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In Defense of Pyrrhonism

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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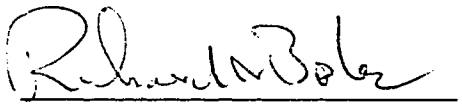

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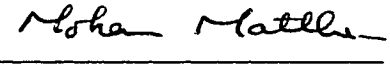

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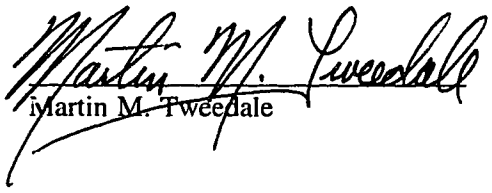

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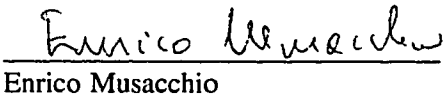

Enrico Musacchio

Abstract:

Pyrrhonism is characterised by Sextus Empiricus as a cure for the rashness of the Dogmatists. This rashness consists of the belief that the truth has been discovered or that the truth is impossible to discover, since to attempt to maintain either position is to be disturbed to a greater degree than is necessary. The constraints of nature are disturbing but are unavoidable, while the disturbances brought about by the belief that all experiences are good or bad by nature can be avoided. The sceptical procedure is to remain with the appearances despite the frequent disparity or variation among them, without giving preference to any one appearance over any other. Any acceptance of an appearance is therefore undogmatic and able to be given up if required by the circumstances. Flexibility and an ease of turning lead to a life of least disturbance.

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Philosophies For Sale

The scene is an imaginary slave market in which Zeus, with the aid of his factotum Hermes, puts various philosophers on the block.

...

Zeus. Who's left? *Hermes*. The Skeptic here. Hey, boots, up here! Let's get you sold, and quickly. Everybody's leaving; there's only a handful left for the sale. Well - anybody interested in this one? *9th Buyer*. I am. First tell me what you know. *Pyrrho*. Nothing. *9th Buyer*. How can you say that? *Pyrrho*. Because, as I see it, absolutely nothing exists. *9th Buyer*. You don't know whether we exist? *Pyrrho*. No, I don't. *9th Buyer*. Not even whether you exist? *Pyrrho*. I'm even less sure about that. *9th Buyer*. How bewildered can a man get? What are you doing with that set of scales? *Pyrrho*. I use it to weigh arguments. I get them to balance and, when I see they're exactly equal, then I'm once and for all sure I don't know which is right. *9th Buyer*. What else are you good at? *Pyrrho*. Everything - except chasing runaway slaves. *9th Buyer*. Why can't you do that? *Pyrrho*. Because, my friend, I can't grasp *anything*. *9th Buyer*. I'm not surprised. You look pretty slow to me. What do you consider the end result of your philosophy? *Pyrrho*. Ignorance, deafness, blindness. *9th Buyer*. You mean the lack of both sight and hearing? *Pyrrho*. And of judgement and feeling. In short, being exactly like a worm. *9th Buyer*. For that I must have him. Hermes, what shall we say he's worth? *Hermes*. A hundred and fifty dollars. *9th Buyer*. Here you are. All right, you, what do you say? Do I own you or not? *Pyrrho*. Who knows? *9th Buyer*. *I* know. I bought you. Paid cash down, too. *Pyrrho*. I reserve judgment. I'll look into it. *9th Buyer*. In the meantime, follow me the way a slave of mine should. *Pyrrho*. Who knows if you're telling the truth? *9th Buyer*. The salesman, the hundred and fifty dollars, and the other people here. *Pyrrho*. You mean there are other people here? *9th Buyer*. Look here, I'll take the weaker side and still prove I'm your master - I'll put you on the treadmill. *Pyrrho*. Don't. Reserve judgment on the point. *9th Buyer*. God, no. I've already declared myself on the point. *Hermes*. Stop arguing and follow him. He bought you. Gentlemen, please come back tomorrow. We're putting up for sale a selection of plain people, workmen, and shopkeepers.

(Lucian, *Philosophies For Sale*, 26-27)

Introduction: scepticism as therapy

Much has been made of the analogy of scepticism as a medical purge that eliminates itself along with the bodily fluids, but the medical analogy is extended well beyond this specific instance in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. According to Sextus Empiricus:

> The Sceptic, being a lover of his kind, desires to cure by speech, as best he can, the self-conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists. So, just as the physicians who cure bodily ailments have remedies which differ in strength, and apply the severe ones to those whose ailments are severe and the milder to those mildly affected, - so too the Sceptic propounds arguments which differ in strength, and employs those which are weighty and capable by their stringency of disposing of the Dogmatist's ailment, self-conceit, in cases where the mischief is due to a severe attack of rashness, while he employs the milder arguments in the case of those whose ailment of conceit is superficial and easy to cure, and whom it is possible to restore to health by milder methods of persuasion. Hence the adherent of Sceptic principles does not scruple to propound at one time arguments that are weighty in their persuasiveness, and at another time such as appear less impressive, - and he does so on purpose, as the latter are frequently sufficient to enable him to effect his object. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 280-281)[1]

The sceptical arguments are a medical or psychological cure for the ailments of the Dogmatist[2], and are administered according to the extent of the disease - mild arguments of little persuasion are often sufficient to effect correction, while more extreme circumstances require more extreme measures. The condition brought about by scepticism is aligned with health, whereas dogmatism is aligned with sickness, a sickness specifically identified as self-conceit. The self-conceit of the Dogmatists (including by name Aristotle, Epicurus and the Stoics) is their insistence to have discovered the truth; on the other hand, those who deny that the truth can be discovered (like the Academics) should not be said to suffer from self-conceit, but are still considered to be rash for having abandoned the search.

The purpose of such efforts to find the truth is εὐδαιμονία (eudaemonia), which the

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[1] This passage is dismissed outright by Benson Mates who writes: "It seems to me quite obvious that these two final sections, with their odd and silly claim that weak arguments have been included for the benefit of those who do not need strong arguments, are not genuine but have been tacked on by someone during the long twelve centuries between Sextus and our earliest MSS" (*The Skeptic Way*, 314).

[2] Philosophy is commonly thought to be a cure for the sickness of the soul. For example: "[Quoting Epicurus] Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases, so too there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul" (Porphyry, *To Marcella*, 31) (Quoted in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 155); or Cicero, "Assuredly there is an art of healing the soul - I mean philosophy, whose aid must be sought not, as in bodily diseases, outside ourselves, and we must use our utmost endeavour, with all our resources and strength, to have the power to be ourselves our own physicians" (*Tusculan Disputations*, III. 6).

Stoics define as the smooth flow of life, and the Sceptics equate with ἀταραξία (ataraxia) as an untroubled and tranquil condition of the soul. Despite such similar ends, the Dogmatists and the Sceptics differ as to the means by which eudaemonia may be brought about.

> Now the dogmatic philosophers assert that ... the man who acquires the good and avoids the evil is happy. Wherefore also they allege that wisdom is a science of life, it being capable of distinguishing things good and evil and of securing happiness. But the Sceptics, neither affirming nor denying anything rashly but subjecting all things to criticism, maintain that those who assume the existence of good and evil by nature have in consequence an unhappy life, whereas for those who refuse to define and suspend judgement -
>
> Freest from care is the life they lead. (*Against the Ethicists* or *Adversus Mathematicos*, xi., 110-111)[3]

For the Dogmatist, the knowledge of which things are good and which things are evil is the means by which eudaemonia may be assured, whereas the Sceptic remains unconvinced, believing that such attempts to secure the good and to avoid evil are not beneficial but a hinderance. Experience is such that, although it is probably agreed that the good is useful and that it is choiceworthy and that it is productive of happiness, "when asked what the thing is to which these properties belong, [the Dogmatists] plunge into a truceless war, some saying it is virtue, others pleasure, others painlessness, and others something else" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 175).[4] The persistent conflict among the Dogmatists speaks against the success of the Dogmatic procedure, for if a man is subject to a certain affection, being either a lover of wealth or a lover of pleasure or a lover of fame, he is unable to find respite in any of the dogmatic doctrines. On the contrary,

> the lover of wealth or the lover of fame is further enkindled in his desire by the Peripatetic philosophy, according to which wealth and fame are among the goods; and the lover of pleasure is further inflamed by the doctrine of Epicurus (for on his showing pleasure is proved to be the perfection of happiness); and the lover of fame is also plunged headlong into this very affection by the Stoic arguments, according to which virtue alone is good and that which results from virtue. In every case, then, what is called by the Dogmatic philosophers "the science of life" is

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[3] In similar fashion tranquillity is said by Seneca to depend on an ease of turning:
> We ought also to make ourselves adaptable lest we become too fond of the plans we have formed, and we should pass readily to the condition to which chance has led us, and not dread shifting either purpose or positions - providing that fickleness, a vice most hostile to repose, does not get hold of us. For obstinacy, from which Fortune often wrests some concession, must needs be anxious and unhappy, and much more grievous must be a fickleness that nowhere shows self-restraint. Both are foes to tranquillity - both the inability to change and the inability to endure. (*On Tranquillity of Mind*, xiv. 1)

[4] Much the same thing is said by Epictetus:
> Preconceptions are common to all men, and one preconception does not contradict another. For who among us does not assume that the good is profitable and something to be chosen, and that in every circumstance we ought to seek and pursue it? And who among us does not assume that righteousness is beautiful and becoming? When, then, does contradiction arise? It arises in the application of our preconceptions to the particular cases, when one person says, 'He did nobly, he is brave'; another, 'No, but he is out of his mind'. Thence arises the conflict of men with one another. (*Discourses*, Book I, xxii. 1-3)

a bulwark in defence of the evils of mankind rather than an aid against them. (*Against the Ethicists*, 179-180)

Rather than dispel such disturbances or curb such weaknesses the particular dogmatic philosophies often fan the flames of excess, condoning and even encouraging their continuance; while in general the therapy of the Dogmatists is to offer one truth after another, one theory after another, in the hope of settling the mind and freeing it from its disturbances. According to Sextus such attempts are futile, wasted efforts.

[T]he philosopher's discourse creates a new disease in place of the old, since, by turning away the man who strives after wealth or fame or health, as being a good, towards the pursuit not of these things but of "the fair" (shall we say) and of virtue, he does not set him free from the pursuit but makes him change over to another pursuit. - As, then, the physician, if he does away with a pleurisy but creates inflammation of the lungs, or removes brain-fever but in its place introduces lethargy, does not get rid of the danger but shifts it over, so also the philosopher, who introduces one perturbation in place of another, gives not succour to the person perturbed. (*Against the Ethicists*, 135-136)

Rather than curing the disease the dogmatist simply exchanges one disease for another; by redirecting the pursuit, the dogmatist is not released from the disturbances. However, if the Dogmatists should simply teach that the object pursued is of little use but entails many disturbances, while a different object is of great use and entails few disturbances, then he is not removing the disturbance but is simply making a comparison between one desire and avoidance and another desire and avoidance.

But this is absurd; for the person in distress does not wish to learn which thing is more distressing and which less, but yearns to be rid of his distress. It will only be possible, then, to avoid this by making it evident to the person who is in distress, owing to his avoidance of evil or his pursuit of good, that there does not exist anything which is either good or evil by nature, -

But by the judgement of men Sentence upon them is pass'd,

as Timon says. And to teach this is, in fact, the peculiar task of Scepticism; therefore it belongs to it to secure a happy life. (*Against the Ethicists*, 139-140)

The intention of scepticism is primarily ethical in that its purpose is a tranquil life, a life of unperturbability.[5] Tranquillity, however, does not translate into a life of no disturbance, but rather into a life of least disturbance. Accordingly, the Sceptic's End is quietude in matters of opinion and moderate affection concerning those things that are unavoidable. To this end of quietude and moderate affection is added, almost as an after-thought, suspension of judgement in investigations.

Despite being set into the background by Sextus Empiricus, the secondary literature has

[5] By contrast, Benson Mates writes that "[t]raditional skepticism, as classically set forth in the writings of Sextus Empiricus, was primarily an epistemological doctrine. It held that we can only know how things *seem* to be; knowledge of how things really *are* is impossible" (*Skeptical Essays*, ix).

afforded the practice of *epoche* so prominent a position as to over-shadow everything else. Certain aspects of scepticism are re-examined in the first three chapters (the conflict of the appearances, the extent of belief, and the necessity of suspension), since these aspects seem to prohibit any positive characterisations of scepticism. Removing these apparent obstacles opens the way to balance the practice of *epoche* with a positive ethical doctrine, which is then laid out in the final two chapters.

Chapter 1: difference, disagreement, and conflict

A review by Stephen Everson titled *Apparent Conflict* begins with the following observations.

This coffee seems bitter to me but not to you. The tower over there looks large and square from close at hand but small and round from far off. Sea water tastes singularly unpleasant to me but fish love it. Porphyry is red and white in the light but has no colour at all in the dark. So what? So very little, in fact. Conflicting appearances have been a traditional weapon in the sceptical armoury but the havoc they have created has been undeserved.

The same opinion is expressed in a lecture given by M. F. Burnyeat, titled *Conflicting Appearances*.

What emerges from this brief historical review is a typical philosophical problem. I do not mean the problem of deciding what does follow from the premise that appearances conflict. For the answer to that question, I believe, is that nothing follows: nothing of any epistemological significance at all ... Why have some philosophers been so impressed, while others like Austin remain unimpressed by the familiar fact that appearances conflict. (73)

The claim that appearances conflict is also repeated by Jonathan Barnes in *The Toils of Scepticism*.

At the beginning of the discussion of the First Mode of Agrippa Barnes writes:

The parties to the disagreements which Sextus rehearses - the 'parts of the διαφωνία', as he often puts it - are usually disputing philosophers; and the disagreements are usually disputes among the rival schools ... Sometimes, however, Sextus will speak of a διαφωνία among the senses or among the phenomena or even among the 'things'. If my sense of sight reports that a surface is smooth and my sense of touch reports that it is rough, then there is a disagreement between these two senses. If the Russian flag appears red to humans and grey to bulls, then there is a disagreement between these two appearances, between these two φαντασίαι. It is no doubt natural and intelligible to extend the concept of διαφωνία in this way; but the extension introduces new issues and new problems. (*The Toils of Scepticism*, 12)

These three passages are indicative of the ever-present assumption that *appearances* conflict. Everson and Burnyeat state that it is a matter of fact that appearances conflict, while Burnyeat goes so far as to state that it is a familiar fact; both are dismissive of the fact that appearances conflict. Neither however explain what it is that can be said to conflict if "This coffee seems bitter to me but not to you", or attempt to define the nature of the conflict. Barnes does not suggest how it is natural or intelligible to extend the concept of *diaphonia* (disagreement) to such things as the senses, the phenomena, or the "things"; nor does he mention what problems the extension creates. It is not clear in what manner the sense of sight *reports* that a surface is smooth, nor is it clear how to make sense of a disagreement between the Russian flag appearing red to humans but grey to bulls. The appearance of red does not disagree with the appearance of grey - the bull does not disagree with the human being - the colour red does not disagree with the colour grey - there are

no contradictory statements or claims about any appearances.

The main interpretive thesis of the chapter is that in describing the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus Sextus does not hold that appearances or sense-impressions conflict. Although appearances differ, difference is not a feature, upon the basis of which Sextus mounts an account of an additional feature, namely conflict. Since this thesis runs counter to a good deal of recent scholarly opinion, it is essential to consider the operative concepts of difference, conflict (section i.) and opposition (section ii. and iii.) with some care.

In the discussion of the Third Mode of Aenesidemus, Sextus explains that the same thing appears differently to each of the sense organs. For example, in the case of an apple, it appears smooth, odorous, sweet, and yellow. Although what is in question is whether the apple is of a singular nature so that it has one quality that is perceived differently by the different senses, or whether it is a complex nature, composed of many qualities, each in turn perceived by a different sense, the different appearances are not in disagreement with each other, but are simply other than. Appearing smooth does not disagree or conflict with appearing sweet. On the other hand, the explanations offered by the dogmatists do conflict or disagree with each other. The explanation that the apple has a single nature disagrees with the explanation that the apple has a complex nature. Commenting on this passage, Everson writes:

> It is not a happy accident that this argument is more convincing than many of the others, for it will be seen that it does not rely on conflicting appearances at all but rather on conflicting explanations. To see the differences in sceptical force between these two strategies, we might recast, for instance, the supposedly sceptical example of the oar appearing bent in water. Normally, this is contrasted with the oar appearing straight in the air and so a conflict of appearances is claimed. Such conflict, as noted earlier, can be easily explained given the way light behaves in different media ... When we see a bent oar in water, it could be a straight oar but it might equally be a bent one. On visual evidence alone we should suspend judgement as to the shape of the oar. This is a limited argument, of course, but in the apple argument Sextus produces a generalised and surely powerful argument for the suspension of judgement based on conflicting explanations of the appearances. Conflicting explanations, unlike conflicting appearances, provided a powerful tool for the demolition of dogmatism. (*Apparent Conflict*, 311-312)

Although Everson recognizes the role of conflicting explanations and claims that the conflicting appearances can easily be explained away, this does not lead him to question whether appearances simply differ rather than conflict, even when the assumption creates problems or questions of interpretation that are better resolved or answered by not assuming that appearances conflict. Appearances are said to conflict without any consideration of why Sextus should move from differences among appearances to conflict, or how the dichotomy can be justified given the unintelligibility of appearances conflicting, or even what exactly is meant by conflict.

The word "conflict" does not translate only a single Greek word, but rather a number of related political and military concepts. One of the more common Greek words rendered by the translation *conflict* is μάχη or μαχομένων (machomenon), but it sometimes translates the following words as well: στάσις (stasis), διάστασις (diastasis), πόλεμος (polemos), and can be extended to refer to a πόλεμος ἄστειστος, a war without a truce.

The Greek word μαχομένων (machomenon) can be translated literally as warring or fighting, and not as conflicting, as it is generally translated. However, translating the word *machomenon* as fighting creates its own difficulties, since to now say that appearances fight among themselves is to attribute to them some sort of anthropomorphic existence. While this might strike the modern reader as somewhat strange, it may have seemed quite natural to the ancient Greek reader.[1] From certain early mythological, philosophical, and cosmological ideas involving notions of polarity (with either equal opposites, or one superior and one inferior), and change (explained as personified forces battling each other for supremacy), the idea of appearances fighting among themselves can be seen to be a part of the common understanding.

