot be preferred over any other. Thus we find that this *trope* relies on the *trope* of *diaphonia* in that two or more conflicting views have been presented, and neither can be certainly said to touch on the nature of the thing at hand. *Diaphonia* leads to the *aporia* and *epoche* with regard to the relativity of objects to subjects, and subjects to objects.

3.10.4 The Fourth Trope: Hypothesis

The *trope* based on hypothesis attacks dogmatists who think that certain unestablished arguments "deserve to be taken as agreed upon simply and without demonstration."[195] The role of hypotheses in Platonic works was discussed in the chapter on Pyrrho, where hypotheses were championed as the best possible courses to take from a position of *aporia*. They were fluid suppositions that were tenuously proposed and open to being replaced by better hypotheses. These are juxtaposed with the more Aristotelian sort of hypotheses, which Sextus most certainly has in mind here, whereby a hypothesis

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[195] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.168.

is proposed as a first principle and is not open to replacement.[196] Both the Platonic and

Aristotelian methods propose something as given, but the Platonic method is heuristic in

nature and aims to aid in getting closer to the discovery of some truth, whereas the

Aristotelian method posits its hypotheses axiomatically, and does not allow for their

change or replacement.[197] The *trope* of hypothesis targets both of these, but clearly

attacks the Aristotelian axiomatic hypothesis with more rigour.

Essentially, Sextus attacks the hypothesis of the dogmatists by saying that they

barely assert anything by hypothesis, and that if they can hypothesize *X* by bare assertion,

then anyone can hypothesize *not-X* by bare assertion as well.[198] One bare assertion is

equipollent to any other, and by proposing a contrary hypothesis to the dogmatist's

hypothesis; Sextus invokes the *trope* of *diaphonia*. By doing this, the sceptic forces the

dogmatist into one of two options: either argue for his hypothesis, thus making it no

longer a hypothesis and susceptible to the *trope* of infinite regress, or argue that the

consequence of the hypothesis is proof that the hypothesis is true.[199] The latter point

shows the *trope* of hypothesis is comparable in form to the *trope* of reciprocity in that the

dogmatist's own argument can be shown to be logically flawed. That is, if the dogmatic

hypothesis were axiomatically given as a principle proof upon which consequent

arguments are built, but the dogmatist states that the proof of the axiomatic hypothesis is

in its consequence, then "the whole epistemological order of things is overturned [and the

dogmatist] suffers as epistemological bouleversement,"[200] since he attacks the ground of

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[196] see Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 72a, 20-24.
[197] Barnes, 93-94.
[198] Ibid., 99. See also Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.173.
[199] Ibid*.,* 111. See also Sextus Empiricus, *M* VIII 376-8.
[200] Barnes, 11-112.

his own dependence on axiomatic hypotheses. That is, proof and premise cannot come from the same source.

If someone were to argue by hypothesis that a god wrote a book and as a consequence of this that person follows what the book says, one might question how she knows a god wrote it. If she were to say that she knows it was written by a god because she follows what the book says, then the initial hypothesis that the book was written by a god is no longer the antecedent argument for her following what is written in the book. The value of the initial axiomatic hypothesis is thrown out as soon as the dogmatist tries to prove its worth by its consequence; the axiom was supposed for its ability to further prove things, not for those further things to prove the hypothesis. Thus, the hypothesizing dogmatist either ends in attacking her own position via reciprocity or turns away from hypothesizing by being forced to justify via further argument her hypothesized proposition. This latter move, as was said, allows the sceptic to invoke the *trope* of infinite regress.

All this argumentation may seem to overshadow the aim of the *trope* to cause the experience of *aporia* and *epoche*, and I think that the focus on the argumentative aspect of the *tropes* does have this effect. However, the *trope* of hypothesis does not end in utterly refuting the position of someone who posits something by hypothesis; it only shows that whatever can be posited by hypothesis can be countered by a hypothesis of equipollent weight, reduced to infinite regress, reciprocity, *diaphonia*, or can be countered by attacking its own position. By this, one hypothesis can be said to touch on the nature of things no more than any other can, and the feeling of being able to choose

absolutely one over any other is lost in the feeling of *aporia*, which is followed by *epoche*.

3.10.5 The Fifth Trope: Reciprocity

The final *trope* concerns reciprocity, and is "introduced whenever that which ought to provide assurance for the thing investigated itself requires confirmation from the thing investigated. Therefore, we are not able to accept either one as establishing the other, and regarding both we suspend judgement."[201] Sextus here points to an oscillation between criterion to proof, or from cause to effect, such that what was meant to provide a ground for further argument also finds its own ground further in the argument itself. Reciprocal argumentation was exemplified in the above discussion of the *trope* of hypothesis, where the value of the initial claim is disregarded as soon as the dogmatist tries to prove its worth by its consequence. The first claim was supposed for its ability to prove further things, and to have the further things need to provide proof for the first claim is to fall to reciprocity.