A passage in *Against the Ethicists* (or *Adversus Mathematicos*, xi.) (51-58) describes just such an anthropomorphized conflict. When Sextus is discussing the differences among those things that are said to be good, he introduces a story by Crantor to better illustrate the difficulties involved. Imagine a general theatre in which each of the Goods were to come and present themselves in order to challenge for or contend over first prize. First Wealth presents itself, claiming that the material good that it supplies is indispensable. Wealth is a delight and a comfort in peace and a strong motivator during war. The Greeks, on hearing Wealth's appeal, decide to award it the first prize. However, even while Wealth is claiming its prize, Pleasure steps forward and presents itself as able to delight and bewitch even the wisest minds. Furthermore, Wealth is said not to be pursued for itself but for the pleasure that it brings, therefore it is Pleasure that should be awarded the prize. The Greeks willingly concur, seeing that this must be so, but even while Pleasure is accepting the prize, Health makes its entrance, explaining that without health there is no profit either in pleasure or in wealth, since a sick man values neither so much as he: th. The Greeks again agree and declare Health the victor. But now Courage comes forward to argue that without courage the Greeks cannot protect or defend either themselves or any other

[1] In a paper titled *Polarity, Parmenides, and Conflicting Appearance*, Heidi Northwood offers an explanation of why Sextus would say that appearances conflict by interpreting the Greek word μαχομένων as warring or fighting.

goods. Therefore Courage should be foremost among the Goods, and yet again the Greeks agree, proclaiming Courage the victor.

Although the story ends with Courage being declared the victor over the other Goods, the fact is clear that things or qualities are personified and that they war among themselves; that is, the Goods contend with each other for a common prize. However, there is no reason to believe that Sextus was seriously committed to the idea of personified forces actually fighting among themselves, since the context of the story instead suggests that it was put forward more to ridicule the ever-changing fancies of the Dogmatists than to support any particular cosmological or metaphysical outlook. Moreover, the discussions of cosmological theories in the books *Against the Physicists* (or *Adversus Mathematicos*, ix., x.) do not suggest that Sextus was in favour of the theories of Anaximander or Heraclitus, or even Pythagoras or Parmenides. Therefore the word *machomenon* is probably not used in such a manner by Sextus; the Goods, or more generally, the appearances, are not personified, nor do they fight among themselves. This, however, does not exclude explaining the use of the word *machomenon* as traditional, without necessarily being philosophical. The word *machomenon* and the related concepts can easily be understood metaphorically and not literally. For Sextus to say that appearances conflict may simply reflect a flair for colour or exaggeration, which would allow the use of *machomenon* without involving any interpretive difficulties.

Even if the use of *machomenon* or conflict can be seen as simply metaphorical, on occasion the appearances are said to disagree. Although there seems little difference between saying that appearances conflict and saying that appearances disagree, it is less plausible to claim that saying that appearances disagree is metaphorical. As noted in the opening passage quoted from *The Toils of Scepticism*, the Greek word that is here at issue is διαφωνία (*diaphonia*). The meaning of the word is something like discord or disagreement, which is not very different from the meaning of *machomenon* as dispute, argue, or quarrel. Unfortunately *diaphonia* is also not very far in meaning from the Greek word διαφορά (*diaphora*), which can mean variance or disagreement, but generally means simply difference. This similarity in meaning tends to result in such words being taken as synonyms for each other.

In the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus, the word associated with the appearances is, for the most part, *diaphora*; the appearances are said to differ from one another. However, there are occasions when the word *diaphonia* is used; there is said to be a disagreement about the appearances. In the Ten Modes, the word *diaphora* (difference) and the word *diaphonia* (disagreement) are both used in the first four, while in the other six modes only the word

diaphora is used. In all ten modes only the concept of *diaphora* (difference) is used to describe the appearances. In *Sextus Empiricus' Sceptical Methods*, Karel Janacek points out that the concept of *diaphonia* (disagreement) is present in the first four modes only in the phrases μέρος τῆς διαφωνίας (party to the disagreement) and διαφωνία τῶν δογματικῶν (disagreements of the dogmatists) (75). The separate use of *diaphora* and *diaphonia* is clearly shown in the following example. In the Third Mode, where the senses are dealt with specifically, Sextus is consistent in saying that the senses differ with each other. "Thus, to the eye paintings seem to have recesses and projections, but not so to the touch. Honey, too, seems to some pleasant to the tongue but unpleasant to the eyes ... The same is true of sweet oil, for it pleases the sense of smell but displeases the taste." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 92) A little further on Sextus writes that "the apple likewise may be all of one sort but appear different owing to differences in the sense-organs in which perception takes place" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 95). It is not until later when Sextus discusses *deciding* the question of nature that the concept of *diaphonia* is used; Sextus argues that anyone trying to decide the question will be discredited because they are party to the dispute (διαφωνίας). A similar separation is generally followed in the other three modes in which the word *diaphonia* occurs.

On the other hand, in the Five Modes of Agrippa only the concept of *diaphonia* (disagreement) is used, *diaphora* is never mentioned; the Mode of Disagreement begins with the disagreement. Sextus writes that the mode "based on discrepancy [διαφωνίας, (disagreement)] leads us to find that with regard to the object presented there has arisen both amongst ordinary people and amongst the philosophers an interminable conflict because of which we are unable either to choose a thing or reject it, and so fall back on suspension" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 165). The concepts of *diaphora* and *diaphonia* seem to be distinct, and it is thus unlikely that it was intended that they be used inter-changeably. Unfortunately the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus are not kept separate from the Five Modes of Agrippa. This allows discussions of difference to become tangled with discussions of disagreement, and explains the presence of the concept of *diaphonia* in the first four modes of Aenesidemus. In these four modes, the elaboration and continuation of the argument imports arguments against regression and reciprocity which belong to the Agrippian Modes and not to the earlier Aenesidemian Modes.

Further evidence for the distinction and separation of *diaphora* and *diaphonia* can be found in the writings of Diogenes Laertius and Philo of Alexandria, both of whom recorded the modes of suspension. Diogenes recorded both the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus and the Five Modes of Agrippa, but there is not any overlap; only the concept of *diaphora* is used in the Ten Modes,

while only the concept of *diaphonia* is used in the Five Modes. Furthermore, the arguments for suspension from the Five Modes are not included within the Ten Modes, as they are in the account given by Sextus. Similarly the modes recorded by Philo keep the concepts of *diaphora* and *diaphonia* separate.

Despite being merged in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, the concept of *diaphora* still can be distinguished from the concept of *diaphonia*, as shown by the following passage: "[T]he greatest proof of the vast and endless differences [διαφορᾶς] in men's intelligence is the discrepancy [διαφωνία] in the statements of the Dogmatists concerning the right objects of choice and avoidance, as well as other things" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 85). At the very least it seems that there should not be any identification or equivocation of *diaphora* with *diaphonia*, even though it is unclear in what way disagreement is proof or evidence of difference.

To compound matters still further Sextus also uses the Greek word ἀνωμαλία in the discussions of the Aenesidemian Modes. Janacek, who unfortunately is convinced that Sextus was simply striving for variety in his writing style, identifies the Greek word ἀνωμαλία as a synonym of διαφωνία. He writes: "Not only is the result of ἀνωμαλία and διαφωνία the same, i.e. ἐποχή (the same holds also for διαφορά), but both terms are interchangeable as can be seen from the extensive passage III 198-234 on the customs etc. of various peoples" (*Sextus Empiricus' Sceptical Methods*, 75). This however is to stretch the similarity, since the Greek concept of *anomalia*, which can be easily translated by the English word anomaly, does not clearly bear the same sense of contest as *diaphonia*. The more common sense is of variety, diversity, inconsistency or even irregularity, but not disagreement. Ἀνωμαλία is more likely a synonym for διαφορά rather than διαφωνία, as anomaly is closer in meaning to difference than to disagreement. Looking at the passage in question, Sextus writes at the beginning: "For thus we shall discover a great variety [ἀνωμαλίαν] of belief concerning what ought or ought not to be done"; and writes at the end:

> And even if, in regard to some of them, we are unable to declare their discrepancy [ἀνωμαλίαν] offhand, we ought to observe that disagreement [διαφωνίαν] concerning them may possibly exist amongst certain nations that are unknown to us. For just as, if we had been ignorant, say, of the custom amongst the Egyptians of marrying sisters, we should have asserted wrongly that it was universally agreed that men ought not to marry sisters,- even so, in regard to those practices wherein we notice no discrepancy [ἀνωμαλίαι], it is not proper for us to affirm that there is no disagreement [διαφωνίαν] about them, since, as I said, disagreement [διαφωνίαν] about them may possibly exist amongst some of the nations which are unknown to us.

On the one hand, there is the *anomalia* (diversity) of beliefs, which simply means that there are many different beliefs; on the other hand, there is the *diaphonia* (disagreement) about these

different beliefs. The same relationship is preserved between *anomalia* and *diaphonia* in both instances - simply because it is not evident or obvious that there is a variety of beliefs, it should not be inferred or assumed that there is not any disagreement about the beliefs. The absence of diversity (or the appearance of absence) should not be taken to imply the absence of disagreement. This relationship seems to be equivalent to the relationship noted earlier at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 85 where difference (*diaphora*) seemed to be a condition for disagreement (*diaphonia*); both passages can be understood to reflect the sceptic's insistence on the possibility of disagreement.

ii.

As the translator for the Loeb edition of Sextus Empiricus, R. G. Bury is in some ways more misleading than Sextus, because where Sextus is varied and possibly careless in his choice of words, Bury translates different concepts with the same word. Bury translates that scepticism is an ability "which opposes appearances to judgements", which results in mental suspense and unperturbedness "owing to the equipollence of the objects and reasons thus opposed". The words to note are "appearances", which translates φαινομὲνων (phenomenon); "judgements", which translates νοουμὲνων (noumenon); "objects", which translates πραγμασι (pragmasi); and "reasons", which translates λόγοις (logos). The contrast that Bury sets up between appearances and judgements in the first instance does not take into account the distinction Sextus goes on to draw between phenomena as αἰσθητά (*aistheta*, translated by Bury as "the objects of sense perception") and noumena as νοητά (*noeta*, translated by Bury as "the objects of thought or 'judgements'"). Sextus marks this contrast by specifying that *now* the word φαινομὲνων refers to the objects of *sense*-perception; generally the word φαινομὲνων is used by Sextus to refer to both the objects of sense-perception and the objects of thought-perception without distinction. In this passage the appearances are divided between αἰσθητά (sensibles) and νοητά (mentals), between the appearances resulting from the senses being affected, and the appearances resulting from the intellect being affected. These are both passive capabilities despite the fact that noumena can be translated as the objects of an act of mind. If *noumenon* is given the sense of *noeta*, then scepticism is an ability which opposes objects or affections of sense to objects or affections of thought.

The opposing of phenomena with noumena is explained in greater detail later in Chapter XIII where Sextus writes:

For instance, we oppose appearances to appearances when we say "The same tower appears round

from a distance, but square from close at hand"; and thoughts to thoughts, when in answer to him who argues the existence of Providence from the order of the heavenly bodies we oppose the fact that often the good fare ill and the bad fare well, and draw from this the inference that Providence does not exist. And thoughts we oppose to appearances, as when Anaxagoras countered the notion that snow is white with the argument, "Snow is frozen water, and water is black; therefore snow also is black". (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 32-33)

Sextus counters any attempt to move beyond the appearances, either phenomenal or noumenal, by setting any one appearance against any other appearance. In the first example the dogmatist moves beyond the appearance of the tower as round to the conviction that the tower is round in nature. The sceptic counters the legitimacy of the inference by opposing the appearance of the tower as round with the experience in which the tower appears square. According to the dogmatist, it is now legitimate to infer that the tower is square in its nature. The tower cannot be said to be both round and square in its nature, and since both inferences are warranted by the appearances, the dogmatist must choose which account is true of the tower. Since the dogmatist cannot resolve the question of whether the tower is round or square in its nature the judgement should be suspended.

In opposing a thought with a thought, the sceptic sets the thought that the universe is orderly against the thought that good people suffer and bad people prosper. While the dogmatist infers from the idea of an orderly universe that there must be an architect of it, the sceptic, basing his argument on observations that the dogmatist would accept, such as frequently good people suffer and bad people prosper, infers that if Providence existed good people would not suffer and bad people would not prosper.

In opposing thoughts to appearances Anaxagoras sets the appearance of snow being white against the thought that snow is black, since snow is frozen water and water is black. Snow cannot be said to be both black and white in its nature, so the dogmatist would choose between these accounts.

The opposition illustrated in these discussions does not support translating noumena as judgements. It is not judgements that are set against judgements in any of the examples, even though introducing a different appearance results in an account (or judgement) that is probably contrary to or contradicts whatever was advanced earlier by the dogmatist. By translating noumena as judgements, noumena becomes confused with logos, which is later translated as judgements as well. Although the affections of thought are not the same things referred to by logos (λόγοις), Bury unfortunately does not keep them separate in the translation. In the first instance logos (λόγοις) is translated as "reasons", but in subsequent occurrences logos is translated instead as

"judgements". Rather than translating ἀντικειμένους δὲ λόγους as opposed *reasons*, it is translated as opposed *judgements*; and when Sextus explains that this phrase is to be understood in its simple sense as μαχομένους, Bury translates this as "conflicting judgements". In the next sentence Sextus explicitly associates μαχομένω with λόγων which should be translated consistently as conflicting reasons, but which is translated again as conflicting judgements. This is not to deny that λόγοις can be adequately translated as judgement, but translating both noumena *and* logos as judgements contributes to the general move from difference to conflict among appearances (both sensible and mental), because whatever opposition there is between different logoi is simply transferred back to the differing appearances. If, however, noumena and logos are kept distinct and separate, then what does seem to conflict are not the appearances, either the phenomenon or the noumenon, but the reasons or explanations of the appearances.

In Chapter VII Sextus writes that the main principle of scepticism is that "of opposing to every proposition [λόγῳ] an equal proposition" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 12). This principle is explained in greater detail in Chapter XXVII.

> When we say "To every argument an equal argument is opposed", we mean "to every argument" that has been investigated by us, and the word "argument" [λόγον] we use not in its simple sense, but of that which establishes a point dogmatically (that is to say with reference to what is non-evident) and establishes it by any method, and not necessarily by means of premisses and a conclusion. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 202)

It is unlikely that this passage is meant to include the opposition among the appearances because there is no sense of appearances which could fit the context of "establishing a point dogmatically". This is not to say that citing an appearance could not be used to establish a point, but in doing so this would be to move beyond the bare appearance itself - the appearances would not compete amongst themselves to establish a point dogmatically.

Sextus is referring to the actions of the Dogmatists who attempt to move from what is evident to what is non-evident. This is accomplished by means of an argument [λόγον] which need not be in syllogistic form. This characterisation of λόγον is much looser than the translation "argument" allows, and should be thought of in the more relaxed sense of reasons or explanations. The earlier translation as "proposition" is similarly too narrow since "proposition" does not convey a sense of trying to explain. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, in their translation the *Outlines of Scepticism*, translate logos as "account", and give the following explanation: "The word λόγος sometimes means 'argument': by alluding to the Stoic definition of an argument (see II 135), Sextus indicates that here he is taking the word λόγος in a more general sense - for any consideration in favour of a dogmatic claim you can find an equally convincing consideration in

favour of something conflicting with it" (note 205, 51). Spelled out more fully, for any logos (consideration, account, reason) advanced by the Dogmatists it is possible to advance an equally persuasive logos that conflicts with it. The logos of the dogmatist is opposed to another different logos, and since each logos attempts to establish the same point, the logoi are at odds with each other over that point. The opposing logos is equal, according to Sextus, in the sense that it is as credible or as incredible as the logos it opposes. However the absolute equality of credibility cannot be established by the sceptic, since to do so would require going beyond the evident to the non-evident. Thus the sceptic qualifies the principle "for every logos another logos of equal weight is opposed" by saying that it appears to me to be the case. By replacement the principle now reads, "To every argument [account] investigated by me which establishes a point dogmatically, it seems to me there is opposed another argument [account], establishing a point dogmatically, which is equal to the first in respect of credibility and incredibility" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 204). Since the accounts conflict with each other, and they both appear to be of equal credibility (or incredibility), there is an inability to choose between them, and consequently the choice should be suspended.

According to Sextus the equipollence in the things opposed first leads to a state of mental suspense (ἐποχή, *epoche*) and then to a state of unperturbedness (ἀταραξία, *ataraxia*). Now between the opposition and the mental suspension there is an inability to choose between the things opposed. This inability to choose, however, presupposes that there is a reason to choose between the things opposed. In the case of judgements that conflict, the reason to choose can be found in the fact that a judgement is a claim to truth. Since conflicting judgements both lay claim to the same truth, there is then a reason for having to choose between them. On the other hand, differing appearances do not share this reason to choose because appearances do not lay claim to truth. Appearances do however make claims on existence, although the existence is not an issue for the sceptic. The existence of the appearance is not something that is contested. Sextus explains that "when we question whether the underlying object is such as it appears, we grant the fact that it appears, and our doubt does not concern the appearance itself but the account given of that appearance, - and that is a different thing from questioning the appearance itself" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 19). Since the doubt does not concern the existence of the appearance, the suggestion is that different appearances do not lay claim to one and the same existence, but rather

that each lays claim to its own existence.[2] Consequently there would then be no conflict over existence and therefore no conflicting appearances.[3]

iii.

According to the Loeb edition of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus defines scepticism as "an ability ... which opposes [sense] appearances to [thought appearances] in any way whatsoever, with the result that, owing to the equipollence of the objects and reasons thus opposed, we are brought firstly to a state of mental suspense and next to a state of 'unperturbedness' or quietude" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 8). Continuing with the translation, Sextus goes on to explain that the phrase "in any way whatsoever" is used to ensure that the phrase "opposes [sense] appearances to [thought appearances]" includes all the various ways in which appearances can be set against each other. Finally, the phrase "opposed judgements" is said not to be used "in the sense of negations and affirmations only but simply as equivalent to 'conflicting judgements'" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 10).

In Chapter XIX Sextus repeats the same formula. "And the expression 'Not more this than that' indicates also our feeling, whereby we come to end in equipoise because of the equipollence of the opposed objects; and by 'equipollence' we mean equality in respect of what seems probable to us, and by 'opposed' we mean in general conflicting, and by 'equipoise' refusal of assent to either alternative." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 190)

In both passages Sextus is consistent in saying that the concept of being opposed to is to

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[2] Epicurus gives the following argument against appearances conflicting, but concludes that all appearances must be true:
[Diogenes quoting Epicurus] Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom. Nor is there anything which can refute sensations or convict them of error: one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid; nor can one sensation refute another which is not kindred but heterogeneous, for the objects which the two senses judge are not the same; nor again can reason refute them, for reason is wholly dependent on sensation; nor can one sense refute another, since we pay equal heed to all. And the reality of separate perceptions guarantees the truth of our senses. (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, X. 31-32)

[3] It would follow, otherwise, that if there were conflicts among the appearances, the appearances as well as the reasons or explanations would be suspended. Yet Sextus does not say that the appearances are suspended and in many places in the text explicitly says that they are not suspended, as in Chapter X of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Sextus insists that Sceptics do not overthrow "the affective sense-impressions [φανταστὰν παθητικὴν]" which induce our assent involuntarily; and these impressions are "the appearances [φαινόμενα]". And when the underlying object is questioned as to whether it is as it appears, the fact that it appears is granted. Sextus later writes: "It must also be borne in mind that what, as we say, we neither posit nor deny, is some one of the dogmatic statements made about what is non-apparent; for we yield to those things which move us emotionally and drive us compulsorily to assent" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 193).

be understood as the same or similar to the concept of being in conflict with. Although the concept of conflict is not defined, it is qualified - conflict is to be understood in a general way or simply. The two adjectives used are κοινῶς, which means common, ordinary, general, or regular, and ἁπλῶς, which means simply. Accordingly, the concept of conflict should not be anything unusual or technical; it should be understood with whatever everyday meaning it bears. The concept of opposition should likewise not be anything unusual or technical, but should bear the same everyday meaning as conflict.