Much like an argument from infinite regress, there is no 'first' element, or epistemic priority, to a reciprocal argument. The lack of epistemic priority is most evident in examples of definition, where one person asks 'what does tall mean?' to which someone responds 'big.' The first person, not being clear what 'big' is asks for clarification, to which he gets the response 'big means tall.' Having come full circle, the initial questioner has learned nothing about what is meant by 'tall'. As Sextus notes, to try to prove something by a reciprocal argument is to try to 'prove the unknown by the

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[201] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.169.

unknown'.[202] As with the *trope* of hypothesis*,* the *trope* of reciprocal argument forces a

dogmatist to argue for a 'first' element or proposition, which would invoke either the

mode of hypothesis, or infinite regress, which in turn would invoke the mode of

diaphonia. The *trope* does not disprove or refute the possibility that the argument may be

true, but it does show that the argument or opinion at hand is no more sound than another

argument of equal and opposite weight, and thereby induces *aporia.*

3.10.6 The Tropes in Action

Sextus maintained that any inquiry can fall to these *tropes*, and that they strip

arguments of their ability to cause us to apprehend absolutely one argument above all

others in a given inquiry as unequivocally correct and true by nature.[203] Concerning what

can be said of things, or the opinions that can be had of them, he felt that nothing could

be posited with absolute certainty, as *aporia* is a more prevalent feeling than is certainty

when trying to determine the validity one position over any other. Through the *tropes* all

inquiry is shown to dissolve by way of infinite regression, hypothesis, reciprocity,

relativity, and *diaphonia*, to *aporia* and suspension of judgement. It should be cautioned

though, that by invoking the *tropes* in argumentative ways, or with a focus on the

argument, the aim of the *tropes* as *ways to epoche* is often lost. The Pyrrhonist is not

arguing dialectically by giving opposite and equipollent propositions, and he is certainly

not trying to argue for the opposite positions themselves; he is trying to implant the

feeling of uncertainty and *aporia* that Epictetus accomplishes so well by asking us to

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[202] Sextus Empiricus, *M* 8.86. Quoted in Jonathan Barnes, *Toils of Scepticism*, 74.
[203] Ibid., *PH*. 1.169-170.

'feel whether the stars in the sky are even or odd in number.'[204] The sceptic does nothing

but try to instill *aporia* and *epoche* by pointing out the human inability to say anything

with absolute certainty regarding the true nature of things, or regarding things like

goodness or badness, which are not evident in *phantasiai*. We cannot say that we are

directly related to the true nature of things by perception and rationality, and the

phantasiai we do grasp in perception and thought cannot be said with absolute certainty

to aid in discovering anything about the true nature of things. We only have *phantasiai*

and we need to limit how we speak of *phantasiai* as related to any absolute truth.

An example that Sextus uses to express this grasping-without-certain-success

(hyphenated to try and keep the sense of it being a verb or action humans do) can be

found in *Against the Mathematicians* where he equates the search for absolute truth and

'knowing' to searching for gold in a dark room.[205] There are plenty of things on the

ground, including gold, and the people in the room grope around in the dark, with

someone announcing every so often that he or she has found gold. With complete

darkness however, no one has a way of conclusively proving that what he has is in fact

gold, despite the fact that he may indeed have found gold. A similar analogy is drawn

later whereby archers are shooting targets in a dark room, and though an archer can say

that she is certain she has hit a target, there is no way to show conclusively that she

has.[206] We can say that these archers who make claims to hitting targets are shooting

propositions at the truth. They dogmatically claim to have 'true apprehension' and draw

a direct relation from subject to object. That is, they claim 'to know' that they have hit

the target, or found gold. Yet, because of the equipollence of propositions made apparent

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[204] Epictetus, *Diss*. I XXVIII 2-3.
[205] Sextus Empiricus, *M* 7.52. Quoted in Jonathan Barnes, *Toils of Scepticism,* 138-139.
[206] Ibid., *M* 8.325. Quoted in Jonathan Barnes, *Toils of Scepticism* 138.

by applying the *tropes* to their claims, it appears that *aporia* and uncertainty are more evident than any single proposition supporting a claim to apprehending something in truth, and the sceptic has the feeling, or *pathe*, of suspending judgement over any feeling of assenting or dissenting to the dogmatic proposition. We can grasp the *phantasiai* of things in the dark room, and say that we behold something, but of non-evident things such as the goodness or badness of them, we only conjecture and grasp nothing.

The division between the use of the *tropes* as arguments or as utterances has been cleared up. They may at first flush be viewed as arguments, but in practice they are not arguments in the sense of having a logical, argued conclusion. They aim at raising more questions, and they essentially do this to reduce the false feeling of certainty and to induce the feeling or *pathe* of *aporia,* and in turn *epoche*. The *tropes* work together to induce *epoche* in the speaker, but also in people with whom a Pyrrhonist may speak. Much of the confusion regarding the *tropes* as purely argumentative efforts arises from the thought that a Pyrrhonist would argue with someone rather than simply speak with her, as Sextus suggests by saying "it is not fitting for a sceptic to quarrel over utterances."[207] Though Sextus there speaks of utterances, the overall disposition of the Pyrrhonist – being aporetic, undetermining, and undogmatic – should certainly show that argument is not their nature. The Academic sceptics might argue for *epoche*, eristically and dialectically manoeuvering to have you logically conclude in their favour. Recalling Pyrrho, he did not argue but taught his position through anecdote and living his philosophy as closely as he could, recommending it for those who might follow and experience the untroubled life as he did. Pyrrho constantly maintained fundamental epistemological and metaphysical uncertainties in the forefront of his use of language.

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[207]Ibid., *PH* 1.206.

By never allowing himself to be caught up in the dogmatic reality that language customarily assumes to be true, Pyrrho never became caught up in struggles for the truth of things either in ordinary language or in philosophical discussion. The following section on the sceptical phrases and utterances should underscore this practical, linguistic disposition Sextus draws from Pyrrho, and further show that Pyrrhonism is less concerned with arguing than it is with suggesting a way to use language that leads to a happier, less troubled life.

3.11 The Sceptical Practice of Language

Sextus wishes to suspend judgement with regard to *what can be said with certainty* of objects of perception and objects of thought – that is, what we can say with certainty about what we perceive and what we think. He does not extend this same suspensive attitude toward the *pathe* of being imposed upon by one's own impressions of appearances, that is, *phantasiai*. Appearances, or *phantasiai*, are what they are, and the sceptic abides by them in daily life. Non-evident, non-apparent things, most notably the goodness or badness of *phantasiai*, are the precise targets of *epoche*. By removing the conventional, infallible way of speaking about non-evident things, Sextus and Pyrrho before him aimed at removing the 'troubling beliefs and opinions' that develop from the implicit way that language assumes that we absolutely 'know' whatever it is we see, hear, touch, taste, or speak about.[208] This certainty, inherent in virtually all perceptual verbs in

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[208] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* I 27-28. Discussed earlier in the chapter, Sextus explains the development of troubling beliefs: "For one who believes that something is honourable or bad by nature will be disturbed; whenever the things he believes to be honourable are not before him, he believes he has inflicted upon himself the things that are by nature bad and he goes off after the things which, according to him, are good; and when he possesses them he stumbles into more disturbances because of his irrational immoderate elation, and fearing that things will soon change he will do everything he can so that he might not lose the things he believes to be good."

modern language (see chapter on *phantasiai*) is precisely what Sextus suspends

judgement on, as he felt that objects of perception and thought are only *phantasiai* and

cannot infallibly be said to lend to a direct relation between the speaker and non-evident

things such as goodness or badness. Any belief regarding the goodness of an action or a

thing is over and beyond anything a sceptic would feel she is able to determine.

An example drawn from Sextus in *Against the Mathematicians* serves to clarify

how the sceptic acts without belief via her aporetic disposition or attitude. I will use this

example shortly to clarify further the language practice that the Pyrrhonists employ. In it

Sextus offers the position of someone criticizing a sceptic for inconsistency, as the

sceptic is said neither to choose nor avoid anything, yet

> […] if [the sceptic] is ever in a tyrant's power and is compelled to do something
>
> unspeakable, either he will not submit to the command but will rather choose
>
> voluntary death, or he will avoid the torture chamber by doing what he is ordered
>
> to do. And so he will no longer be, in Timon's words, "free of choice and
>
> avoidance", but will choose some things and steer clear of others – and that is the
>
> act of people who grasp with conviction that there is something which is worth
>
> choosing and something which is worth avoiding.[209]

Sextus' hypothetical critic supposes a situation in which anyone would be forced to make

a choice and thinks that he has caught the sceptic in a situation where the sceptic's so-

called claim neither to choose nor avoid anything is made to be inconsistent, as the

sceptic clearly must make a choice in the situation. Sextus shows that this attempted

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[209] Sextus Empiricus, *M* 11.163-164.

entrapment is mistaken in a number of ways. The first of which is the thought that the sceptic lives according to a philosophical theory, akin to the scepticism delineated by the 'general' (versus 'specific') understanding of scepticism as having principles and arguments, given at the outset of this chapter. The sceptic can and does make choices via "unphilosophical observations", which are in accord with living by appearances, upheld by Sextus' fourfold observances, as well as by Pyrrho.[210] The sceptic, coerced by the tyrant, will choose a course of action. He will not fall to *apraxia* – the other option that the critic thinks the sceptic would fall to - as he does not in fact determine a 'sceptical' theory, or any other any philosophical theory, as a guide to correct action. As Sextus states, "he will perhaps choose one thing and avoid another by [following] the basic grasp which accords with his ancestral customs and habits."[211]

The 'perhaps' in the above quote is of interest as it seems to allow for the *aphasia* of Pyrrho, such that the sceptic may in fact say or do nothing, being overcome with the sense of *aporia*, and thereby he may be seen to in fact fall to *apraxia*. I shall return to this. The point here is that the sceptic does not follow anything but the *phantasiai*, or appearances, and vests no belief or opinion in the following of these *phantasiai* as being anything but *how things appear*. Thus, Sextus concludes, the sceptic will bear hardship more easily than will a dogmatist, as the sceptic "has no additional opinions beyond [the hardship itself]."[212] The sceptic endures whatever befalls him, be it torture, death, or 'unspeakable acts'. The dogmatist would endure these, as well as the self-inflicted trauma of believing her choices and the ensuing effects of them to be good or bad.

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[210] Ibid., *M* 11.165.
[211] Ibid., *M* 11.166.
[212] Ibid.

It is important now to recall that the Pyrrhonian sceptic does not argue for her

aporetic position in the sense of determining it to be 'logically' correct and concluded.