In *The Toils of Scepticism*, Jonathan Barnes attempts to explain the notion of conflict as it is used in these two passages (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 10, 190) by referencing yet a third passage from *Against the Logicians*. "If the things which they say they accept by assumption are trustworthy because accepted by assumption, their opposites also will appear trustworthy when accepted by assumption, and thus we shall be positing things that conflict." (*Against the Logicians*, II. or *Adversus Mathematicos*, viii., 370) But referencing this passage does not help to clarify the concept of conflict, since it compounds the matter further by introducing the Greek word ἐναντίον (opposite) into the comparison. Barnes writes:

> Here Sextus uses the word ἐναντίον, 'opposite'. Elsewhere, and more often, he employs ἀντικείμενον ('contradictory') or one of its cognates. The two words are to be taken as synonyms, and they are to be construed in a generous sense: P* is 'opposite' or 'contradictory' to P just in case it conflicts (μάχεται) with P (cf. PH I 10, 190). The essential thought is this: P and P* are opposites provided that the truth of the one excludes the truth of the other. (*The Toils of Scepticism*, 105)

On the one hand, if things are opposites just in case they conflict with each other, it should follow that appearances will be opposites of each other just in case they conflict with each other. If it is said that the appearance of the oar as straight conflicts with the appearance of the oar as bent, it makes little sense to say that the appearance of the oar as straight is opposite to the appearance of the oar as bent. It makes less sense to say that straight is the opposite of bent.

On the other hand, apparently conflict should now be understood to exist whenever the truth of one thing excludes the truth of another thing (or more than one other thing). If the appearance of the oar as straight conflicts with the appearance of the oar as bent, then this should mean that the truth of the appearance of the oar as straight excludes the truth of the appearance of the oar as bent. A more implausible example would be the appearance of an apple as sweet excluding the truth of the appearance of an apple as yellow. Even though the appearance of sweetness does not seem to conflict with the appearance of yellowness, nor does the appearance of sweetness seem to be opposite to the appearance of yellowness, the appearance of the apple as

sweet can be set in opposition to the appearance of the apple as yellow, as in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 95. Another example would be paintings that appear to have recesses and projections according to sight, but appear smooth according to touch (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 92). The appearance according to sight can be set in opposition to the appearance according to touch, but doing so does not seem to exclude the truth of either appearance.

Sense appearances and thought appearances are set in opposition, but not to dispute the appearances; what is in dispute is the explanation of the differences among the appearances.[4] This

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[4] Still, Sextus does seem to say that things disagree or conflict, even though these occasions are greatly out-numbered by the occasions when things are said simply to differ. In *The Toils of Scepticism* (12), Barnes notes a number of occasions when the senses, the phenomena or the things are said to disagree. These examples, however, do not clearly say that things *disagree*. In the three examples where Sextus is to have said that πράγμα (pragma, things) disagree (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 12, I. 163, III. 235), the Greek word is not διαφωνία (diaphonia) but ἀνωμαλία (anomalia). Therefore, although the things can be said to differ or that there is a discrepancy among them, they need not be said to disagree, since ἀνωμαλία does not have the same sense of contest as διαφωνία.

Of the four examples in which Sextus is to have said there is disagreement among the φαντασία (phenomena) (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 59, I. 112; *Against the Logicians*, I. 177, I. 430), three of the four examples say that the disagreement is about the phenomena, and not among them; the phenomena do not disagree but the accounts that try to make sense of the differing phenomena disagree. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 59 states that "the same things appear different [ἀνόμοια] owing to the variety in animals", and that we are unable to judge between appearances because we are involved in the dispute (μέρος καὶ αὐτοὶ τῆς διαφωνίας). The point seems to be that because the same thing does not appear consistently the same way, then there is a disagreement over which appearance should be given precedence over the others, and this is the dispute to which we become a party. Therefore, the appearances in themselves do not disagree, even though there is a disagreement about the phenomenon. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 112 similarly states that the anomalies [ἀνωμαλίας] among the appearances are caused by being in different dispositions, and that the disagreement involves trying to give precedence to one appearance over the others. *Against the Logicians*, I. 177 is somewhat different from the previous examples because it does not explicitly mention a disagreement. The phenomena are said to disturb our faith when they appear falsely, whereas if they all with one accord appear true, then our faith is not disturbed. The context suggests that the phenomena is said to appear falsely when the appearance is not consistent with our expectations or experience. The disagreement, then, is not found among the phenomena but between the appearance and our expectation of that appearance. *Against the Logicians*, I. 430 is not as clear as the other examples. Sextus writes: "For just as, when apparent things are contradictory, the question is by what shall we judge what is real and what not real, so also, when presentations are not in accord, we inquire by what we shall judge which of them is apprehensive and which not so". The apparent things (τῶν φαινομένων) are said to be contradictory (διαφωνίᾳ καθεστώτων), while the presentations (τῶν φαντασιῶν) are said to be not in accord (ἀσυμφώνων). Accordingly, at least the presentations do not disagree with each other, since the Greek word ἀσυμφώνων simply means to be out of harmony with or to be at variance with. On the other hand, Sextus seems to be saying that the apparent things disagree, but this does not take into account the influence of the word καθεστώτων, which is left untranslated by Bury. The word καθεστώτων means steadily or fixedly and suggests that what is meant is a fixing in place or a setting down. That which is set down or fixed in place would then be the belief that apparent things disagree. The sentence fragment could be translated as "when apparent things are set down as disagreeing", which would not commit Sextus to the position that the apparent things conflict with each other. Furthermore, the presence of the word καταληπτικὴν (apprehensive) indicates that Sextus is responding to an objection by the Stoics, and therefore is not necessarily committed to the response. The doctrine of apprehensive impressions is attributed to the Stoics in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 68, I. 235, III. 241, and *Against the Logicians*, I. 151.

Of the three examples in which Sextus is to have said that there is a disagreement among the

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seems to be in agreement with the discussion of the first mode of the Five Modes of Agrippa. The First Mode is based on discrepancy or disagreement (diaphonia). Sextus goes on to say that the mode "based on discrepancy [disagreement] leads us to find that with regard to the object presented there has arisen both amongst ordinary people and amongst the philosophers an interminable conflict because of which we are unable either to choose a thing or reject it, and so fall back on suspension" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 165-166). "Interminable conflict" translates the words ανεπίκριτος στάσις and is said to arise among both philosophers and laymen over the object presented. In other words, Sextus simply seems to be noting an empirical fact that whenever something is considered, a disagreement arises over it, or a disagreement can be found which has arisen over it.

Commenting on the passage Barnes writes:

As for disagreement or διαφωνία, Sextus offers no official definition. It is, I suppose, worth saying first that διαφωνία is not mere *difference* of opinion. You and I may have different opinions without disagreeing on anything. Perhaps I believe that the toad is a mammal and you believe that it has magical properties. We are both wrong, but our opinions do not conflict. For

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[4](...continued)

αἰσθήσεις (senses) (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 52; *Against the Logicians*, I. 345/6, II. 182), the first one says that the sense of smell is not συμφωνεῖ with itself, which should be understood in the same sense as in the previous example, that the sense of smell is not in harmony with itself or that the sense of smell is not consistent. Sextus writes, "For certainly the senses are affected in diverse ways by external objects - taste, for instance, perceives the same honey now as bitter and now as sweet; and vision pronounces the same colour now blood-red and now white. Nay, even smell is not consistent with itself; for certainly the sufferer from headache declares myrrh to be unpleasant, while one who does not so suffer calls it pleasant" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 52). Myrrh appearing unpleasant to someone suffering from a headache can hardly be said to disagree with myrrh appearing pleasant to someone without a headache. In *Against the Logicians*, II. 182 Sextus writes of the trustworthiness of signs that if the sign "is sensible, the original inquiry remains once more, by reason of the general disagreement [διαπεφωνῆσθαι] about sensibles; while if it is intelligible, it is equally untrustworthy, for this latter cannot be apprehended apart from things sensible". The disagreement that is indicated is not between the appearances; the appearances do not disagree with each other since the disagreement refers to the previous discussion concerning the self-evidence of signs. The disagreement is therefore concerned with the various positions or arguments put forward by the Dogmatists to support the trustworthiness of signs. The final passage in *Against the Logicians*, I. 345-346 cannot be explained away as easily, since it does seem to clearly say that the senses disagree with one another. The sentences in question are as follows: "The senses, too, in many cases give false reports and disagree with one another [διαφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλαις], as we have shown when expounding the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus. But that which is in disagreement and at variance [τὸ δὲ διάφωνον καὶ ἐστασιασμένον] is not a criterion, but is itself in need of a judge". Yet if these sentences are to be understood in the same way as the discussions in the Modes of Aenesidemus, and specifically the Third Mode which deals with the senses, then nothing more should be made of them than to say simply that the senses differ from one another or are not consistent with one another, even though the word here in use is διαφωνία.

Although none of the preceding analysis is meant to show conclusively that Sextus did not say that appearances disagree, it is intended to show that those passages that are in question need not be assumed to be problematic for scepticism. Furthermore, some allowances can be made on the basis of carelessness, even if there is a reluctance to do so. Unfortunately the off-hand comments by Sextus that the sceptical language is sometimes used loosely casts a shadow on any expectations of consistency.

disagreement to exist, there must be conflict: my opinion and your opinion must be incompatible or in conflict with one another. (*The Toils of Scepticism*, 11)

It *is* worth saying that diaphonia is *not* diaphora - disagreement and difference are distinct, if not separate. The opinion that the toad is a mammal and the opinion that the toad has magical properties differ but do not conflict or disagree with each other. But these two opinions are very far apart in content. The opinion that the toad is a mammal and the opinion that the toad is a reptile also differ, but do these two opinions conflict or disagree? Need the opinions be closer still for conflict or disagreement, such as the opinion that the toad is a mammal and the opinion that the toad is not a mammal? According to Barnes, my opinion and your opinion must be incompatible for there to be disagreement, but there is not any incompatibility between someone having the opinion that the toad is a mammal while someone else has the opinion that the toad is not a mammal.

It is not clear in what circumstances two opinions could not both hold together. Nothing seems to prevent someone believing that the toad is a mammal while someone else believes that it is a reptile. Even bringing the opinions closer together in content does not help, since nothing seems to prevent someone believing that the toad is a mammal while someone else believes that it is not a mammal. Further, nothing seems to prevent someone from believing *both* that the toad is a mammal and that the toad is a reptile, or even *both* that the toad is a mammal and that the toad is not a mammal, if it is allowed that the opinions can vary in the degree of conviction with which they are held. As Gisela Striker points out, "a person may quite consistently believe that *p* but also, less confidently, that not-*p*", as in the case when someone says "I believe I saw him yesterday, but it may have been the day before" (*Sceptical Strategies*, 80-81). The possibility of holding opposed or opposite beliefs in this way seems to have been acceptable to Greek thinkers as well, for Galen of Pergamum writes,

if the judgements should be of more or less equal credibility, we must withhold decision about the truth of the matter, but ... one who thinks that pleasure is a good may nevertheless have some minor thing that draws him towards the opposite view, or the person who makes the supposition that only the honorable is good may himself have yet another supposition that pulls against his trusting it earnestly. (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, V 4.12)

In a later attempt to define disagreement[5] Barnes writes, "The proposition that the toad

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[5] Prior to this later definition, Barnes attempted to move from defining conflict as the incompatibility of opinions to defining conflict as the non-compossibility of propositions. He writes:
What exactly is conflict here? It is more than 'non-compossibility'; that is to say, if two propositions cannot both hold together, it does not follow that they conflict with one another. For suppose that P is in itself impossible (let it be 'There is a highest prime number' or 'Sextus is both older and younger than Galen'); then P cannot hold
(continued...)

is a mammal is not itself in disagreement with the proposition that the toad is an insect; it is the two *opinions* on the matter which show διαφωνία" (*The Toils of Scepticism*, 13). This is modified to be more precise as the following: "x and y disagree over some issue ?Q whenever *either* x offers P_1 in answer to ?Q and y offers P_2 in answer to ?Q and P_1 and P_2 are incompatible, *or else* x offers P in answer to ?Q and y rejects P as an answer to ?Q (or *vice versa*)" (14). This is reformulated yet again as "x and y disagree over some issue ?Q whenever x and y hold conflicting attitudes to ?Q" (15). To now say that there is disagreement whenever there are conflicting attitudes to some question is far different from saying there is disagreement whenever appearances conflict, or even from saying there is disagreement whenever opinions conflict. Introducing attitudes compounds the difficulty of trying to extend this notion of disagreement beyond a disagreement between people. It makes it impossible to extend it to the appearances, or the senses, or the things themselves. Furthermore, conflicting attitudes do not themselves require conflicting appearances, since clearly there can be conflicting attitudes about appearances that simply differ, and even conflicting attitudes about the same appearance.

Allowing difference to play the central role in scepticism frees Sextus from the difficulty (some might say impossibility) of advancing and defending a metaphysical theory of conflict. Appearances do not conflict with each other, nor can they even be said to disagree with each other. An oar may appear both bent and straight, or look bent and feel straight, without such appearances being in conflict, despite the presence of difference. Sextus goes so far as to write that "the Sceptics say that the same thing is the subject of opposite [or contrary, translating the Greek word ἐναντία] appearances ... but ... we declare that the view about the same things having opposite [or contrary] appearances is not a dogma of the Sceptics but a fact which is

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[5](...continued)
together with any other proposition. For since P is impossible, the conjunction 'P and Q' is impossible for any proposition Q. But we should not want to say that P conflicts with every other proposition ('There is a highest prime number' does not conflict with 'Vesuvius is on the bay of Naples'). It is difficult to say precisely what conflict does consist in: it is, as it were, non-compossibility plus something else, but the something else is elusive. (*The Toils of Scepticism*, 11)
If propositional conflict is to be defined as non-compossibility plus something else, it is not clear whether non-compossibility alone should now be understood as a definition of disagreement, that is, whether non-compossibility is sufficient to define disagreement. But it can not be the case that Barnes would want to define disagreement *simply* as non-compossibility; if he does not want to say that an impossible proposition *conflicts* with every other proposition, then he would not want to say that an impossible proposition *disagrees* with every other proposition. Even though Barnes has shifted from opinions to propositions, the concept of non-compossibility is not sufficient to define the nature of propositional conflict (admitted by Barnes) or propositional disagreement, and does not seem to be of any use in defining conflict among opinions or appearances. Barnes now moves away from trying to characterize disagreement as a logical relationship holding between propositions, and back to characterising disagreement as a relationship holding between opinions.

experienced not by the Sceptics alone but also by the rest of philosophers and by all mankind" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 210). As Sextus explains, to hold that the same thing is the subject of opposite appearances may be a preliminary to holding that it is the subject of opposite realities, but although the Sceptics say that the same thing is the subject of opposite appearances, unlike the Heracleiteans they do not go on from this to assert their reality (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 210). The sceptic, therefore, is able to remain with the appearances, despite the differences among them, without being involved in any sort of conflict simply by doing so.

Chapter 2: the scope of scepticism - belief and conviction

The extent or the scope of scepticism seems able to be determined from four considerations: what it means to dogmatise, the precise meaning of dogma, the notion of the non-evident, and whether or to what extent the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ limits or restricts suspension.

i.

While the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ is thoroughly analyzed by Karel Janacek in *Sextus Empiricus' Sceptical Method*, it has received relatively little attention in this respect. However Jacques Brunschwig, in *Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*, writes that "whatever the exact meaning of [the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ] may be, its function is clearly to specify a *limit*, *restriction* or *qualification*. It is accordingly essential to examine it in order to determine the 'scope' of the ἐποχή more precisely" (*Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*, 246).

Although there are very many variations of this phrase, many of which Janacek explains as attempts to avoid monotony, according to Brunschwig, the exact phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ occurs only four times in Sextus Empiricus: at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 20, I. 227, III. 48, and III. 72.[1] The meaning of the general phrase is clear enough - "ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ ..." can be translated unproblematically as "in so far as it is a matter of ...", or "in so far as ... is concerned". However, it is not clear how the word λόγος should be understood in the phrase "in so far as it is a matter of logos".

The phrase first occurs in Chapter X during the response to the accusations by the Dogmatists that the sceptic does away with the appearances. Sextus objects that, while the account given of the appearance is wondered about, the fact of the appearance is granted by the sceptic. Continuing, Sextus writes: "For example, honey appears to us to be sweet (and this we grant, for we perceive sweetness through the senses), but whether it is also sweet in its essence is for us a matter of doubt, since this is not an appearance but a judgement regarding the appearance" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 20). Although Bury has translated ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ as "in its essence", or in other words, "in so far as its essence is concerned", this translation can be seen to

[1] According to Janacek, the exact phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ occurs three other times, at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 215, III. 60, and III. 62; but these are not considered by Brunschwig along with the first four because "the various complements which accompany the formula in these passages make it impossible to consider them as uses of the [ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ] formula, *stricto sensu*" (*Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*, note 1, 244).

be redundant. In the preceding sentence Sextus already distinguishes between the appearances and the underlying object, even though Sextus does not then re-identify both conditions; only the appearance is signified by a change in wording, "honey appears (φαίνεται) to sweeten", compared to "whether it is sweet (εἰ δὲ καὶ γλυκύ ἐστιν ...)". The identical procedure is repeated in *Against the Ethicists*, where Sextus explains that "the word 'is' has two meanings, one of these being 'really exist' (as, at the present moment, we say 'it is day' [τὸ ὅτι ἡμέρα ἔστιν] for 'day really exists'); and the other 'appears' [φαίνεται] (as some of the mathematicians are frequently in the habit of saying that the distance between two stars 'is' a cubit's length, this being equivalent to 'appears to be but is not really'" (*Adversus Mathematicos*, xi. 18). Both here and in the example of the honey the verb ἐστιν is used to say how something "is", meaning how it "really is". Both here and in the example of the honey the verb φαίνεται is used to say how something appears. Therefore to translate ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ as "in its essence" would be to repeat the distinction already identified.

Keeping the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ separate, the sentence should read: "honey appears to us to be sweet (and this we grant, for we perceive sweetness through the senses), but whether honey is really sweet, in so far as it is a matter of logos, is still to be wondered about". If λόγος can be translated as reason, or account, or explanation, then logos either references a particular reason, account, or explanation, or simply refers to reasons in general. On first glance there does not seem to be a specific reference for logos in the example of the honey, yet the sentence "honey appears to us to be sweet" is made on the basis of what can be seen as a reason - that we perceive sweetness through the senses. So the sentence "honey is really sweet" can also be made on the basis of this preceding logos - *that we perceive sweetness through the senses* - but unlike the sentence "honey appears to us to be sweet", the sentence "honey is really sweet", made on that basis, remains a matter of doubt.