The discussion of the *tropes* should have made this clear, as they aim only to raise more

questions and induce the feeling of *aporia*, like how Socrates argued with people on the

streets of Athens not to prove them wrong, but to show that no one present seems to

know anything about the topic at hand. Sceptics are trying to reveal the experience of not

knowing and also maintain that *aporia*, that presence of not knowing, in their own

language. The sceptical utterances that Sextus sketches toward the end of the first

chapter of the *Outlines* espouse this revelatory character of Pyrrhonian scepticism as well

as the non-argumentative nature of having the Pyrrhonian, or aporetic, disposition of

determining nothing in everyday language. These utterances, of which Sextus gives five,

accentuate the roots that Sextus' thought has in Pyrrho's recommendation of being

"undogmatic and uncommitted and unswayed, saying of each and every thing that it no

more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not […] The result for those

who are in this disposition will first be speechless and then freedom from disturbance."[213]

This is the germ of all Pyrrhonian utterances. Each one of Sextus' utterances is said

without commitment, without intending to take a side on whatever is being stated, and

without making any claim beyond a report of what appears at the moment to the person

making the locution. The sceptical utterances certainly aid in the promulgation of *aporia*

and *epoche*, but that burden is largely laid upon the *tropes*. The utterances definitively

underscore the individualistic, non-argumentative nature of Pyrrhonian scepticism, as

they, more so than the *tropes*, concern the maintenance of the sceptic's own disposition

over and above any thought of convincing another person of the ways of scepticism.

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[213] Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.* 14.18.

3.12 The Sceptical Utterances

The first utterance is 'I suspend judgement', and is uttered to show that the sceptic

cannot say which of the objects or choices before her can be given her trust or belief, and

which should not. It is an expression of the *aporia* and *epoche* induced by the *tropes*, and

can be understood in terms of the tyrant example as the sceptic expressing her inability to

choose between the options that the tyrant forces upon her. No option strikes her as

better or worse by nature than any other; death is not certainly known to be bad, nor is

whatever 'unspeakable act' that the tyrant demands of her. In terms of appearances,

customs, or personal preference, she will choose accordingly, but will never leave the

aporetic disposition that she has towards her choice and action being 'good' or 'bad' by

nature, since such things are not evident.

The second utterance is the locution 'I determine nothing', wherein 'determining'

is meant as "making an utterance about a non-apparent thing with assent."[214] This

utterance merely "reveals our state [of mind]," and encompasses itself in its own scope

in that the sceptic does not determine anything in stating that he determines nothing.[215] It

is again an expression of the *pathe* of uncertainty that the sceptic feels regarding

whatever is under investigation, much like the third utterance 'all things are

undetermined' is a report of how the sceptic feels that whatever is under investigation –

the 'correct' choice of action in the face of the tyrant, perhaps – is not determined. One

choice is no more determined than a contrary choice; hence the sceptic, struck by *epoche*

induced by equipollence, cannot and will not say that anything is determined.

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[214] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.197.
[215] Ibid.

Furthermore, Sextus indicates that any locution is necessarily relative to a subject, and that the sceptic's utterance 'all things are undetermined' is necessarily limited to and relative to the sceptic. Any utterance therefore can always be taken, as Aenesidemus pointed out, as only speaking to a relative, and not to an absolute, point of view. This suggests that the sceptic, in making her choice between the options given to her by the tyrant, does not determine what could be good by nature for her at the moment of deciding by thinking if her choice might be good for someone else. The focus on the moment is either because existentially and phenomenologically speaking there is only this moment and no one else *could* be in it, or that, in purely relative terms, what is good for one is not always good for another or for all. Sextus does not care for relativism save for where it aids in revealing the experience of *aporia*, or where it is part of expressing the experience of *aporia* itself. It does both here.

'I fail to grasp' is the fourth sceptical utterance, and it further accentuates the revelation of the sceptic's experience of *aporia* through showing that "the sceptic avoids, for the present, positing or abolishing any of the non-evident matters being investigated."[216] I group into this fourth category of utterances Sextus' 'all things are ungraspable,' as both of these utterances report an individual's *pathe*, with the word 'all' in both instances limited to what is relative to the present investigations of the sceptic. The sceptic is not determining that things are certainly not graspable, as the Academics tended to conclude, but is saying that the goodness of one choice of action over another is not presently evident or determinable.

The final utterance is a familiar one by now: 'to every argument an equal argument is opposed.' As with the previous utterances, it is said only in terms of relating

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[216] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.201.

the sceptic to whatever investigation she is undertaking at the moment. Hence, 'every argument' does not mean every single one in existence, but merely every one that has been presented thus far in the present investigation. The meaning of the utterance is once again not a dogmatic statement, as might be understood by one who thinks that Pyrrhonian scepticism holds itself to general principles or to a philosophical theory, but should be understood in light of the specific understanding of Pyrrhonism as a revelatory, experiential approach to using language in an aporetic way, such that it reflects the *aporia* that the sceptic feels.

Sextus indicates that 'some sceptics' urge that this utterance be employed only in the imperative, such that it is stated as 'let us oppose to every argument an equal and opposite argument'. They urge this so that the sceptic

> will not be lead astray by the dogmatist and give up his sceptical mode of investigation, and so, because of his rashness, lose that freedom from disturbance which is apparent to them and which they believe is dependent on suspension of judgement about everything, as we said above.[217]

The sceptics who urged this almost certainly included Pyrrho, as it is he who began the linguistic approach to maintaining *aporia*, and who was most concerned with how unchecked language use can lead to rash beliefs and opinions. We might understand the imperative-approach to utterances as something a novice sceptic might do in earnest, not yet having fallen into *ataraxia* nor found his stride in aporetic praxis. Pyrrho himself embodied this approach to life; he himself never said that anything was more being than

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[217] Sextus Empricus, *PH* 1.204.

not being, and remained undogmatic, uncommitted, and unpersuaded in his own everyday

statements about the nature of reality. His scepticism was no armchair philosophy, and it

was not concerned with general accounts of principles or conclusive arguments, but with

specific language and how, in practice, people generate beliefs about non-evident things

based on false assumptions as much as true ones. Sextus shares this concern about the

beliefs generated by and through everyday language use, as expressed in the numerous

ways already discussed, the strongest of which being the nature of the *tropes*, the

fundamental practical nature of the utterances, and the way that Sextus incorporates the

aporetic language of the utterances throughout the writing of the *Outline of Pyrrhonism*.