Although the sentence "honey is really sweet" remains in doubt, it is not in doubt because it was based on the particular logos (that we perceive sweetness through the senses), but rather, as Sextus concludes, because "this is not an appearance but a judgement regarding the appearance". "Honey is really sweet" is in doubt because it is a judgement about the appearance. It does not seem that the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ actually indicates a general distinction between those things that are doubted or questioned and those things that are not. That the sentence "honey is really sweet" should be doubted, as distinguished from the sentence "honey appears to us to be sweet", is not something signalled by the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ. The phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ does not state the reason why the sentence "honey is really sweet"

is to be rejected; what it does signal is the reason or account on the basis of which the doubtful sentence is made.

This function is repeated in the other three instances of the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ. For example, at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 72 motion is said to exist by those who argue that globes that revolve on their axes move, even while remaining in one place. Sextus writes that "Against these men we should transfer the argument which applies to each of the parts of the globe, and, reminding them that, to judge by this argument [ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ], it does not move even in respect of its parts, draw the conclusion that nothing moves in the place where it is". The phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ clearly refers to the earlier argument directed against the movement of parts as opposed to wholes, which Sextus explicitly speaks of transferring (μεταφέρειν) to this later claim that things may move in one spot.

The function of the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 47-48 is similar. After recording a number of arguments against the existence of Body, Sextus continues that since all things are either sensible or intelligible, Body must be either sensible or intelligible. But Body is neither sensible or intelligible. "And if it is neither sensible nor intelligible, and besides these nothing else exists, we must declare that, so far as this argument goes [ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ], Body has no existence." Although Bury again over-translates τῷ λόγῳ as "*this* argument", the reference is clearly to the preceding argument against Body being either sensible or intelligible. The phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ signals the argument on the basis of which the sentence "Body has no existence" is made.

The last instance of ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ, at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 227, does not have as clear a reference. Sextus contrasts the New Academy with the Sceptics, claiming that "as regards sense-impressions, we say that they are equal in respect of probability and improbability, ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ, whereas they assert that some impressions are probable, others improbable". Brunschwig assumes that the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ must refer to the preceding passage if it is to be said to have a reference; but the preceding passage discusses the stance taken by the Academy over the statement that all things are non-apprehensible, and the manner in which the Academics describe a thing as good or evil. Neither aspect seems to correspond to the "sense-impressions" in the following sentence.[2]

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[2] It is possible that the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ refers forward rather than back, since Sextus takes up the division of the sense-impressions into those that are probable, probable and tested, and probable, tested, and irreversible, in the very next sentence. Sextus could anticipate the conclusion that the sense-impressions are equal in respect of probability and improbability on the basis of the following discussion. Furthermore, Sextus does not (continued...)

The probability or improbability of the sense-impressions does occur somewhat earlier during the discussion of whether or not Plato should be considered a genuine sceptic. The discussion is concerned with the manner in which Plato makes statements about the Ideas or the reality of Providence, for "if he is accepting them as more probable than not, since thereby he gives a preference to one thing over another in point of probability or improbability, he throws off the character of a Sceptic"; and again, "for the man that dogmatizes about a single thing, or ever prefers one impression to another in point of credibility or incredibility, or makes any assertion about any non-evident object, assumes the dogmatic character" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 222-223). The corresponding elements strongly suggest that Sextus is referring the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ back to this discussion, and making the statement, "as regards sense-impressions, we say that they are equal in respect of probability and improbability, whereas they assert that some impressions are probable, others improbable", on this basis.

It would seem that the role of the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ is simply to refer to a specific account on the basis of which the Sceptic sets up the opposition with the Dogmatists. This is confirmed by two of the three other instances of the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ, at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 215, III. 60, and III. 62, that were not originally considered. The first instance is the exception. The passage is very brief and concerns the differences between Scepticism and Cyrenaicism. One difference is that "whereas we [the Sceptics] suspend judgement, so far as regards the essence (ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ) of external objects, the Cyrenaics declare that those objects possess a real nature which is inapprehensible". If τῷ λόγῳ is not translated as "the essence", but as "argument" or "account", then there does not seem to be anything in the context of the passage to which it can refer. If some reference must be given, then both statements could be said to follow from the opening assertion that the Cyrenaic doctrine is similar to Scepticism because "it too affirms that only mental states are apprehended". On the basis of the affirmation that only mental states are apprehended, the Cyrenaics conclude that external objects possess a real nature that is inapprehensible, while the Sceptics neither affirm nor deny that external objects possess a real nature that is inapprehensible.

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[2](...continued)
offer any sort of conclusion after the discussion, but simply ends with the statement that "the philosophers of the New Academy prefer the probable and tested impression to the simply probable, and to both of these the impression that is probable and tested and irreversible" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 229). The conclusion given by Sextus, however, contrasts the position of the Sceptics with the Academics who assert "that some impressions are probable, others improbable", which is significantly different from the Academics preferring the probable, tested, and irreversible impressions over those that are simply probable, or those that are probable and tested.

Unlike the first example, the second and third instances of the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ clearly refer to a specific argument on the basis of which the opposed position is advanced. In the second example the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ is repeated as ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ ὑποθέσει τοῦ τρόπου τῆς κράσεως, as the "theory of Mixture assumed".

> And if, again, a cup of water were poured into the twenty cups, then - according to the theory assumed (ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ) - the quantity is bound to be forty cups or, again, only two, since it is admissible to conceive either the one cup as all the twenty over which it is distributed, or the twenty cups as the one with which they are equalized. And by thus pouring in a cup at a time and pursuing the same argument it is possible to infer that the twenty cups seen in the blend must be twenty thousand and more, according to the theory of Mixture assumed, and at the same time only two - a conclusion which reaches the very height of incongruity. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 60-61).

Sextus opposes the Dogmatists on the basis of their own theory of mixture, concluding in the third example that "if the so-called Elements are unable to form the compounds either by way of contact through juxtaposition or by mixture or blending, then, so far as this argument goes (ὅσον ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ), the physical theory of the Dogmatists is inconceivable" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 62). The use of the word τούτῳ in the last example explicitly references the previous Dogmatic theory of mixture. Despite the uncertainty of the first example, there seems to be sufficient support for the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ to simply reference something previously stated in the context of the discussion.[3]

This is further confirmed by those occasions when the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ is varied, as in the argument against motion where Sextus writes "so far as the evidence of phenomena goes it seems that motion exists, whereas to judge by the philosophic argument [ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ λόγῳ] it would seem not to exist" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 65). The variation ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ λόγῳ does not indicate a class of arguments that are (or should be) rejected on the basis of being *philosophical* arguments, but simply indicates the grounds for stating that motion does not seem to exist, namely the philosophical argument on the basis of which motion would seem not to exist. Therefore it seems that the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ, or its variations, do not specify a limit or restriction to suspension, and cannot be used to support claims of insulation.

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[3] Brunschwig notes four other instances where the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ is used with the word τούτῳ, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 23, III. 193, and *Against the Logicians*, I. 367, II. 438; and three other instances where the phrase is used with the word τούτοις, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 203, 211, 215. Brunschwig also notes fifty other instances where there is a greater variation in the phrase ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ (*Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*, 248-249).

ii.

In distinguishing scepticism from other philosophies, Sextus writes that it is not enough simply to utter statements in a sceptical way, as Plato was said to do; "for the man that dogmatizes about a single thing, or ever prefers one impression to another in point of credibility or incredibility, or makes any assertion about any non-evident object [τῶν ἀδήλων], assumes the dogmatic character" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 223). Although it is not clear that the idea of the "non-evident" marks a limit or restriction of suspension, it does seem to identify those things about which the sceptic does practice suspension.[4]

According to Sextus, whenever the sceptic says "All things are undetermined", he means "not existing things but such of the non-evident matters investigated by the Dogmatists as he has examined" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 198). The same explanation is given of the use of the word "all" in the expression "All things are non-apprehensible", and of the use of the word "every" in the phrase "To every argument an equal argument is opposed". Sextus goes so far as to say "we do not employ [the sceptical expressions] universally (καθόλου) about all things, but about those which are non-evident and are objects of dogmatic inquiry" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 208).

Such protests against the universal applicability of scepticism seem to be supported by a specific argument against the dogmatic move from evident things to non-evident things. Sextus records an argument in Chapter XV against the logic of induction wherein the sceptic does not accept universal generalisations to be made on the basis of particular instances. To form a generalisation, the dogmatist must either review all the particular examples or some of them. If the dogmatist reviews only some of the examples the induction will be unreliable because it is possible that the particular examples not examined may contradict the generalisation. If the dogmatist would review all the particular examples, Sextus writes that the task cannot be done

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[4] James Allen understands the distinction between the evident and the non-evident as Stoic in origin and something simply assumed by Sextus.

Sextus' use of 'evident' and 'nonevident' in his characterization of skeptical belief is best understood in connection with this skeptical response to the dogmatists ... It is this sense of 'nonevident', the sense that applies to everything which fails to satisfy the requirements imposed by the dogmatists, which came to play a crucial role in the Pyrrhonists' account of the skeptical attitude. Their point is that everything, even matters apparently directly vouchsafed to us, becomes nonevident, if failure to meet dogmatic standards is sufficient for nonevidence ... When the skeptics equate dogmatic assertions or arguments with assertions or arguments about the nonevident, it is the left hand side of the equivalence which is held fixed. A matter dogmatically maintained or investigated is thereby nonevident, not dogmatic because it is independently seen to be nonevident. The skeptic is not committed to the dogmatists' version of the distinction between evident and nonevident matters. (*The Skepticism of Sextus Empiricus*, 2600-2602)

As such, the distinction between the evident and the non-evident should not be understood as determining the practice of insulation.

because the particulars are infinite and indefinite. Therefore, the dogmatist cannot guarantee the reliability of the induction to a general or universal statement (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 204). The sceptic then suspends judgement on the reliability of induction and acts within the limits of the evident or particular, not presuming to be able to move to the non-evident or universal. Still, to argue against induction need not commit the sceptic to the opposite position; to argue that suspension cannot be universalised does not imply that the sceptic insulates some things against suspension. In practice everything might still be suspended even if the sceptic would not go so far as to generalize that everything should be suspended.

According to Sextus, the dogmatist distinguishes between those things that are self-evident and those that are non-evident. Those things that are self-evident are grasped on their own, directly and without inference. An example is knowing it is day when it is day. Of the non-evident things Sextus writes that the dogmatist distinguishes them into those that are totally non-evident, occasionally non-evident, and naturally non-evident.

> Pre-evident are, as they assert, those which come to our knowledge of themselves, as for example the fact that it is day-time; altogether non-evident are those which are not of a nature to fall within our apprehension, as that the stars are even in number; occasionally non-evident are those which, though patent in their nature, are occasionally rendered non-evident to us owing to certain external circumstances, as the city of Athens is now to me; naturally non-evident are those which are not of such a nature as to fall within our clear perception, like the intelligible pores; for these never appear of themselves but may be thought to be apprehended, if at all, owing to other things, such as perspirations or something of the sort. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 97-98)

According to Sextus, the self-evident things and the totally non-evident things are not in question. The self-evident things are grasped directly, while the totally non-evident things are not grasped at all. Of the other two, Sextus writes that the dogmatist holds that the occasionally non-evident and the naturally non-evident are grasped by means of signs. The occasionally non-evident is grasped through a suggestive or reminiscent sign, which means that it is a reminder of the occasionally non-evident in virtue of being associated with it. A sign is said to be reminiscent "when, being mentally associated with the thing signified, it by its clearness at the time of its perception, though the thing associated with it remains non-evident, suggests to us the thing associated with it" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 100). The occasionally non-evident is allowed to be suggested by a reminiscent sign because of an experiential association between the two. In the example, the smell of smoke is a reminder of the experience of fire, even though the fire is not evident at the time.

According to the dogmatist, the naturally non-evident is grasped by means of an indicative sign. An indicative sign is not something that has been experientially associated with that of which

it is a sign. An indicative sign is said to point to the naturally non-evident by virtue of its inner nature, "just as, for instance, the bodily motions are signs of the soul". The indicative sign, as the bodily motions, apparently lead the dogmatist to conclude the existence of the soul by means of the relation between the bodily motions and the soul.

Of the two types of signs, the reminiscent sign is considered by the sceptic to be reasonable and acceptable. Sextus writes that "the suggestive sign is relied on by living experience, since when a man sees smoke fire is signified, and when he beholds a scar he says that there has been a wound. Hence, not only do we not fight against living experience, but we even lend it our support by assenting undogmatically to what it relies on, while opposing the private inventions of the Dogmatists" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 102). On the other hand, the move from an indicative sign to something naturally non-evident is not based on everyday, common experience. The naturally non-evident is beyond experience, and like the totally non-evident it cannot be grasped in and of itself. There cannot be an experience of an association between the indicative sign and that of which it is a sign. Since there is no experiential support for the relation between indicative signs and naturally non-evident things the sceptic withholds his trust and acceptance.

The sceptic is able to set into opposition the dogmatic position that indicative signs exist with the equally plausible position that indicative signs do not exist. There are many arguments that can be cited by the sceptic to support the position that indicative signs do not exist, such as the argument from relativity recorded at *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 117-120. The Dogmatists say that an indicative sign is relative and that it reveals or indicates the naturally non-evident thing that it signifies. But relatives are such that the signifier and what is signified are grasped together, as in the case of left with right, and up with down. Since the indicative sign is said by the dogmatists to reveal that which it signifies, it must be grasped prior to what it signifies and must be understood first, in order to lead to an understanding of the non-evident thing. It is impossible to grasp the non-evident thing if the indicative sign, which must necessarily be known first, is not able to be grasped. Since the indicative sign is said by the Dogmatists to be relative to the non-evident thing, and revealing of the non-evident thing, the indicative sign must be grasped both simultaneously and prior to the non-evident thing. Therefore, it seems that the naturally non-evident could not come to be grasped by means of an indicative sign.

It would appear that the sceptic does not suspend judgement on those things that are self-evident, or even on those things that are occasionally non-evident. Suspension seems to be restricted to those things that are non-evident and those things that are naturally non-evident.

Although a broad distinction can be drawn between things that are evident and things that are non-evident, being evident is not necessarily a guarantee that such things will not become the subject of suspension. Sextus admits that on occasion the sceptic argues against the appearances, even if the purpose for doing so is to discredit reason for being able to call the appearances into question (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 20). There are passages where Sextus suggests that not all appearances are accepted, as in the following: "When Alcestis had died, Heracles, it is said, brought her up again from Hades and showed her to Admetus, who received an impression (φαντασίαν) of Alcestis that was probable and tested; since, however, he knew that she was dead his mind recoiled from its assent (συγκαταθέσεως) and reverted to unbelief" (ἀπιστίαν) (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 228). The example is repeated at greater length in *Against the Logicians*:

> When ... Heracles presented himself to Admetus bringing back Alcestis from the grave, Admetus then received from Alcestis an apprehensive presentation, but disbelieved it; and when Menelaus on his return from Troy beheld the true Helen at the house of Proteus, after leaving on his ship that image of her for which the ten years' war was waged, though he received a presentation which was imaged and imprinted from an existing object and in accordance with that object, he did not accept it as valid ... For Admetus argued that Alcestis was dead and that he who is dead does not rise again, but certain daemons do rove about at times; and Menelaus also reflected that he had left Helen under guard in his ship and that it was not improbable that she who was discovered in Pharos might not be Helen but a phantom and supernatural. (*Against the Logicians*, I. or *Adversus Mathematicos*, vii., 254-256)

Although Sextus is arguing against the Stoics, the reasons that are given for the rejection of the appearances are consistent with the sceptical practice of *epoche*. Admetus opposed the appearance of Alcestis as alive with the thought that she was dead, and resisted assenting to the appearance. The Stoics might object that Alcestis was in fact dead and so the appearance was false and therefore non-evident, but Sextus includes the second example of Menelaus, of which the Stoics would admit that the appearance of Helen was evident. Menelaus similarly opposed the appearance of Helen as being present at the house of Proteus with the thought that he had left Helen under guard in his ship, and resisted assenting to the appearance. If the mythological aspects are overlooked, the reason the appearances are resisted despite being evident is that there is an ἔνστημα, an obstacle or an objection.

The Academics also use the unobstructed presentation as the criterion in general, and Sextus uses the same story of Helen as an example of an obstructed presentation. "[S]o also the Academic forms his judgement of truth by the concurrence of presentations, and when none of the presentations in the concurrence provokes in him a suspicion of its falsity he asserts that the impression is true." (*Against the Logicians*, I. 179) Suspicions can arise if the presentations or aspects of a single presentation are not in accord with one another. If the appearance of Socrates

is such that it does not possess all of the qualities that are customarily associated with Socrates, then the appearance may seem suspicious; but just as doctors do not determine a fever from a single symptom, but by a concurrence of a number of symptoms, such as a quick pulse and a high temperature, tenderness, and thirst, the Academic similarly considers more than just a single presentation. Being evident does not seem to be sufficient to ensure that the appearance will be accepted, if the circumstances are such that there is some obstacle present, and this insufficiency tells against simply using the distinction between the evident and the non-evident to insulate some beliefs against scepticism.

iii.

According to Jonathan Barnes, in *The Belief of a Pyrrhonist*, the word δόγμα (dogma) can be given both a sense and a colour. This means that the common sense or meaning of dogma does not necessarily determine its proper application. The sense of the word is quite straightforward; according to Barnes the meaning of dogma was simply belief. However, very little is offered as evidence that originally dogma meant simply belief, and much seems to depend on how the word is used by Plato. In a brief survey of the historical use of the word δόγμα, Barnes cites the *Theaetetus* (157d) as perhaps the earliest use of the word δόγμα, and as an example of where δόγμα should be translated as belief. In *Can the Skeptic Live his Skepticism?*, Myles Burnyeat also refers to the same passage in the *Theaetetus*, as well as a passage in the *Republic* (538c), to insist that "of course the Greek word *dogma* originally means simply 'belief'" (122). This perhaps should not be taken for granted, because, without yet passing on to the discussion of the colour of the word, Barnes confesses that "δόγμα, in its earliest surviving occurrences, has a political colouring" (*The Belief of a Pyrrhonist*, 6), and notes its political use in the *Laws*, the *Republic*, the *Minos*, and the *Apology*. The fact that the political use of the word dogma in the writings of Plato far outnumbers its simple use as belief might suggest that the use of dogma to refer to simple belief was the exception and not the norm.

Although Barnes does not go so far, he does admit that the context in which the word dogma was customarily used and the types of beliefs which it commonly designated were philosophical opinions (citing the *Laws*, the *Philebus*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Sophist*). Aristotle and Epicurus are also said to have used the word dogma similarly, but it is Philo who is said to have made the most frequent use of the word dogma, almost invariably referring to philosophical tenets or religious beliefs. "Δόγματα are weighty, substantial beliefs - tenets, doctrines, principles. It is significant that Philo uses the adjective δογματικός in a commendatory sense to mean 'full

of import'." (*The Belief of a Pyrrhonist*, 7) Jumping to the end of the survey, Galen is noted for having contrasted the Dogmatists (doctors who relied upon theories about the internal structure of the body and about the nature of diseases) with the Empirics, who were against theory but for experience. As Barnes points out, Galen's testimony is important in determining the meaning of dogma because of his closeness to Sextus, both in time and in interests.

On the basis of this survey it would seem fair to say the word dogma does not refer to ordinary, everyday beliefs, and therefore, when dogmata are suspended the ordinary, everyday beliefs would be left intact. This definition of dogmata, however, does not ensure that ordinary, everyday beliefs are insulated from a sceptical attack. Myles Burnyeat in *The Sceptic in His Place and Time* objects that the distinction between the common or everyday and the theoretical is misconstrued. One of the passages in question is the following: "Space, or place, then, is used in two senses, the strict and the loose - loosely of place taken broadly (as "my city"), and strictly of exactly containing place, whereby we are exactly enclosed. Our enquiry, then, is concerned with space of the strict kind. This some have affirmed, others denied; and others have suspended judgement about it" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 119).

From the passage it would seem that the sceptic only suspends judgement about place when place is understood strictly or theoretically, whereas the sceptic does not suspend judgement about place when place is understood in its ordinary broad sense. Yet according to Burnyeat, the insulation rests on a false distinction. The Greek words on which this distinction depends are καταχρηστικῶς (*katachrestikos*) and κυρίως (*kurios*), which Bury translates as "loosely" and "strictly" respectively. While accepting the translation of *kurios*, Burnyeat objects that the word *katachrestikos* carries a basic sense of "misuse". Therefore, "[t]o use an expression katachrestikos is to use it improperly ... and is contrasted here with using it kurios, in its proper meaning. So the contrast between broad and narrow place is a contrast between an improper and a proper use of the term ... Narrow place is not a technical construct of natural philosophy but what 'place' actually means" (*The Sceptic in His Place and Time*, 234). The implication is that Sextus does not allow the existence of place to be understood in its loose sense, and dismisses the existence of place understood in its loose sense outright *because it is an incorrect use.*

It does seem that the correct contrast to make in these contexts is between the proper and the improper use of the concepts rather than between a theoretical and a non-theoretical use, for although the incorrect use seems to be identified with the common use, it is not the case that common language is necessarily indicative of something that would be insulated from scepticism. Sextus says the following about language:

For we must allow ordinary speech to make use of inexact terms, as it does not seek after what is really true but what is supposed to be true. Thus we speak of digging a well and weaving a cloak and building a house, but not with exactness; for if there is a well, it is not being dug but it has been dug; and if there is a cloak, it is not being woven but it has been woven. So that in ordinary life and common conversation inexact speech is in place, but when we are inquiring into real facts then we must stick to accuracy. (*Against the Logicians*, II. or *Adversus Mathematicos*, viii., 129)

Therefore, although ordinary speech is allowed to be inexact, inexact speech does not indicate something that would be insulated from suspension, nor are inexact concepts insulated from suspension on the basis of being inexact. The use of inexact language simply facilitates the easy flow of ordinary life, it does not protect the beliefs of ordinary life against the possibility of a sceptical attack.

vi.

Although Sextus does not explicitly define the sorts of things or beliefs that would count as dogma, he does explicitly define what it means to dogmatise.

When we say that the Sceptic refrains from dogmatizing we do not use the term "dogma", as some do, in the broader sense of "approval of a thing" (for the Sceptic gives assent to the feelings which are the necessary results of sense-impressions, and he would not, for example, say when feeling hot or cold "I believe that I am not hot or cold"); but we say that "he does not dogmatize" using "dogma" in the sense, which some give it, of "assent to one of the non-evident objects of scientific inquiry". (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 13)

As noted, the definition is not concerned with the noun δόγμα but rather with the verb δογματιζει; the broader sense of "approval of a thing" (spelled out further as "assent to the feelings which are the necessary results of sense-impressions"), is contrasted with the narrower sense of "assent to one of the non-evident objects of scientific inquiry". The contrast however is ambiguous, and is concerned with either the difference between "assent" and "approval", or the difference between assenting to "sense-impressions or appearances" or "the non-evident objects of scientific inquiry". The second of these contrasts would seem to be ruled out by the following remark made by Sextus in the midst of an argument against the Stoics on apprehensive presentations: "... assent is not relative to presentation but to reason (for assents are given to judgements)" (*Against the Logicians*, I. 154).[5] Assent would therefore seem to be an aspect only of judgements and not of appearances. In explaining his state of mind and announcing how things

[5] This need not be understood as an absolute injunction against saying that the sceptic assents to appearances, since clearly Sextus does say that the sceptic assents to appearances. It does suggest that, even if the same terminology is used, there is a difference between assenting to appearances and assenting to propositions.

appear, the sceptic is not making a judgement; consequently there would not be anything to assent to, even while there would still be much to which the sceptic would give approval.

"Approval of a thing" translates the phrase τὸ εὐδοκειν τινα πράγματι, with the sense of being content with something. According to Barnes the contentment is clearly minimal - "a Pyrrhonist *acquiesces* in his πάθη, he does not speak out against them or deny them" (*The Belief of a Pyrrhonist*, 10). From this Barnes concludes that the sceptic's acquiescence does not involve any beliefs, since Sextus words his sentence negatively - "the sceptic will not say 'I believe I am not being warmed'", rather than "I believe I am being warmed". "[The sceptic's] εὐδοκία is a matter of *refraining* from belief ... and not a matter of believing anything at all." (*The Belief of a Pyrrhonist*, 10) This seems to ignore the distinction between approval (or acquiescence) and assent, between εὐδοκειν and συγκατάθεσιν, and to dismiss the possibility that the contrast is between two different ways of approaching or reacting to beliefs. In the essay *The Skeptic's Two Kinds of Assent*, Michael Frede distinguishes two kinds of assent on the basis of whether or not the assent is voluntary or involuntary, but at the same time he rejects the distinction between εὐδοκειν and συγκατάθεσιν, claiming that the verb *eudokein* is "a variant for the verb normally used in this context, *synkatatithesthai*. And indeed, the Suida, the Etymologicum Magnum, and the Lexeis Rhetorikai ... treat *synkatatithesthai* as a synonym of *eudokein*" (207).

Despite this evidence of what would seem to be the common usage, a number of passages in the texts suggest that the words εὐδοκειν and συγκατάθεσιν are used by Sextus to mark two different stances towards belief.[6] In the context of the discussion of the difference between the Academics and the Sceptics, the following passage is concerned with the distinction between two different ways of describing. "For the Academicians do not describe a thing as good or evil in the way we do; for they do so with the conviction [πεπεῖσθαι] that it is more probable that what they call good is really good rather that the opposite." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 226)[7] The

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[6] For a related discussion concerning the dogmatic versus the sceptical ways of announcing see *Scepticism* by Arne Naess, pages 7-15.

[7] This difference is explained further in *Against the Ethicists*:
When, then, as Sceptics, we say that "Of existing things some are good, others evil, others between the two", as the element "are" is twofold in meaning, we insert the "are" as indicative not of real existence but of appearances. For concerning the real and substantial existence of things good and evil and neither we have contests enough with the Dogmatists; but as regards the appearance of each of these things we are in the habit of designating it good or evil or indifferent. (*Against the Ethicists*, 19-20)
The sceptic's reaction is a matter of habit; regarding appearances as good, bad, or indifferent according to habit
(continued...)

two ways of describing are distinguished from each other by the manner in which they are performed; the way of describing is dogmatic when it is done with conviction. This difference is made more explicit when Sextus distinguishes between two ways of believing.

> For the word "believe" [πεἰθεσθαι] has different meanings: it means not to resist but simply to follow without any strong impulse or inclination, as the boy is said to believe his tutor; but sometimes it means to assent to a thing of deliberate choice and with a kind of sympathy due to strong desire, as when the incontinent man believes him who approves of an extravagant mode of life. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 230)

The Greek word at issue is *peithesthai* which can be translated as "to be persuaded of" or "to believe". Sextus admits that the sceptic "believes" in the first sense of the word but denies the second sense. Thus, when a sceptic is persuaded of something or comes to believe it, he does so as a matter of simple yielding, without attachment. The Academic, on the other hand, is persuaded of something or comes to believe it with a strong inclination or sense of conviction. Sextus continues, "Carneades and Cleitomachus declare that a strong inclination (προσκλίσεως σφοδρᾶς) accompanies their credence and the credibility of the object, while we say that our belief is a matter of simple yielding (ἁπλῶς εἴκειν) without any consent" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 230). The Greek word σφοδρᾶς is an adverb indicating excess, meaning very much, or exceedingly, or vehemently, and is contrasted with the sceptical way of believing characterised as a simple yielding without consent. Although ἀνευ προσπαθείας is translated as without consent, it should be translated as without passionate attachment or without prejudice, to correspond to the earlier contrast between the way a schoolboy believes and the way an incontinent man believes. It is not just a matter of consent, but a matter of interest. This is repeated once more when Sextus discusses the statements made by Arcesilaus. Sextus objects, not to what was said by Arcesilaus, but to the manner in which it was said. "Only one might say that whereas we make these statements not positively [διαβεβαιωτικῶς] but in accordance with what appears to us, he makes them as statements of real facts, so that he asserts that suspension in itself really is good and assent bad." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 233) The Sceptics make the same statements as Arcesilaus concerning suspension and assent, that suspension regarding particular objects is good, but assent (συγκαταθέσεις) regarding particulars bad, but their statements are not made positively. The Greek word διαβεβαιωτικῶς[8] is translated as

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[7](...continued)
does not commit the sceptic to any belief as to how the appearances are by nature. Furthermore, following habits does not commit the sceptic to holding on to them steadfastly or to acting on them with conviction.

[8] For another instance of διαβεβαιωτικῶς see *Against the Logicians*, II. 474.

"positively", but this does not adequately convey the sense of commitment because διαβεβαιωτικῶς also can be translated as with assurance, or to maintain strongly. Arcesilaus is dismissed as being dogmatic because his statements concerning suspension and assent were held with conviction.

Cicero provides further evidence that the Academics were thought to be somewhat dogmatic (in the sense of having strong convictions) in their scepticism. In the *Academica*, Cicero has Catulus say:

> I return to the position of my father, which he said to be that of Carneades; I believe that nothing can be known, but I also believe that the wise man will give assent, i.e. will have opinions, but this in such a way that he is aware that he is only opining and that he knows that there is nothing which can be comprehended and known; hence I approve of this kind of withholding assent in all matters, but I vehemently assent to this other view that there is nothing which can be known. (I. 148)[9]

The vehemence with which Catulus believes that nothing can be known would seem to be the reason Sextus thought the Academics were dogmatic, yet Barnes insists that besides this "it reveals its dogmatism in that it allows the skeptic to have opinions, i.e., beliefs on how things are" (*The Skeptic's Two Kinds of Assent*, 213). Catalus describes two things as belonging to Carneades: the view that the wise man will give assent, albeit in a limited fashion, and the view that the wise man knows that there is nothing which is comprehended and known. While giving assent in this limited manner is identified by Catulus as a kind of withholding of assent, it is seemingly assent without conviction. On the other hand, knowing that there is nothing which can be known can be understood as a belief about how things are, a belief that things in their nature are unknowable; but it can be understood as signifying the difference in the degree of conviction, the difference between knowing and opining. For Catulus the contrast seems to be between a strong sense and a weak sense of believing, between believing in such a way as to be aware that it is only belief and vehemently believing - not between believing and not believing.

The contrast between *approving* the withholding of assent in all matters, and vehemently *assenting* that nothing can be known, echoes an earlier passage in which Cicero writes that there are "answers that we can give in the affirmative or the negative in reply to questions, merely following a corresponding presentation, provided that we answer without actual assent"

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[9] Similarly, Aulus Gellius distinguishes between the Academics and the Pyrrhonians "because the Academics do, as it were, 'comprehend' the very fact that nothing can be comprehended, and, as it were, decide that nothing can be decided, while the Pyrrhonians assert that not even that can by any means be regarded as true, because nothing is regarded as true" (*The Attic Nights*, Book XI. v. 8).

(*Academica*, II. 104).[10] Again it seems that what is not allowed the sceptic is assent, since clearly the sceptic may both affirm and deny.

Sextus makes a similar distinction between stating a thing and stating a thing with assent, which comes close to the difference between εὐδοκειν and συγκατάθεσιν, between approval and assent. In explaining the sceptical expression "I determine nothing", Sextus writes that "[w]e hold that 'to determine' is not simply to state a thing but to put forward something non-evident combined with assent [συγκατάθεσις]" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 197). Again the concept of συγκατάθεσις, of assent, defines that which is not allowed the sceptic - the sceptic does not determine anything in that the sceptic does not assent to anything. Sextus explains further:

> So whenever the Sceptic says "I determine nothing", what he means is "I am now in such a state of mind as neither to affirm dogmatically or deny any of the matters now in question". And this he says simply by way of announcing undogmatically what appears to himself regarding the matters presented, not making any confident declaration, but just explaining his own state of mind. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 197)

The sceptic neither affirms or denies anything *dogmatically*, but this does not mean that the sceptic does not affirm or deny anything at all. The difference is between making an announcement and making a confident declaration. The Greek word πεποιθήσεως, here translated as "confident", also carries the sense of "boldly" or "with trust". On the other hand, πεποιθήσεως also suggests attachment or involvement. In the first sense, by not making any confident declaration the sceptic could be understood to be advancing something tentatively. Sextus explains, however, that the sceptic is just explaining his own state of mind, and not making

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[10] The passage at *Academica* II. 104 seems to show that Carneades distinguished between assenting and approving, but Richard Bett does not think that the difference is in the degree of conviction. For the Stoics "[t]o assent to an impression ... is to believe that a certain state of affairs obtains; but beliefs may vary widely in the degree of conviction with which they are held, and in the degree to which they are supported by relevant evidence. The notion of assent does not, then, in itself entail commitment of a special or particularly powerful kind" (*Carneades' Distinction Between Assent and Approval*, 23). With such a broad or weak sense of assent, any further distinction in the degree of conviction would be insignificant. To still allow the distinction to be made, Bett shifts the emphasis so that "[a]ssent and 'approval' are distinguished not by degrees of certainty, nor by the presence or absence of deliberation, but simply by whether or not one takes the impression in question to be true. To assent to an impression, even if only implicitly, is to take a stand on the *truth* of the impression. 'Approval', by contrast, involves no commitment, one way or the other, as to whether the impression 'approved' is really true or false" (10). This way of distinguishing assent from approval does not take into account the following remark noted earlier, made by Sextus in the midst of an argument against the Stoics on apprehensive presentations: "... assent is not relative to presentation but to reason (for assents are given to judgements)" (*Against the Logicians*, I. 154); however, the Academics do seem to say that appearances are true or false. "... so also the Academic forms his judgement of truth by the concurrence of presentations, and when none of the presentations in the concurrence provokes in him a suspicion of its falsity he asserts that the impression is true." (*Against the Logicians*, I. 179)

any declaration, tentative or otherwise. In the second sense, by announcing undogmatically what appears to him, the sceptic is not investing himself in the announcement. The sceptic can act or affirm and deny just as long as the sceptic is not dogmatic or steadfast while doing so.

Sextus is careful to guard scepticism against the same charges made by the sceptic against Dogmatic positions by insisting that scepticism is not simply negative dogmatism.

> [I]f the Sceptics had asseverated, together with assent, that proof is nothing, they might, perhaps, have been confuted by him who shows that proof exists; but as it is, seeing that they only make a bare statement of the arguments against proof without assenting to them, so far from being injured by those who establish the opposite, they are benefited rather. For if the arguments brought against proof have remained uncontradicted, and the arguments adopted in favour of proof's existence are likewise strong, let us adhere neither to the former nor to the latter but agree to suspend judgement. (*Against the Logicians*, II. 476-477)

"Asseverated, together with assent" translates the Greek words διισχυρίζοντο ... μετὰ συγκαταθέσεως, but the words διισχυρίζοντο and συγκαταθέσεως are not necessarily unrelated concepts. Διισχυρίζοντο means to affirm confidently while συγκαταθέσεως means to accept with conviction, both share the sense of being steadfast. If the sceptic had been steadfast either in stating that proof does not exist or in accepting that proof does not exist, then the Dogmatists could equally demand that the Sceptics justify such steadfastness. Sextus is careful to show that the sceptic is not caught by either aspect; the sceptic makes only a bare statement of the arguments against the existence of proof, but even to such a bare statement the sceptic does not assent. The bare statement of the argument is not itself an argument; in the Greek phrase ψιλὴν θέσιν λόγων, ψιλὴν is translated as "bare", but it has the sense of being unsupported by evidence. The sceptic is not committed to defending or justifying this bare statement against proof, and thus is not assenting to the statement simply by making the statement. Furthermore, the sceptic does not assent to the statement, if this means to accept it with conviction, regardless of the nature of the statement.

This distinction is repeated in the discussion on signs, where Sextus insists that the practice of the Sceptics be kept in mind. "This is to set out the arguments against the existence of the sign, but not with conviction or assent (for to do it with assent would be on a par with maintaining, like the Dogmatists, that a sign exists)." (*Against the Logicians*, II. 159) Again, the sceptic gives a bare statement without πείσματος καὶ συγκαταθέσεως, without conviction or assent, so as not to be like the Dogmatists by being a negative dogmatist. The position that signs do not exist is put forward by the sceptic simply to bring the inquiry to a position of equipollence, and not for the purpose of over-throwing any other position in order to win favour for itself. That signs do not exist is not something that the sceptic is committed to in any steadfast

or dogmatic manner.

It would seem that the only distinctive feature of insulation is the mental attitude taken towards the beliefs. Consequently, things evident and things non-evident, theoretical beliefs and ordinary beliefs, are all subject to a sceptical examination. At the same time, being non-evident does not automatically cause such things to be ignored by the Sceptics. Although the existence of the Gods is something non-evident, the sceptic is not as a result unconcerned with religion. "For perchance the Sceptic, as compared with philosophers of other views, will be found in a safer position, since in conformity with his ancestral customs and the laws, he declares that the Gods exist, and performs everything which contributes to their worship and veneration, but, so far as regards philosophic investigation, declines to commit himself rashly." (*Against the Physicists*, I. or *Adversus Mathematicos*, x., 49) The sceptic is able to act within convention even though the convention involves something that is non-evident. However, this action is still distinguished from the actions of the Dogmatists by the conviction with which such actions are carried out. This difference exists even though there may not be any outward signs of the difference discernible from the actions of the sceptic. The sceptic operates with a certain flexibility or ease of belief that allows full participation in the practices of daily life, without necessarily being limited by his scepticism.