The 'perhaps' mentioned earlier in the passage from Sextus[218] seems to allow for

the *aphasia* that was thought to be part of Pyrrho's development of the sceptical sage.

The novice sceptic may in fact say or do nothing, being overcome with the sense of

aporia, and may be seen to fall to *apraxia* by those ignorant of the mature Pyrrhonian

way and the fact that the sceptic is merely choosing to say nothing. Sextus supports this

in suggesting that *aphasia* is a state of mind, though "we [Pyrrhonians] do not understand

by *aphasia* something that inevitably results from the nature of things, but we mean that

we now find ourselves in the condition of mind expressed by it in regards to the things

that are under investigation."[219] Thus, not speaking or offering any statement about

whatever is under investigation is not necessarily inaction – that one can act without

speaking is beyond question – but *aphasia* is by virtue of the silence itself, an expression

of the *aporia* that the sceptic feels, and the *epoche* held because of this feeling.

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[218] Note: "He will perhaps choose one thing and avoid another by [following] the basic grasp which accords with his ancestral customs and habits." Sextus Empiricus, *M* 11.166.
[219] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.192-193. The text I used here was translated by Mary Mills Patrick in *Sextus Empiricus and Greek Scepticism*, (Cambridge: George Bell & Sons 1899), 79.

These are the sceptical utterances as Sextus treats them in the *Outlines*. I have spoken of Pyrrho as offering the initial utterance of 'no more', which Sextus treats separately from the utterances mentioned above, though very much in the same way. As was discussed in the section on Aenesidemus, it was thought that his utilization of 'no more' was an exercise in relativity, which appears to have pervaded the utterances that Sextus describes in the sense that all utterances "do not have any unqualified significance but are in fact relative to the sceptic and the sceptics [themselves]."[220] The utterance 'no more' is for Sextus an expression of the state of mind that the sceptic finds herself experiencing by applying the *tropes* to a given investigation. Any option given to the sceptic by the tyrant appears to the sceptic to be 'no more' good than not good in that goodness is neither apprehended, nor, due to the equipollence of arguments, any more present in one option than in another. If the sceptic feels the desire to express herself with regard to the choices she has or how things appear to her, the utterances provide ways that express her *aporia* but also ways to 'thwart every sophistical trick'[221] that a dogmatist may throw at the sceptic in trying to incite her to slip from her suspensive attitude.

3.13 Shielding, Suspending, and Purging

The sceptics do not use the utterances as anything but a shield from sophistical wrangling, though a more apt analogy might be found in calling the utterances a web of articulation which suspends the sceptic above the mire of troubling beliefs that they perceive dogmatic language inevitably creates. Like the characterization of Pyrrho's

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[220] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.207.
[221] Ibid., *PH* 1.208.

sceptical sage in the first chapter, showing him to be a linguistic nomad unfettered by troubling ontological beliefs due to the suppression of dogmatic utterances, the sceptic of the *Outlines* induces *aporia* and maintains it through the utterances for the perceived benefit, stumbled upon in suspending judgment, of no longer being troubled by so many beliefs about her ontological situation. Both sceptics, to the point that we might speak of them as one since they share the fundamental sceptical attitude towards what can be said with certainty in language, wish to use the very medium that controls our ability to make meaning and sense, to suppress just how much we let language speak itself.

The Pyrrhonists do not venture into the realm of argument like many imagine a person labeled a 'sceptic' would or should. This is the prerogative of an Academic sceptic, to be sure, as he delights in refuting and dialectically attacking every position, including his own. A Pyrrhonian does not share in this argumentative approach for no other reason than that she *practices aporia*, and *practices epoche*, and to do these things is fundamentally to use language differently. If one *feels* that a given position or argument on a topic is no more trustworthy than another, or any other, then to engage in argument is viewed as equally unscrupulous. The feeling of *aporia* and *epoche* drops the Pyrrhonian into a different use (or 'way,' to follow the meaning of '*trope*', as well as Benson Mates' book title, *The Skeptic Way*) of language than that which an Academic uses, evidenced by the Academic's misappropriation of Pyrrho's 'no more' utterance into an eristic weapon that, rather than expressing or lending to *epoche*, was only used as a dialectical chess piece for argumentation. Pyrrhonians step back from the entire chessboard, viewing the game as a whole as not appearing to help one to achieve *eudaimonia*.

Sextus speaks of the sceptical phrases as "purgative drugs, which not only eliminate the [unhealthy] bodily humours but also drive themselves out along with the humours."[222] He says this to describe the way that the sceptical phrases are used to express the *pathe* of a sceptic, and the way that the phrases are not committed to or assented to in any way. The phrases or utterances aid the sceptic in expressing and maintaining *epoche* and an aporetic disposition, but any dogma that the utterance may have conveyed or belief that the sceptic may have had in the utterance is purged by the very *epoche* it expresses. In terms of this purgative relation that the sceptic has with the utterances, we might view language itself as having a purgative function as well. In exploring this, I wish to draw in the *aphasia* that has been mentioned in connection with Pyrrho's sage as well as in Sextus' account of the sceptic's state of mind, and show how sceptical *aphasia* can be understood as something other than simply being dumbstruck.

Language itself is like a purgative. Before even becoming a sceptic, the sceptic implicitly took language first as a mode of inquiry, assuming it to be an accurate medium for relating subject to object and for describing the human situation. Becoming more sceptical and finding only *aporia* and equipollence in arguments regarding the nature of things, the sceptic steps back from the initial assumption that language can accurately relate what he perceives, knows, or feels, to the external word, and vice versa. That is, he suspends judgement on all arguments and takes up the Pyrrhonian practice of maintaining that disposition of suspended judgement through the *tropes* and sceptical utterances. The practice of *epoche* through the utterances is that very stepping away from language; it is the stepping away from the implicit assent to the assumption that language describes or relates the human condition to the external world in a way that is in itself dogmatic. Only

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[222] Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.206.

in using language with the initial hope of finding truths about reality to make his life better does the sceptic come to this end, this end being the conclusion of the sceptic's use of implicitly dogmatic language. Having altered his disposition from unconsciously dogmatic to consciously aporetic, he finds that language must be altered to suit the altered disposition. This is the function of the practice of sceptical utterances: to purge language of the implicit dogmatic disposition it foists upon its users.

The switch to consciously aporetic language marks the beginning of sceptical *aphasia*. By this I do not mean that the sceptic does not speak, but that she finds herself unable to speak the tacitly dogmatic language that assumes to relate infallibly things in their true nature to the objects of thought and perception held by an individual. No longer can the sceptic simply say 'I see the chair' or 'the Green Party has a good platform' as she actively qualifies everything to accommodate the *aporia* she feels towards what can be said. 'Seeing' is no longer an infallible perception, but more importantly, the verb 'to see' is consciously held at arm's length and not held to be synonymous with knowledge.

Dogmatism and the language it fosters are viewed by the Pyrrhonians as most commonly found in everyday language. We might think of when Adam stood in the garden of Eden and accused the animals and everything of their being, accusing them of their names as he pointed at them, dogmatically making up the truth of it as he went. To not accuse things of their being, to not act as if perception were beyond questionable, and to not act as if the perceptual verbs that we use to articulate our views lent to an infallible relation between human to true nature, is to try and 'speak' against the grain of language. Aporetic language tends to speak against the grain of language – the necessity for

Anesidemus' apology for such language speaks to the difficulty he probably encountered both in expressing himself but also in finding someone to listen to his aporetic disposition.

The sceptic is struck dumb because of his altered disposition and the way that language is not geared for someone to articulate oneself fallibly. Speaking from an aporetic disposition, having disavowed the dogmatic one, the sceptic not only has the *pathe* of *aporia* but the further feeling of *aphasia*.[223] To proclaim, to make a statement, to declare, to argue, to speak: these are all inherently dogmatic in their function. Language assumes certainty, and to try to be uncertain in making propositions requires additional work. The realization of this extra work – carried forth by the practice of the utterances – is the end of language as the sceptic had hitherto used it and the start of what I call *aphasic language*. This can largely be viewed as being synonymous with aporetic language as practiced by the sceptical utterances, but singles out the linguistic nature of it. It is *aphasic* because from a dogmatic disposition, the *aphasic* speaker is not saying, or claiming, anything. It is language operated from an aporetic disposition in accord with the Pyrrhonian practice of the *tropes* and utterances.

To be sure, the sceptics can and do qualify statements with phrases and utterances that diminish the 'determining' power that statements inherently have. *Aphasic language* is precisely the habit on the part of the Pyrrhonist that maintains the aporetic state within the sceptic, allowing *ataraxia* fortuitously to follow him everywhere. As has been said numerous times, he does not *epoche* on what appears to him to be; rather, he suspends judgement on whether what appears to be can be said to relate to things at all. The Pyrrhonian sceptics therefore: use the *tropes* and utterances to shield themselves from

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[223] Note: Sextus calls *aphasia* a state of mind or a state of the soul. See *PH* 1.206.

slipping into dogmatism; use language to purge themselves of dogmatic language; and use the utterances to suspend themselves above the tumult of assumptions and beliefs that dogmatism and a dogmatic disposition bring about.

An example of the sort of troubling belief that the Pyrrhonist would avoid altogether can be found in the old debate about the existence of gods. There is an influx of atheists who attack theists with the same virility with which many theists attack non-believers. Often, it has become as impossible to talk to an atheist about the possibility that gods might exist, as it is to talk to a theist about gods not existing. Both sides of the argument have developed devout believers, and more often than not, devout, militant believers are those who think any who believe anything contrary to his or her own beliefs are wrong and in need of correcting. Moreover, these militant believers are so caught up in their arguments and beliefs that they themselves often do not know where argument begins and belief starts, or vice versa; but to be sure, they are indubitably sure, particularly the atheist, that her beliefs are founded entirely on rational argument. The aim here is not to dip into the god debate, but to expose enough of it to show that beliefs – strong beliefs, at that – develop out of incoherent, false, and fundamentally uncertain arguments just as quickly as beliefs develop out of coherent arguments.