Chapter 3: *equipollence, epoche, ataraxia* - persuasion and the sceptical modes

Although Sextus records a number of actual disputes between the philosophical schools or individual philosophers, not all of them involved the Sceptics. This fact does not exclude the Sceptics from such disputes since the Sceptics could become party to the dispute in virtue of choosing and defending any of the alternatives. According to Plutarch of Chaeroneia, "when opinion keeps within the bounds of our responses it continues free from error; but when it strays beyond and meddles with judgements and pronouncements about external matters, it is forever getting embroiled with itself and falling into conflict with others in whom the same matters give rise to contrary experiences and dissimilar impressions" (*Reply to Colotes*, 1120f).

This circumstance of going beyond the proper boundaries and falling into conflict is indicated by the frequent use of the expression μέρος καὶ αὐτοὶ τῆς διαφωνίας, as in the following passages.[1]

For we cannot ourselves judge between our own impressions and those of the other animals, since we ourselves are involved in the dispute [μέρος καὶ αὐτοὶ τῆς διαφωνίας] and are, therefore, rather in need of a judge than competent to pass judgement ourselves. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 59)

When the Dogmatists ... assert that in judging things they ought to prefer themselves to other people, we know that their claim is absurd; for they themselves are a party to the controversy [μέρος γάρ εἰσι καὶ αὐτοὶ τῆς διαφωνίας]; and if, when judging appearances, they have already given the preference to themselves, then, by thus entrusting themselves with the judgement, they are begging the question before the judgement is begun. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 90)

It is impossible to believe either all the views now set forth, because of their conflicting character, or any one of them. For he who asserts that one must believe this view, but not that, becomes a party to the controversy [μέρος γίνεται τῆς διαφωνίας], since he has opposed to him the arguments of those who take the rival view, and therefore he himself, along with the rest, will need an adjudicator instead of pronouncing judgement on others. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 182)

According to these passages the question to be settled is which or whether an appearance represents a thing as it is in its nature, but the dispute concerns which appearance or account is to be believed or preferred. This question does not assume that there is a single way of representing a thing as it is in its nature, nor does it assume that any of the appearances represent a thing as it is in its nature. It does however seem to assume that a thing has a nature that may

[1] Other passages include *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 98, 113, and *Against the Logicians*, I. 318, 351.

or may not be represented.

The dogmatist who prefers any view or appearance advances that preference in answer to the question of what a thing is in its nature, but in doing so, this preference simply becomes one more among many. The dogmatist is unable to get outside the question to offer himself as an authority to be believed when this does not answer the question of which alternative should be believed. Sextus explains that the preference advanced by the dogmatist

> is either in disagreement with all those who disagree or in agreement with only one. But if it disagrees with all, [it will be], like the whole of the disagreement, in need of a judgement; for that the same thing should be at once both examining and examined is a thing impracticable. And if it does not disagree with all but agrees with one, the one with whom it agrees, as being involved in the disagreement, requires an examiner. (*Against the Logicians*, I. or *Adversus Mathematicos*, vii., 318-319)

The dogmatist is unable to settle the disagreement because he is a party to it, but being party to the disagreement does not seem to be a consequence of *having appearances*, even different appearances, but rather a consequence of attempting to establish the authority of an account.

i.

If appearances differ but do not disagree (or conflict), the move from difference to disagreement is not a necessary one. Neither the sceptic nor the dogmatist becomes party to the dispute simply in virtue of having appearances, even if these appearances differ from each other. Sextus does however seem to speak as if difference inevitably leads to disagreement, as in the following passages:

> Those who agree together about a certain person that he has found the truth are in a condition with respect to their agreement which is either different or not different at all but one and the same. But they will by no means be in a different [διάφορον] condition since then they must certainly disagree [ἐπεὶ πάντως αὐτοὺς δεήσει διαφωνεῖν]. (*Against the Logicians*, I. 333)

> Intellects, too, are many in number, and being many are in disagreement, and as disagreeing they have need of one to pronounce judgement upon them. (*Against the Logicians*, I. 351)

> [B]ut the non-evident is disagreed about [διαπεφώνηται] and naturally falls into dispute [διολκὴν πίπτειν πέφυκεν]. (*Against the Logicians*, II. or *Adversus Mathematicos*, viii., 322-323)

From the presence of the word πάντως in the first passage there is the suggestion that disagreement necessarily follows difference, but the restriction can be relaxed somewhat given that it is not repeated in other passages. Further, in the third passage the dispute is said to be πέφυκεν, to be natural; disagreement should be understood as simply following naturally from

difference. When Sextus does move from difference to disagreement he is recording the empirical fact that where there are differences there are disagreements over the differences - more often Sextus simply begins with the disagreement.[2]

Inevitability also seems to define the move to suspension, since suspension does not seem to follow necessarily from disagreement. Sextus explains by analogy that while quietude was sought after, it was not calculated that the suspension of the belief that things are good or bad by nature would bring it about. Although quietude apparently followed the suspension quite by chance, the analogy does not suggest that suspension followed the disagreement by chance. The sceptic was said to have had the same experience as Apelles the painter, who became frustrated while trying to paint the foam from a horse. Unable to realistically represent the foam, Apelles gave up and threw the sponge he used to wipe the paint off his brush at the picture. The sponge, upon hitting the picture, reproduced the image of the foam. "So, too, the Sceptics were in hopes of gaining quietude by means of a decision regarding the disparity of the objects of sense and of thought, and being unable to effect this they suspended judgement; and they found that quietude, as if by chance, followed upon their suspense, even as a shadow follows its substance." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 29) If this analogy can be applied to *epoche* as well as *ataraxia*, then the Sceptics, like Apelles, became frustrated with trying to settle the disagreement and gave up trying. It does not seem that *epoche*, like *ataraxia*, was chanced upon, and therefore it is unlikely that suspension would follow disagreement with the regularity of a shadow following a body.[3]

If the analogy with Apelles is appropriate for scepticism, and *epoche* is simply the result of giving up on the disagreement, then *epoche* could be said not to strictly follow from disagreement at all. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes write:

It is important to see in what sense suspension of judgement is the 'conclusion' of the modes. We have presented the First Mode as a schematic argument in which the proposition ... 'we suspend

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[2] Sextus often begins the discussion by rehearsing the *diaphonia* and identifying the specific parties, as in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 17-18, *Against the Logicians*, I. 2-23, 46, 264-268, 369, 389, and *Against the Logicians*, II. 4-10.

[3] This is in part the complaint of Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes:

The Pyrrhonists habitually harp on the fact of disagreement and dispute, and sometimes they seem to suggest that this fact in itself is enough to induce suspension of judgement. [An example of this occurs in the discussion on truth: "...even if we assert nothing directly against the criterion, the dissension which exists about Truth itself is enough to drive us to a position of suspended judgement" (*Against the Logicians*, II. 2).] This is an unappealing suggestion, for disagreement may be due to prejudice or ignorance or irrationality, and the mere fact of dispute should not in itself drive us to doubt. (*The Modes of Scepticism*, 162)

Disagreements do arise as a result of different circumstances and not just different opinions, but even disagreements arising from prejudice or ignorance or irrationality can be expressed as differences of opinion. The sceptical method, however, is unconcerned with disagreements made on the basis of prejudice or ignorance.

judgement...' appears as the conclusion.[4] But it is clear that [the conclusion] does not strictly *follow* from the premisses of the argument. Nor can the Pyrrhonists have thought that it did: although Sextus sometimes says that suspension of judgement is 'inferred', he does not mean that we infer that people do in fact suspend judgement - he is well aware that, despite the manifold oppositions of appearances, many people persist in making judgements. (*The Modes of Scepticism*, 49)

Sextus introduces the Ten Modes conditionally, "without making any positive assertion regarding either their number or their validity; for it is possible that they may be unsound or there may be more of them than I shall enumerate" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 35). The admission that the arguments of the Modes may be unsound seems incompatible with any characterisation that emphasizes the logical force of the Modes. Moreover, Sextus does not make any positive assertion

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[4] (1.1) *x* appears F to animals of kind K
(2.1) *x* appears F* to animals of kind K*
but the appearances are by design conflicting, and
(3.1) we cannot prefer K to K* or *vice versa*;
Hence
(4) we suspend judgement as to whether *x* is really F or F*. (*The Modes of Scepticism*, 39)
The condition "but the appearances are by design conflicting" is unnecessary since difference or otherness is sufficient for choice. Premise (3.1) should read "we cannot prefer F to F* or *vice versa* because we cannot prefer K to K* or *vice versa*".

Charlotte Stough presents the argument somewhat differently:
1. The same objects appear different (different impressions are produced by the same objects) owing to differences in perceptual conditions.
[2. The real nature of an object is independent of perceptual conditions.]
3. We have no criterion to determine the accuracy of one perceptual experience (set of impressions) over another.
4. We can say how an object appears to us (describe our impressions), but not what it is in its real nature, i.e., we do not know the real nature of the object. (*Greek Skepticism*, 76)
The second premise is said to be assumed throughout, but it is completely unnecessary. To be independent of perceptual conditions is intended to mean that the real nature of an object is stable and unchanging, but at most Sextus assumes that the appearance should be consistent. In the third premise Sextus does not need to *determine the accuracy* of one perceptual experience over another; all that is required for the argument is that any one perceptual experience is unable to be *preferred* over any other. Finally, the conclusion is far too dogmatic, since the position that we *do not know* the real nature of an object would be dismissed as negative dogmatism.

Gisela Striker combines *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 59 and I. 61 into the following argument:
1) The same things produce different impressions in different kinds of animals;
2) it is impossible to decide which (impressions) are correct (both in 61);
hence
3) we can say how the underlying thing appears to us, but we will suspend judgement as to how it is with regard to nature. (59) (*The Ten Tropes of Aenesidemus*, 100)
Striker goes on to say that the second premise "tacitly rules out the possibility that all of the conflicting impressions might be true together" (100), since we would then have to accept contradictory propositions as true together. The second premise should not be concerned with correctness but with preference as noted above. The argument then would be unaffected by the possibility that different appearances may equally represent the underlying object.

The simplest general formulation is as follows:
i. appearances differ
ii. any particular appearance is no more to be preferred than any other particular appearance
iii. perhaps we can say how something appears, but we are unable to say how something is in its nature.

concerning the validity (validity translates the Greek word δυνάμεως, which is perhaps better translated as power or capability or capacity) of the Modes. In other words, *epoche* may or may not follow from the Modes; Sextus does not conclude *epoche* from any of the arguments. Although *epoche* is sometimes said to be inferred from disagreement, often it is simply said to follow from disagreement, or that it ought to follow, or should follow disagreement, or that it should be agreed to because of the disagreement. Initially *epoche* is said *to seem to follow* from the Modes. "The usual tradition amongst the older Sceptics is that the 'modes' by which 'suspension' is supposed [δοκεῖ] to be brought about are ten in number" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 36). Even if *epoche* is to be inferred from disagreement (meaning it is inferred from the premises of an argument), this does not mean that at all times suspension must actually follow disagreement, since the inference may be simply that suspension should follow disagreement. The fact that people persist in making judgements even in the face of disagreement is not adequate evidence for or against the necessity of suspension. There may be reasons for their persistence that have nothing to do with the disagreement. However, the question still remains, in the face of such challenges, in what manner or by what means does suspension follow disagreement?

ii.

In Chapter XXII subtitled ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ "ΕΠΕΧΩ", *epoche* is said to be used in place of "'I am unable to say which of [the considerations presented, (τῶν προκειμένων)] I ought to believe and which I ought to disbelieve', indicating that [the alternatives, (τά πράγματα)] appear to us equal as regards credibility and incredibility" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 196).[5] Suspension is said to follow disagreement when the opposition between the various positions are such as to be or appear to be equipollent. Sextus continues: "As to whether they are equal we make no positive assertion; but what we state is what appears to us in regard to them at the time of observation" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 196). The equipollence of the alternatives amounts to each position seeming as persuasive or unpersuasive as the other (or others). According to Myles Burnyeat, if the sceptic arrives at equipollence as a result of a set of arguments that show that any dogmatic claim has an opposed claim that is equally persuasive or unpersuasive, then these arguments

[5] Bury translates τῶν προκειμένων as "the objects presented", and τά πράγματα as "the objects", which seems to unnecessarily exclude arguments or philosophical positions.

compel the sceptic to suspension because they compel him to accept their conclusion.[6] Burnyeat objects that "accepting the conclusion that *p* on the basis of a certain argument is hardly to be distinguished from coming to *believe* that *p* is *true* with that argument as one's *reason*" (*Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?*, 138).[7] The sceptic is forced to say that it appears that the claims are equally balanced while denying that he believes them to be so, landing the sceptic in an apparent contradiction, which Burnyeat phrases as "I (am inclined to) believe that *p* but I do not believe that *p*". Yet *accepting* can be distinguished from *believing* if the acceptance simply amounts to being able to act on the conclusion. Accepting that the opposed positions appear equal enables the sceptic to act on the appearance and so suspend assent. Further, *accepting* something need not be equivalent to *being inclined to believe* something, since acceptance does not necessarily imply a preference one way or the other.

Sextus explains that the sceptical arguments brought against the Dogmatists do not demonstrate the falsity of their views, but simply suggest what can be said against them; equipollence is not the conclusion of an argument.

> It remains for us to proceed to our refutation, not in any anxiety to show that the indicative sign is wholly unreal, but reminding ourselves of the apparent equivalence of the arguments adduced for its reality and for its unreality. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 103)

And again.

> So then these few arguments out of many will be enough for the present to suggest to us the non-existence of an indicative sign. Next, we shall set forth those which go to suggest the existence of a sign, in order that we may exhibit the equipollence of the counter-balancing arguments. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 130)

The Greek word to note is ὑπομιμνήσκοντες which means to put one in mind of, or to remind, or to suggest.

> But as we have previously stated that we do not object to the commemorative sign but to the indicative, we are able to admit that the arguments brought against the sign signify something, but

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[6] Burnyeat claims that in the same way "an argument or overwhelming evidence may compel assent", the sceptical arguments are "designed to check assent". But this seems to go too far, since Burnyeat seems willing to acknowledge only that an argument *may* compel assent, but insists that a sceptical argument *will* check assent.

[7] According to Stephen Makin, if the suspension depends solely on the sceptical argument, then the sceptic is not forced to suspend assent because it is "very misleading to think of the sceptic as guided by an *argument*" (*Indifference Arguments*, 168). The point Makin makes is that the sceptical argument does not function as an *argument* for the *sceptic* at all. Accordingly, the sceptic does not argue for the suspension, since to do so would involve claiming that the premises are true, that the inference is valid, and that the conclusion is, in consequence, true. For Makin, the sceptical argument is rather a formula expressive of the way the sceptic is affected, a formula that manifests his feeling. The force of the argument is therefore not logical but causal; "the sceptic - in his desire to avoid recommending *belief* - will prefer to describe the causally necessary outcome of coming upon balanced considerations" (*Indifference Arguments*, 169).

not as yet in an indicative but in a commemorative way; for we are affected by them and we recall in memory the things that can be said against the indicative sign. (*Against the Logicians*, II. 289)

The accounts put forth for either side simply suggest what is the case, they do not argue for it. The equipollence is an appearance based on the suggestions for either side,[8] as reflected in the Modes of Aenesidemus, which neither argue for equipollence nor conclude equipollence from the considerations put forth. Differences simply are noted or recorded in order to bring the oppositions into relief. This is consistent with the practice as recorded by Diogenes Laertius: "Thus the Pyrrhonean principle, as Aenesidemus says in the introduction to his *Pyrrhonics*, is but a report on phenomena or on any kind of judgement, a report in which all things are brought to bear on one another, and in the comparison are found to present much anomaly and confusion" (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, IX. 78).

iii.

According to Annas and Barnes suspension is not an act of will or a matter of choice. They write that suspension

is something that *happens* to us, not a thing that we are *obliged* or can *choose* rationally to adopt. The relation between the premisses of the modes and the suspension of judgement is therefore this: once we recognize the premisses, we shall in fact suspend judgement; suspension follows on, or is inferred from, the premisses in the sense that it is the actual - perhaps even the inevitable, result of our recognising the force of the premisses. (*The Modes of Scepticism*, 49)

Therefore unbelief is not something which is strictly inferred from a set of premises even though it is something that follows from the premises; the sceptic has not inferred that he *ought not* to believe any more, but rather, the sceptic simply finds that he *does not* believe any more (*The Modes of Scepticism*, 50). In *The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist* Barnes again repeats the position that suspension is something that simply happens.

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[8] Burnyeat objects that equipollence is not equivalent to other perceptual experiences, such as the stick appearing bent in the water. He insists that the impression of equipollence "when all is said and done, simply *is* my assent to the conclusion of an argument, assent to it as true" (*Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?*, 140). This leads Burnyeat to go so far as to deny that mental appearances can be equivalent to sensible appearances:
That is the danger of allowing talk about appearances or impressions of thought: it comes to seem legitimate to treat states which are in fact states of belief, presupposing assent, as if they were independent of assent in the way that sense-impressions can be. For if, beneath its disguise as a mere passive affection, the philosophical impression includes assent, it ought to make no sense for the sceptic to insist that he does not assent to it as true. That would be to contemplate a further act of assent to the assent already given. If the sceptic does insist, if he refuses to identify with his assent, he is as it were detaching himself from the person (namely, himself) who was convinced by the argument, and he is treating his own thought as if it were the though of someone else, someone thinking thoughts within him. (*Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?*, 140)

When a philosopher offers us an argument, he normally implies that, if we accept the premisses, we ought to accept the conclusion. It is thus natural to suppose that a Pyrrhonist's arguments similarly imply an intellectual *ought* ... A few Pyrrhonian passages do indeed contain such an intellectual *ought*; but those passages are, I think, misleading. Sextus usually says, not 'you *should* suspend judgement', but 'you *will* (or: *must*) suspend judgement'. 'Εποχή is 'an affection (πάθος) that comes about (γίγνεται) in the inquirer after the investigation' (*PH* 1.7). The onset of ἐποχή is something which simply *happens* to us. (*The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist*, 1)

Outlines of Pyrrhonism, I. 7 does not actually say that *epoche* is a *pathos* that comes about in the inquirer after the investigation, but that the Sceptical school is sometimes called ἐφεκτικὴ because of the *pathos* that comes about in the inquirer after the investigation.[9] *Epoche* is defined soon afterwards by the following sentence: "'Suspense' is a state of mental rest owing to which we neither deny nor affirm anything" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 10), which translates the Greek ἐποχὴ δέ ἐστι στάσις διανοίας δι' ἣν οὔτε αἱρομέν τι οὔτε τίθεμεν. This is repeated later on in the text. "And the term 'suspension' [ἐποχὴ] is derived from the fact of the mind being held up or 'suspended' [ἐπέχεσθαι] so that it neither affirms nor denies anything owing to the equipollence of the matters in question." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 196) Moreover, Sextus explains that without exception the sceptical expressions are to be understood to be indicative of the "sceptical attitude and tone of mind" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 187). For example: "the expression 'Not more this than that' indicates also our feeling [πάθος], whereby we come to end in equipoise ... [which is] a refusal of assent to either alternative"; and "non-assertion [ἄφασίαν] is a mental condition [πάθος] of ours because of which we refuse either to affirm or to deny anything"; and "indetermination is a state of mind [πάθος] in which we neither deny nor affirm any of the matters which are ... non-evident" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 190, 192, 198).