Still further, beliefs develop out of previously held beliefs, such that the validity of the foundation of the antecedent belief is not even questioned in the development of the consequent belief. The Pyrrhonian concern for how we develop beliefs becomes increasingly apparent, especially considering the way beliefs often develop unconsciously and embed themselves into an individual's language, but also a society's language. This leads to many reciprocal, circular, and hypothetically based beliefs, which are the bread

and butter of what the *tropes* expose. For example, many people, atheists and theists

included, believe something initially and find arguments to fit the belief, and refuse to

acknowledge or are not even aware of such things going on in their psyche, thereby

having a belief as the 'bare assertion' or hypothesis for another belief, or even an

argument. They speak as if their beliefs are grounded by solid argument and logic on all

four corners, and lose themselves in letting language speak for them. That is, language is

allowed to operate with the dogmatic disposition spoken of earlier, where most

everything that is or can be said, is 'known' in the strong and absolute sense of the verb.

Little is said of a thing that is not an accusation of the true nature of the thing; that is,

there is no space for uncertainty. 'I see the chair' is a proclamation about the nature of

the object before the subject, and is heard only as such (as hearing is as much a part of

speaking as is listening) and is understood as a direct 'knowing' (Sextus' criticism of

apprehension) of the object by the subject. 'Gods do not exist' follows the same form: it

is a statement about the nature of the gods and is heard only as a claim to knowledge. To

speak such a statement or to hear such a statement uttered in such a way that it was *not* a

claim to knowledge goes against the grain of language – so much so, that a 'non-

statement' does not seem to make sense. The Pyrrhonian may suspend judgement on

knowing the true nature of the chair as much as knowing the true nature of the gods; the

fact remains that fewer people develop hatreds or political parties over differing views on

the nature of chairs.

As mentioned at the outset of this thesis, linguistic determinism – the 20th century

concept that one's language determines one's thought – appears to have deep roots in the

Pyrrhonian approach to aporetic language use in that Pyrrhonians seemed to presuppose

some version of linguistic determinism in their approach to language praxis. Linguistic determinism was and still is a greatly debated subject, and a discussion in this thesis regarding aporetic linguistic praxis and its relation to a 20th century thinker such as Ludwig Wittgenstein would be interesting and, I think, very fruitful. I did not touch upon this topic as the focus of this thesis has been on the historical development of Scepticism, with the cynosure being Pyrrhonism and its approach to living a happier life.

Pyrrhonism wades into the mire of beliefs and language, and through its practice forces the sceptic to operate language with an aporetic rather than a dogmatic disposition. Epistemological, metaphysical, and ontological uncertainties are kept at the forefront of how the Pyrrhonist speaks, thereby allowing him to speak about things that he may suspend judgement on without succumbing to beliefs about those things. More to the point, he avoids the emergence of unfounded beliefs upon previous unfounded beliefs, and finds himself unexposed to strong beliefs and strong emotions regarding them. He is not apathetic, inactive, or silent, since the *tropes* and utterances provide for ways of expressing how he feels about things. Strong beliefs regarding those things, however, are generally removed, and the untroubled life sets in.

Conclusion

4. The Linguistic Praxis of Pyrrhonism

and the Sceptic Way

The root teachings of Pyrrho have been shown to focus on a way to speak that

inculcates uncertainty and suspended judgement. He recommended an attitude towards

reality via language practice that reduces the power and number of beliefs one may have,

and he went about teaching this view by a pedagogy of revealed experience and living the

practice himself by maintaining things to be no more being than not being. Introducing

epoche, his philosophy was always aimed at helping the individual to achieve a less

troubled life, exemplified by the questions and answers that he posited for those who wished to live a happier life.

By comparing his philosophy with that of Plato and Socrates, many similarities are brought out, most notably the importance of the experience of *aporia* and the lack of desire for eristic argument. Much like Socrates, Pyrrho did not argue for a particular position and wished to underscore the experience of *aporia* as essential to living a happier life. This was outlined by examining passages from Plato's *Meno, Theaetetus*, and *Phaedo* whereby: similarities between Plato's use of hypotheses and Pyrrho's language praxis were drawn out, and Socrates' own state of *aporia,* or awareness of his own ignorance, was shown to be integral to his ability to act as a midwife for the ideas of others. Overall, Socrates and Pyrrho appeared to have similar pedagogical goals in that both wished to enjoy a happier life through the recognition of the limitations of knowledge.

The Academic sceptics serve as a foil against which the peculiar linguistic practice of Pyrrhonism is highlighted. Pyrrho focused on suspending judgement and a pedagogy of altering language so as to maintain *aporia* and reduce troubling beliefs; on the other hand, the Academics wished to use eristic argument over and above any pedagogy they may have had for improving the life of the individual. The Academics, Carneades specifically, lacked the revelatory experience of *aporia* and most importantly lacked the aporetic language praxis, though they did aim to cast their opponents into uncertainty. In the end, the Academic sceptics and the Pyrrhonian sceptics have very different goals and very different ways of going about achieving them.

Aenesidemus was found to have criticized the Academics heavily and explicitly revived the language practice of Pyrrho. He systematized a set of ten *tropes* or ways to *epoche* which, along with his relativizing focus on Pyrrho's 'no more' locution, set back in motion the aporetic disposition maintained in language that Pyrrho started.