Characterising *epoche* as a *pathos* does not serve to explain the relationship between *epoche* and equipollence. If suspension is a *pathos* that simply *happens* to the inquirer, then equipollence is necessary and/or sufficient to bring it about. If equipollence is necessary to bring about suspension, then suspension should not be able to come about without equipollence, but suspension does seem to occur without equipollence. On the other hand, the evidence does not seem to support *epoche* being the necessary consequence of equipollence, since, despite the best efforts of the Sceptics, the Dogmatists persisted in their beliefs. Therefore to maintain that it is

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[9] However, *epoche* is said to be a *pathos* by Diogenes Laertius, who writes that the Pyrrhoneans were named after Pyrrho, and were called Aporetics, Sceptics, Ephectics, or Zetetics from the principles they followed. Those called Ephectics were so called "because of the state of mind [πάθους] which followed their inquiry, I mean, suspense of judgement [ἐποχήν]" (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, IX. 70).

necessary requires that it not be sufficient. According to Myles Burnyeat the suspension is to be understood as constrained in the same way the assent to the appearances is constrained. He writes: "It would seem, therefore, that this *pathos*, and assent to it, is forced upon the skeptic as the outcome of his arguments just as much as a sense-impression is forced upon him by an encounter with some sensible object and then forcibly engages his assent" (*Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?*, 131). His reason for thinking that *epoche* and the assent to appearances are parallel is the use of the Greek word ανάγκη (*anagka* - forced, constrained) to describe both conditions. Despite the fact that in the texts suspension is not consistently described as forced, Burnyeat insists that just as the sceptic assents to the appearances when the assent is forced, the sceptic suspends assent because the suspension is forced.

Although the word *anagka* is sometimes used to describe both the assent to appearances[10] and the suspension of assent[11], the occasional presence of the word *anagka* does not seem sufficient to conclusively establish a parallel between them. More telling perhaps is the selective use of the adjectives ἀβουλήτως (*abouletos*) and ἀκουσίοις (*akousios*) with appearances and their affections. Both words can be translated as without will, or against one's will, or involuntarily. Despite the fact that suspension is sometimes said to be forced, suspension is not said to be involuntary in the sense of ἀβουλήτως and ἀκουσίοις. Suspension does not seem to be the involuntary result of the sceptical argument in the same way that the assent to appearances is said to be involuntary.

According to Charlotte Stough in *Sextus Empiricus on Non-Assertion*, to assent ἀβουλήτως, even to affections, is not to assent ἄλογον (without reason). While ἀβουλήτως is generally translated as involuntarily and is understood to mean against the will or forced, Stough prefers to translate ἀβουλήτως as "independent of the will", allowing assent to be dependent on something else. Stough bases this distinction on a separation between necessary *affections* and necessary *assent*. Necessary affections are characterised as ἄλογον, ἀχούσιον, and ἀβουλήτως, which implies an involuntariness in which there is no control over the affection. "Rational choice and decision play no role in the kind of experience in which one is no more than a passive recipient. Hence Sextus concludes that necessary affections cannot be disposed of by the Sceptic *logos*, implying that they can be neither eliminated nor ignored." (148)

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[10] See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 193.

[11] The Greek word ανάγκη is more often used in the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus. See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 61, 78, 89, 121, 128, 163.

But according to Stough, necessary assent (to the affections) is not to be understood in the same way, since Sextus does not characterize assent as either ἄλογον or ἀχούσιον, but simply as ἀβουλήτως.

> If necessary assent is ἀβουλήτως without being ἀχούσιον, it is independent of one's wants and desires in a way that does not make it contrary to what one might decide to do. And if it is not ἄλογον, it is not independent of conscious awareness and reason ... Assent consciously granted in accordance with the rational faculty, and not contrary to desire, is not beyond one's rational control and so is not involuntary. Necessary assent is compatible with intentional action. (*Sextus Empiricus on Non-Assertion*, 150)

Accordingly, the adjective *abouletos* does not necessarily suggest any sense of constraint by itself, but simply means that whatever is described as *abouletos* is independent of the will. Necessary assent is compatible with intentional action because the necessity indicates the motivation provided by the affections; assent is given only when the affections constitute compelling reasons for acting.

Stough admits that when involuntary affections like hunger or thirst necessarily induce assent, the affection cannot be willed away, nor can the inclination to satisfy the urge be willed away. According to Stough, the reasonable thing to do is to eat or drink, but the assent to do so "is no more than a component of the intentional action of eating, and neither irrational nor forced independently of the will ... In different circumstances one might decide for good reason not to eat ... In both types of case, even though the affection and impulse are involuntary, assent and action need not be" (*Sextus Empiricus on Non-Assertion*, 152). If assenting to affections (such as hunger or thirst) is similar to assenting to the appearance of equipollence, then the act of suspension is not brought about involuntarily, even if there is an impulse to suspend - in certain circumstances there may be good reasons not to suspend.

iv.

Suspension supposedly follows, sometimes or always, upon recognising the *force* of the premises, but if the force of the premises is logical, since the sceptic does not even admit the truth of the premises, then the sceptic is not bound by the force of the argument. "[W]henever such an argument is propounded to us we shall suspend judgement regarding each premiss, and when finally the whole argument is propounded we shall draw what conclusions we approve." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 253) The sceptic will act, or not act, after considering the merits of the complete argument, and not be predisposed to act simply on the basis of the logic of the argument. The truth of each premise is neither assumed nor admitted, consequently the validity (or lack of) of the argument is not determined. The logic of the argument, therefore, cannot

compel the sceptic to assent to the conclusion.

Although an argument of the Dogmatists may appear persuasive to the sceptic, and he is unable to suggest anything specific that may be said against it at this moment, the sceptic still refuses to assent.

> Just as before the birth of the founder of the School to which you belong, the theory it holds was not as yet apparent as a sound theory, although it was really in existence, so likewise it is possible that the opposite theory to that which you now propound is already really existent, though not yet apparent to us, so that we ought not as yet to yield assent to this theory which at the moment seems to be valid. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 34)

The sceptic refuses to assent to the argument because the inability to create an opposition is not sufficient to guarantee the truth of the argument. Moreover, despite the force of the premises, and despite the persuasiveness of the argument, the sceptic need not assent to the conclusion even if the conclusion appears to be true. If the argument is false but appears true, Sextus denies that the sceptic needs to know where the fallacy lies in order to refuse to assent to the conclusion. "For just as we refuse our assent to the truth of the tricks performed by jugglers and know that they are deluding us, even if we do not know how they do it, so likewise we refuse to believe arguments which, though seemingly plausible, are false, even when we do not know how they are fallacious." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 250)[12]

Sextus clearly thinks that the conclusion of an argument can be resisted or at least avoided; this is repeated in the following analogy where just as a chasm can be avoided despite the presence of a road leading to it, assent similarly can be resisted or avoided despite the presence of an argument leading to it.

> Thus, suppose there were a road leading up to a chasm, we do not push ourselves into the chasm just because there is a road leading to it but we avoid the road because of the chasm; so, in the same way, if there should be an argument which leads us to a confessedly [ὁμολογουμένως] absurd conclusion, we shall not assent to the absurdity just because of the argument but avoid the argument because of the absurdity. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 252)

The analogy can be read in two ways: either there is no necessity to follow the road and the sceptic can stop whenever he pleases; or the chasm appears as something to be avoided and therefore the road leading to the chasm is avoided. The Greek word ὁμολογουμένως is translated as confessedly, but the sense is that of being agreed upon, or being admitted to by

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[12] The same idea seems to be expressed in the following example where Admetus refuses to assent to the appearance of Alcestis because he knew she was dead. "When Alcestis had died, Heracles, it is said, brought her up again from Hades and showed her to Admetus, who received an impression (φαντασίαν) of Alcestis that was probable and tested; since, however, he knew that she was dead his mind recoiled from its assent (συγκαταθέσεως) and reverted to unbelief (ἀπιστίαν)." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 228)

common consent. The conclusion is then something that is admitted to as being absurd by a common agreement; the chasm is avoided because, by common agreement, it is something to be avoided.

v.

It would seem that suspension for the Sceptics, like the Dogmatists, is a matter of choice. Still, whether *epoche* is voluntary or involuntary is important in explaining how the Sceptics (or the Dogmatists for that matter) can move beyond equipollence to *ataraxia*.[13] Equipollence is defined as "equality in respect of probability and improbability" and indicates that "no one of the conflicting [accounts] takes precedence of any other as being more probable" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 10). Equipollence translates the Greek word ἰσοσθένεια (isostheneia), which means simply to be equal or to be evenly balanced. This suggests that a balance is achieved by opposing one account with another, and results in *epoche* which is defined as a state of mental rest. On its own equipollence calls to mind the image of a balance or of measuring scales, poised but at rest, inclining neither one way or the other. Put together with opposition, equipollence suggests a stalemate, a contest of tug-of-war between opponents neither of whom is able to gain the upper hand. Such a deadlock seems incompatible with being at rest, rather, it is in constant tension.

A third circumstance could be one of confusion rather than of rest or tension, which suggests that "the sceptic emerges from his arguments in a state of bafflement rather than belief. Bafflement could be the effect of arguments for and against; you are pulled now this way, now that, until you just do not know what to say. The problem is to see why this should produce tranquillity rather that acute anxiety" (*Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?*, 138-139). Such confusion would seem to result in anxiety rather than tranquillity, but Sextus does not ever say that the sceptic or the dogmatist ends in a state of bafflement. The dogmatist is not said to be confused about his beliefs, while for the sceptic, suspension is not a matter of being so bewildered that he is unable to choose or assent one way or another. Although at times scepticism is said to result in *aporia*, and therefore puzzlement or confusion, Paul Woodruff insists that this is to misunderstand the meaning of *aporia*. According to Woodruff:

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[13] Benson Mates writes: "As for *ataraxia*, I find no evidence that skepticism leads to any such desirable state. On the contrary, the rational minds among us are not inclined to give up the struggle, while the rest become religious mystics or philosophical obscurantists, neither condition seriously describable as 'blessed'" (*Skeptical Essays*, x).

An *aporia* is not a confusion or a problem or a puzzle or a doubt. It is more than a difficulty. It is an obstacle, a roadblock, or debilitating poverty. A person who is in *aporia* has nowhere to turn. He is helpless. That is why if you seem to be in *aporia*, you have a problem; hence the translator's confusion between *aporia* and problem. But *aporia* is a very special sort of problem; it is the problem you have when every attempt to support your claim to knowledge has been refuted. *Aporia* leads to a state of epistemic *frustration*. (*Aporetic Pyrrhonism*, 141)

The dogmatist, therefore, is not confused about his beliefs, but rather frustrated over them.

Sextus explains that the sceptic, finding himself in equipollent disagreements, was unable (μὴ δυνάμενος) or without power to decide between them, and so suspended forming an opinion on which should be believed (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 26). This is paralleled by the story of Apelles who was unable to realistically represent the horse's foam and so gave up the attempt. As noted before, both images suggest that frustration was the cause of the suspension, but frustration does not seem to lead easily to rest. Apelles, while being frustrated, flung his paint sponge at the painting which happened to realistically reproduce the horse's foam. His frustration was relieved or dispelled because he was finally able to represent the horse's foam, albeit accidentally. The sceptic, on the other hand, has not succeeded in deciding but has simply given up. Hayden Weir Ausland writes in *On the Moral Origin of the Pyrrhonian Philosophy* that "For happiness, it is not enough to have failed in one's attempts to assign preference to one thing over another; one must be satisfied that there is no remaining means of deciding the matter, for otherwise one's doubt ... is like that of a man awaiting appeal, falling significantly short of ἀταραξία" (397). Not only does the sceptic seem to fall short of *ataraxia*, he would seem to fall short of *epoche* as well, since a lack of satisfaction would seem to imply a lack of mental rest. According to Burnyeat,

if tranquillity is to be achieved, at some stage the skeptic's questing thoughts must come to a state of rest or equilibrium. There need be no finality to this achievement; the skeptic may hold himself ready to be persuaded that there are after all answers to be had ... But *ataraxia* is hardly to be attained if he is not in some sense satisfied - so far - that no answers are forthcoming, that contrary claims are indeed equal. (*Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?*, 139-140)

However, this need not be the case if the sceptic were simply to give up on the contest and not consider or ponder the alternatives. On the other hand, the dogmatist would seem to need to be satisfied that all possibilities had been exhausted, for although the dogmatist could simply give up the contest as well, it is likely that upon doing so he would return to his original position with renewed determination. However, R. J. Hankinson explains that to characterize *epoche* as mental rest is misleading:

[I]t is the fact that they [the sceptic's thoughts] never come to rest, but continually (although non-neurotically) turn over without arriving at definite conclusions, that produces *epoche* and by

consequence *ataraxia*. *Epoche* is a sort of condition supervenient upon continuous mild investigation, not a conclusion to that investigation. The Sceptic is, in this sense, perpetually travelling hopefully, never arriving - but, since whether or not he arrives no longer matters to him, the condition is perfectly calm. (*The Sceptics*, 300)

While this description of epoche can be used to explain why the Sceptics were called *zetetic*, the continuous turning of thoughts, even if done in a mild fashion, does not seem to result in tranquillity.

The images of the balance and the tug-of-war seem to correspond to the two stances of being detached from and being attached to. Sextus generally portrays the sceptic as being detached from the disagreement, even though the sceptic may enter into the disagreement in order to present the other side or an alternate account. In such circumstances it is easy to consider the equipollence in terms of a balance, for the sceptic has entered the disagreement for the sake of presenting the equipollence and not to advance any preference. In contrast, the dogmatist is defending a preference, and by doing so the dogmatist is participating in a contest. By being attached to the position, the dogmatist is likely to continue to struggle despite any appearance of equipollence. Separating the dogmatist from the position is a matter of weakening or lessening his commitment, and this is a matter of persuasion and not of force.

In the Aenesidemian Modes Sextus presents an extensive collection of what may be said against any particular dogmatic position to lessen the dogmatist's commitment, but according to Annas,

we can find a certain tension, at least in Sextus, who plainly enjoys retailing examples of shocking and upsetting persuasions. For the more shocking an example, the *less* likely it is to undermine our belief that we are right to believe the opposite. Many of Sextus' examples would be more likely to reinforce than to weaken his audience's moral beliefs. And even the blander examples can hardly on their own lead us to abandon our commitment to our own beliefs. (*Doing Without Objective Values*, 11)

Although the Modes sometime contain shocking or upsetting examples of social persuasions, they likely appear more shocking because of the abruptness of the presentation. A gradual progression from the bland to the outrageous would seem to be more conducive to persuasion. Considered separately, the value of shock should not be underestimated, for although the initial response is aversion and perhaps entrenchment, the later response is usually a tentative examination or reconsideration. Perhaps even the blander examples would be sufficient to persuade the dogmatists to abandon their commitment, if the belief were not held too strenuously.

The Modes are not uniformly persuasive, nor are they intended to be so. They are a grab-bag of considerations, a collection that anticipates a particular breadth of possible circumstances.

In the end it must be admitted that persuasion is not irresistable, because "just as nobody can by argument convince the joyful man that he is not joyful, or the man in pain that he is not in pain, so nobody can convince the man who is convinced that he is not convinced" (*Against the Logicians*, II. 475-476).

Chapter 4: moderation and the natural mean

The sceptical position is set over against those dogmatically claiming to have discovered the truth and those dogmatically denying that it can be discovered. Since positive dogmatism is as much an extreme as negative dogmatism, the sceptic can be seen to occupy the mean in virtue of not accepting either position and instead suspending judgement, declaring one to be no more persuasive than the other. Such an observation was recorded by Galen of Pergamum in the text *On the Natural Faculties*. He writes: "Or will you take a midway [μέσον] course between these two, neither perforce accepting those arguments as true nor contradicting them as false, but suddenly becoming sceptics - Pyrrhonists, in fact?" (II. ix.127).

i.

There are few specific references to the doctrine of the mean in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, but certain passages are comparable to the accounts given of the mean by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle writes that it is possible to take from those things that are divisible the larger part, the smaller part, or the equal part. The larger, smaller, and equal parts are so either with respect to the thing itself, or relatively to us. In either case, the equal part is a mean between the two extremes of excess and defect, since, in the first instance it is a point equidistant from both extremes, while in the second instance the equal picks out that which is neither too much nor too little.

Excess and defect are said to destroy perfection, while adherence to the mean preserves it. "Strength is destroyed both by excessive and by deficient exercises, and similarly health is destroyed both by too much and by too little food and drink; while they are produced, increased and preserved by suitable quantities." (*Nicomachean Ethics*, II. ii. 6) Neither excess nor defect are determined by exact amounts; excess is simply said to be too much, while defect is said to be too little. Furthermore, too much food and drink or too little are not excessive or deficient with respect to health itself, but are so determined with respect to the person said to be healthy.

The following passages taken from *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* use the language of excess and defect to explain the differences in appearances.

And wine strengthens us when drunk in moderate quantity [σύμμετρος], but when too much [πλεῖων] is taken it paralyses the body. So likewise food exhibits different effects according to the quantity consumed; for instance, it frequently upsets the body with indigestion and attacks of purging because of the large quantity taken. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 131)

As a general rule, it seems that wholesome things become harmful when used in immoderate quantities [ἄμετρον], and things that seem hurtful when taken to excess cause no harm when taken in minute quantities [ἀκαριαῖα]. What we observe in regard to the effects of medicines is the best evidence in support of our statement; for there the exact blending of the simple drugs makes the compound wholesome, but when the slightest oversight is made in the measuring, as sometimes happens, the compound is not only unwholesome but frequently even most harmful and deleterious. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 133)

In the first quote the mean is defined in very general arithmetic terms - a moderate amount of food and wine is beneficial for the body, while an excessive amount is harmful. Although the precise amount is not determined, the limits could probably be defined and an average amount could be calculated. The moderate amount of food and wine could then be understood as corresponding to the average amount, while the immoderate amount would be either more or less than the average. In the second quote the appearance of a thing does not remain constant in all circumstances; what seems wholesome at one time seems harmful at another time. Things that appear to be wholesome no longer seem to be wholesome when used immoderately, but come to appear harmful when used either too much or too little. Here the moderate use of such things would reinforce the appearance of wholesomeness, and would seem to be the proper amount. With things that appear to be harmful, the appearance of harmfulness is reinforced when used excessively, while they do not appear to be harmful when used in very small doses. With medicine the exact blending of simple drugs picks out the mean as the proper amount of each drug relative to being beneficial. The mean amount of each drug is not an equal amount because if it were, the same amount of each simple drug would be blended together to form the compound, whereas what is needed is the proper quantity of each drug. Either too much or too little of any drug will affect the compound, making it harmful in the case of too much but ineffectual in the case of too little; an adherence to the mean would produce and preserve the perfection of the drug.

Although these examples can be dismissed as commonplaces, in the following quotation the language of the mean is extended to matters other than health.