Sextus Empiricus embodied the practice of aporetic language in the very writing of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, and his use and discussion of the *tropes* as well as the sceptical utterances therein were geared towards 'what can be said' of things such that he unmistakably supported the linguistic approach to maintaining *aporia* and *epoche* to stumble upon *ataraxia*. With the aporetic language practice in hand, Sextus' in-depth discussion of *phantasiai*, apprehension, *epoche*, and *ataraxia* come together to show the shielding, purging, and suspending ways of Pyrrhonism: shielding from falling to speaking dogmatically; the purging effect that utterances have on dogmatism as well as themselves; and the suspending function that the aporetic attitude and sceptical utterance have in holding the sceptic away from language that develops beliefs.

The way of the sceptic is not a path that is quickly grasped nor easily understood. The life of the sceptical sage, which I have alluded to repeatedly in the hopes of clarifying the sceptic's way of life, is perhaps the best way to show once again the complete path of the sceptic now that we have traced aporetic language praxis from its birth with Pyrrho to its flowering in Sextus. In this final examination of the way of the Pyrrhonian sage, I wish to make it clear that the sceptical life insofar as I have developed it in concert with aporetic language praxis, is a progression from a pre-sceptical or novice period to the level of a fully sceptical sage. The point at which the novice becomes the sage involves the implementation of aporetic language into regular practice.

The novice strives to achieve something – namely happiness – and this is carried out with a dogmatic disposition as well as dogmatic language. Like a dogmatist, or more likely, an Academic, the novice sceptic begins his inquiry with the belief that either his inquiry into happiness has or will find some truth (dogmatist), or that his inquiry cannot or will not find any truth (Academic). As the sceptic learns and applies an aporetic language to his everyday life, suspending judgement on everything and developing an aporetic disposition via aporetic language practice, he no longer believes 'dogmatically' or 'Academically' that he will or will not find truths in his inquiry. Rather, *ataraixa* befalls him, having suspended judgement on everything and adopted *aphasic* or aporetic language so completely that he does not think dogmatic thoughts nor speak dogmatic statements. No longer troubled by the desire to prove anything, nor troubled by the beliefs that follow and build upon dogmatic statements and thoughts, the sceptic becomes a Pyrrhonian sage. The evolution from novice to sage is a subtle one, and I do not think that the sceptic is necessarily conscious of the manifestation of tranquility that she has brought about. The story that Sextus tells about the painter Apelles is somewhat misleading in this way.[224] By the story it would seem that the occurrence of *ataraxia* is as sudden and obvious as an unexpected yet expertly accomplished brush stroke. Freedom from disturbance does not, however, follow from the accomplished strokes of the painter, but from the *suspensive state* into which he had fallen. What Apelles accomplishes in the appearances of the painting, whether by intended effort or accidental

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[224] "They say that when Apelles was painting a horse and wished to depict the horse's froth, he was so unsuccessful that he gave up and flung the sponge that he used to wipe off the brushes. The mark made by the sponge produced a representation of the horse's froth. The sceptics hoped to attain a freedom from disturbances by judging the inconsistency of appearances and ideas, and not being able to this, they suspended judgement. Being in this suspensive state, freedom from disturbance followed fortuitously, as a shadow follows a body" (Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.28-29).

happenstance, is symbolic of the sceptic's inability to apprehend the inconsistency of appearances and ideas in everyday life. *Epoche* follows from the inability to choose one appearance as true over any other; the practice of aphasic or aporetic language follows naturally from this, in that one who cannot *choose* also cannot make locutions of the type which claim definitive choice.

The occurrence of *ataraxia* may seem to be the root of the change from novice to sage, but *ataraxia* itself is a consequence of practiced linguistic *aporia*. Therefore, *ataraxia* cannot befall the sceptic until aporetic language has pervaded her way of speech and way of thinking.

By all of this the Pyrrhonian practices the avoidance of strong beliefs and strong emotions concerning those beliefs. She does not in fact, 'doubt' anything, yet neither does she assent to things either, as suspension of judgement is the inability to choose either. The Pyrrhonian lives by appearances and customs, as, it might be said most people do already anyways, yet the Pyrrhonian does so without the added convictions or beliefs about the reality of the external world. By reducing beliefs, and reducing the value or weight that beliefs have in one's daily life, the Pyrrhonians seem to have found a disposition with which to face the world by which many people could benefit – a disposition achieved through the habitual practice of aporetic language.

Glossary

Several key terms are defined as they are utilized throughout this thesis.

Aporia: The state of mind of being puzzled or uncertain, best described by Epictetus in his dictum: "feel or reject the feeling that the stars are even in number. Impossible."[225]

Ataraxia: The state of mind of being at peace, undisturbed, unperturbed, or free of anxiety, particularly pertaining to the happenings of everyday life.

Epoche: Described by most Pyrrhonian sceptics as the act of 'suspending of judgement' whereby a decision or judgement regarding something (whether it be an ontological or epistemological judgement) is not decided upon. Closely linked to *aporia*.

Eristic: Having to do with debate or dabating, particularly with winning a debate rather than reaching some sort of truth. It is contrasted with *elenchus*, or Socratic method.

Phantasiai: A difficult term to pin a single definition to, especially given the seemingly shifting position that a sceptic such as Sextus Empiricus has regarding *phantasiai*. A good rule of thumb definition is that *phantasiai* are what human experience is comprises; all sense impressions and thought impressions.

Trope: Literally from Greek, *trope* means 'way' or 'turn' and is used throughout this thesis to describe the *ways* in which sceptical phrases and arguments are employed, similar to the way in which ancient sceptics employed the term.

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[225] Epictetus, *Diss.,* I xxviii 2-3

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