Accordingly, in order to avoid the appearance of cutting down at all our debt of exposition, we shall discuss in summary fashion the character of each of these dogmas or operations, neither divagating into long disquisitions regarding irrelevant matters, nor, as regards such as are relevant, failing to give a full account of the pressing points, but making our exposition as moderate and measured [μέσην καὶ μεμετρημένην] as possible. (*Against the Professors* or *Adversus Mathematicos*, vi. 6)

From this passage, both the excess and the defect are determined in relation to the mean; the excessive exposition is an account that goes on at length about irrelevant matters, while the deficient is an account that does not go on long enough to adequately explain those matters that

are relevant. The mean length is that which is sufficient to include all relevant matters and to give an adequate account of them.

This extension of the mean to cover the length of expositions echoes the more poetic imagery of the *Protagoras*, in which Plato has Hippias give the following speech in the course of the dialogue:

[Y]ou, Socrates, must not require that precise form of discussion with its extreme brevity, if it is disagreeable to Protagoras, but let the speeches have their head with a loose rein, that they may give us a more splendid and elegant impression; nor must you, Protagoras, let out full sail, as you run before the breeze, and so escape into the ocean of speech leaving the land nowhere in sight; rather, both of you must take a middle [μέσον] course. (*Protagoras*, 337e-338a)

The passage from *Against the Professors* is echoed in turn by later writings, for in almost the same words used by Sextus, Galen describes his own procedure in recounting the doctrine of others: "For this reason I, too, wishing to escape both charges, believe that I have found a middle and moderate course [μέσην τινὰ καὶ σύμμετρον] equally distant from inadequate brevity and excessive prolixity" (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, IV, 1.2). Despite the use of the mean in discussions about the proper length of discussions, the question of the proper length of discussions is peripheral to the practice and purpose of scepticism.

The following passage from *Against the Logicians* is evidence that the mean influences the *practice* of scepticism, for the scepticism of Carneades and the Academics makes explicit use of the language of excess and defect in the determination of the criterion.

Thus, for example, as there are present at the seat of judgement both the subject that judges and the object that is being judged and the medium through which judgement is effected, and distance and interval, place, time, mood, disposition, activity, we judge the distinctive character of each of these factors - as regards the subject judging, whether its vision be not dimmed (for vision of that kind is unfitted for judging); and as regards the object judged, whether it be not excessively small; and as regards the medium through which the judgement is effected, whether the atmosphere be not dark; and as to distance, whether it be not excessively great; and as to interval, whether it be not too short; and as to place, whether it be not immense; and as to time, whether it be not brief; and as to disposition, whether it is not found to be insane; and as to activity, whether it be not unacceptable. (*Against the Logicians*, I. or *Adversus Mathematicos*, vii., 183)

The unacceptable aspects of judging are described in terms of excess and defect: the object judged is not to be too small, which uses the Greek adverb ἄγαν (very much, too much); the distance is not to be too great, which uses the Greek adverb μέγας (very much, exceedingly); the place is not to be too large, which uses the Greek adjective ἀχανής (vast, immense). The excess and the defect of such aspects hinder the judgement, whereas the mean condition is enabling. However, this still does not demonstrate that there is a relationship between the mean, suspension, and tranquillity.

ii.

Such a relationship between scepticism, tranquillity, and the mean is suggested by Cicero in the following question raised in the course of the dialogue in the *Academica*. "But I want to know when the Old Academy adopted 'decisions' of that sort, asserting that the mind of the wise man does not undergo emotion and perturbation. That school were upholders of the mean in things, and held that in all emotion there was a certain measure that was natural." (*Academica*, II. 135) Cicero firstly associates freedom from perturbation with the mean (although by contrasting not experiencing disturbances with experiencing moderate emotions), but also defines the mean in emotions as a certain measure or response that was *natural*, just as the health of the body or soul was said to be a natural state, neither being excessive or deficient in composition.[1]

A certain measure in the emotions is first mentioned in Chapter XII of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, titled "What is the End of Scepticism?". Sextus defines the end of scepticism as follows: "Now an 'End' is 'that for which all actions or reasonings are undertaken, while it exists for the sake of none'; or otherwise, 'the ultimate object of appetency'. We assert still that the Sceptic's End is quietude [ἀταραξίαν] in respect of matters of opinion and moderate feeling [μετριοπάθειαν] in respect of things unavoidable" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 25). In answer to Cicero's question, freedom from disturbance does not exclude the experience of being affected. Freedom from disturbance or *ataraxia* is compatible with moderate feeling or *metriopathea*, since Sextus assigns each condition to a different aspect of experience; freedom from disturbance is the end "in respect of matters of opinion", and moderate feeling is the end "in respect of things unavoidable".

Sextus explains that quietude or freedom from disturbance in respect of matters of opinion followed the suspension of those judgements concerned with how things are truly or in reality. From the differences in appearances the sceptic moves to suspension because of an inability to decide among them, or to prefer one appearance over another. The inability is due to the balanced nature of the arguments or evidence for any particular position against any other.

For the Sceptic, having set out to philosophize with the object of passing judgement [ἐπικρῖναι] on the [φαντασίας, impressions or presentations] and ascertaining which of

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[1] Seneca also recognizes that there is a measure of experience that is dependent on Nature, although the context of the remark is an invective against pretence and spectacle:
In the matter of one's own misfortunes, too, the right way to act is to bestow on them the measure of sorrow that Nature, not custom, demands; for many shed tears in order to make a show of them, and, whenever a spectator is lacking, their eyes are dry, though they judge it disgraceful not to weep when everyone is doing it. This evil of depending on the opinion of others has become so deeply implanted that even grief, the most natural thing in the world, becomes now a matter of pretence. (*On Tranquillity of Mind*, xv. 6)

them are true and which false, so as to attain quietude thereby, found himself involved in contradictions of equal weight, and being unable to decide between them suspended judgement; and as he was thus in suspense there followed, as it happened, the state of quietude in respect of matters of opinion. For the man who opines that anything is by nature good or bad is for ever being disquieted: when he is without the things which he deems good he believes himself to be tormented by things naturally bad and he pursues after the things which are, as he thinks, good; which when he has obtained he keeps falling into still more perturbations because of his irrational and immoderate elation [τὸ παρὰ λόγον καὶ τὸ ἀμέτρως ἐπαίρεσθαι], and in his dread of a change of fortune he uses every endeavour to avoid losing the things which he deems good. On the other hand, the man who determines nothing as to what is naturally good or bad neither shuns nor pursues anything eagerly; and, in consequence, he is unperturbed. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 26-28)

Although Sextus begins with the question of which things are true or false, he shifts the concern from truth or falsity to whether anything is good or bad by nature. The question of truth or falsity is concerned with the determinations of the *phantasias* or impressions, which are concerned with the goodness or badness of the impressions. Any particular determination was found to be no more persuasive than its contrary, so the sceptic, being unable to choose between them declared things to be no more good than bad. Quite by chance, the quietude the sceptic sought through attempting to determine whether the impressions were good or bad by nature, was instead found to follow upon *epoche*. The lesson of this experience for the sceptic was that quietude was not to be found by attempting to determine the nature of things; on the contrary, the belief that any particular thing is good or bad by nature causes actions or reactions either for or against the appearance that are based on the belief rather than the appearance. Since it is the belief that things are good or bad by nature that causes the sceptic to attempt to determine whether any particular thing is good or bad, and consequently to be disturbed, then it is this belief that must be suspended. "Hence we conclude that if what is productive of evil is evil and to be shunned, and the persuasion that these things are good, those evil, by nature produces disquiet, then the assumption and persuasion [τὸ ὑποτίθεσθαι καὶ πεποιθέναι] that anything is, in its real nature, either bad or good is evil and to be shunned." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 238)[2]

The assumption and conviction that anything is, in its real nature, either good or evil, is able to be shunned or resisted because the belief that things are good or bad by nature is distinct from a good or bad experience. The goods and evils that are said to exist are divided into those that are introduced by reason and those that are natural. Those introduced by reason are the goods

[2] Sextus includes the element of persuasion along with the assumption as being responsible for being disturbed, but persuasion does not convey the sense of trust or confidence or boldness that is part of the Greek word πεποιθέναι. What is at fault besides the assumption is the sense of conviction that accompanies the assumption that anything is in its nature good or bad.

and evils that men pursue or avoid of their own judgement (goods such as wealth, fame, noble birth, friendship, beauty, strength of body, courage, justice, wisdom and virtue in general, with the opposites as evils); while those introduced by nature are the goods and evils that affect men necessarily, such as pain and pleasure. While the goods and evils introduced by reason are distinct from those introduced by nature, often there is not any separation between them.

[W]hen a man has a preconception that certain things are by nature evil (such as ill-repute, poverty, lameness, pain, disease, folly in general), he is not distressed by these alone but also by hosts of other evils due to them. For when they are present he is tempest-tost not only by them but also by his belief about them, through which he is convinced that evil is present with him; and by such a preconception he is devastated as by a greater evil. And he is equally devoid of rest when they are not present, and, either through taking precautions against the future or through fear, he has anxiety as his house-mate. But when reasoning has established that none of these things is good by nature or evil by nature, we shall have a release from perturbation and there will await us a peaceful life. (*Against the Ethicists* or *Adversus Mathematicos*, xi., 128-130)[3]

Such things as poverty or sickness are disturbing, but it is the preconception[4] that these things are good or bad by nature that causes the afflicted to be disturbed *as if by a greater evil*. Whosoever believes that things are good or bad by nature is disturbed to a greater extent because the disturbances are multiplied.[5] The belief that things are good or bad by nature causes the belief that the absence of something thought to be good is an evil; it causes the belief that the presence of something thought to be bad is an evil that must be avoided; it causes immoderate joy when

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[3] The sceptic avoids the rashness of the Dogmatists, remaining impassive in matters of opinion, and moderate in matters of emotion. "[F]or though, as a human being, he suffers emotion through his senses, yet because he does not also opine that what he suffers is evil by nature, the emotion he suffers is moderate [μετριοπαθεῖ]. For the added opinion that a thing is such a kind is worse than the actual suffering itself." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 236)

[4] Epictetus also locates the distress in the judgement:
It is not the things themselves that disturb men, but their judgements [δόγματα] about these things. For example, death is nothing dreadful, or else Socrates too would have thought so, but the judgement [τὸ δογμα] that death is dreadful, *this* is the dreadful thing. When, therefore, we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never blame anyone but ourselves, that means, our own judgements. (*Encheiridion* or *Manual* 5)
And again in the *Discourses*:
Why what is weeping and sighing? A judgement. What is misfortune? A judgement. What are strife, disagreement, fault-finding, accusing, impiety, foolishness? They are all judgements, and that, too, judgements about things that lie outside the province of moral purpose, assumed to be good or evil. Let a man transfer his judgements to matters that lie within the province of the moral purpose, and I guarantee that he will be steadfast, whatever be the state of things about him. (*Discourses*, Book III, iii. 18-19)

[5] Seneca makes a similar observation:
But, that you may not think that I am using merely the precepts of philosophers for the purpose of belittling the ills of poverty, *which no man feels to be burdensome unless he thinks it so*, consider, in the first place, how much larger is the proportion of poor men, and yet you will observe that they are not a whit sadder or more anxious than the rich; nay, I am inclined to think that they are happier because *they have fewer things to harass their minds*. (italics added) (*To Helvia on Consolation*, xii. 1-2)

something thought to be good is attained, and immoderate sorrow when it is not; it causes a great fear over possible changes in fortune; and it causes things to be pursued or avoided eagerly depending on whether they are thought good or bad by nature. In the case of wealth, the man who declares that wealth is good and that poverty is bad is continually perturbed. If he does not have wealth he is disturbed because he is poor, as well as being disturbed because he struggles to become rich. If he has wealth, he is disturbed in three ways: "because he is immoderately overjoyed, and because he toils to ensure that his wealth stays with him, and because he is painfully anxious and dreads the loss of it" (*Against the Ethicists*, 146).[6] Immoderately overjoyed translates the Greek phrase πέραν τοῦ μετρίου γέγηθε. The two words that define the excess are πέραν and μετρίου, and which mean "beyond, further, beyond measure, or extravagantly", and "moderate or measure", respectively. The belief that wealth is a good causes the joy or happiness felt at having wealth to be beyond measure, or to beyond moderate happiness. Similarly, the belief that poverty is an evil causes the sorrow felt at being poor to be beyond a proper measure. This is testified to by Plutarch of Chaeroneia, who writes that "some adjudge poverty not to be an evil, others to be a great evil, still others to be the greatest evil, so that they even hurl themselves down from precipices or throw themselves into the sea" (*On Moral Virtue*, 450a).[7] The difference in the actions would not be determined by the poverty itself, but rather by the differing beliefs about the poverty. Those who jump into the sea believe that poverty is the greatest evil, and so commit the most extreme actions. The belief that things are good or bad by nature thus forces both feelings and actions into the extreme of excess. The sceptic is released from such disturbances since he no longer believes that anything is good or bad by nature, and

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[6] A related discussion by Favorinus of Arles on the divination of good and bad fortune is recorded by Aulus Gellius in *Attic Nights*:
They [the diviners] predict, said he, either adverse or prosperous events. If they foretell prosperity and deceive you, you will be made wretched by vain expectations; if they foretell adversity and lie, you will be made wretched by useless fears. But if they predict truly and the events are unhappy, you will thereby be made wretched by anticipation, before you are fated to be so; if on the contrary they promise prosperity and it comes to pass, then there will clearly be two disadvantages: the anticipation of your hopes will wear you out with suspense, and hope will in advance have reaped the fruit of your approaching happiness. (*Attic Nights*, Book XIV. i. 36)

[7] Epictetus makes a similar observation:
"But my wife treats me badly." Very well; if someone asks you what this amounts to, say "My wife treats me badly". "Nothing else, then?" Nothing. "My father doesn't give me anything" ... But is it necessary in your own mind to add to the preceding statement that to receive nothing from your father is an evil, and at that to add a lie too? For this reason we ought not to cast out poverty, but only our judgement about poverty, and so we shall be serene. (*Discourses*, Book III, xvii. 7-8)

accordingly both his feelings and actions are moderate and within the mean.[8]

iii.

The sceptic's response to the question of how disturbances can be avoided or overcome is to suspend judgement on whether things are good or bad by nature; but the quietude in respect of matters of opinion that follows the suspension of the belief that things are good or bad is not complete, because the tranquillity the sceptic gains in ethical matters does not prevent him from being affected by the appearances. Sextus admits that the appearances are unavoidable and that even the sceptic is affected by them; but the sceptic's response is not to try to eliminate the

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[8] Unlike the Stoics, Sextus does not hesitate to assign the cause of the excess to reason, to the judgement of the goodness or badness of things. The Sceptics were unwilling to allow the distinction between believing something to be good and believing something to be the highest good to sanction disturbances that fall outside the mean. The belief that something is good or evil, and the belief that something is the greatest good or evil will both distort the appearance, and therefore both beliefs should be suspended. Galen records that Chrysippus tossed continually as if on a story sea and was unwilling to clearly settle the question of the cause of excess. Galen represents Chrysippus as being inconsistent for insisting that excessive motions "arise contrary to reason and that they reject reason and rebel against it, and then to say a little later that these same motions arise by the agency of a rational power" (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, IV 5.18) According to Galen, in his *Cure of the Affections* Chrysippus writes: "For we do not speak of these infirmities as being in the judgement that each of these things is good, but in also being drawn to them in excess of what is natural" (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, IV 5.21-22). What was at issue was the precise meaning of this explanation - whether the infirmities were caused *simply* by the judgement that things are good or bad, or whether the infirmities followed the judgement but were caused by an excessive desire, or whether the infirmities were caused by judgements that over-estimated the value of whatever was at issue, judging this to be the greatest good or evil. The following passage rehearses part of the disagreement among the Stoics:

Perhaps someone may protest that the madness does not arise because of the irrational power but because the judgement and the opinion have gone beyond what is fitting, as if he said that infirmities arise in the soul not simply from the false supposition about something, that it is good or evil, but from the supposition that it is the greatest (good or evil), the opinion about money, that it is good, is not yet an infirmity, but it becomes an infirmity when one holds that money is the greatest good and even supposes that life is not worth living for the man who has lost it: this constitutes 'love of money' and 'love of wealth', which are infirmities. Posidonius answers this objection in the following way: "On this interpretation of Chrysippus' words one might first raise the question how it is that wise men, who hold that all honorable things are good to the highest degree and unsurpassed, are not moved affectively by them, desiring the things they seek and taking excessive delight in these same things whenever they obtain them. For if the magnitude of apparent goods or evils moves one to believe that it is proper and in accordance with one's estimate of them to be moved affectively when they are present or approaching and to accept no reasoning that says one should be moved by them in another way, then the persons who think that the good they enjoy is unsurpassed ought to have been thus affected; but we observe that this does not happen. There is a similar difficulty in the case of those who are making progress and who suppose that their vice brings them great harm: they ought to have been carried away by fear and to have fallen victim to immoderate distress, but this too does not happen." (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, IV 5.24-29)

Galen believes that the cause of excess is not attributed to reason since Chrysippus calls those who are excessively afflicted woman-mad or bird-mad. "If the inclusion of 'mad' in the name of the infirmity is not to be meaningless, and if madness arises by the agency of the irrational power in the body, nothing is less rational than infirmities." (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, IV 5.23) Therefore reason is not responsible for the excess of feeling or action, and the cause must be found in another part of the soul.

unavoidable disturbances caused by the appearances, but to experience the appearances just as they are, neither adding or subtracting anything so that the resulting disturbances are moderate.[9]

We do not, however, suppose that the Sceptic is wholly untroubled; but we say that he is troubled by things unavoidable; for we grant that he is cold at times and thirsty, and suffers various affections of that kind. But even in these cases whereas ordinary people are afflicted by two circumstances, - namely, by the affections themselves and, in no less a degree, by the belief that these conditions are evil by nature,- the Sceptic, by his rejection of the added belief in the natural badness of all these conditions, escapes here too with less discomfort. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 29-30)[10]

The suffering that is necessitated by the experience is ordinary or natural, while the suffering that is brought about by the additional belief is not. Experiencing less discomfort is not a matter of being *less* affected by the cold or thirst, but of being *only* affected by the cold or thirst. Unlike the Dogmatist who pursues an endless number of goods and avoids an endless number of evils, and consequently suffers an endless number of disturbances, the Sceptic is less disturbed by having to avoid and guard against only one isolated form of evil.

So that in respect of the things held, as a matter of belief, to be good and bad, and in respect of the desires and avoidances thereof, [the sceptic] is perfectly happy [εὐδαίμων] while in respect of the sensible and irrational affections he preserves a due mean [μετριάζει]. For the things which occur, not because of a distortion of the reason and foolish belief but, owing to an involuntary affection of the sense it is impossible to get rid of by means of the Sceptical argument; for in a man who is distressed because of hunger or thirst, it is not feasible to implant, by means of the Sceptical argument, the conviction that he is not in distress, and in the man who is overjoyed at getting relief from these sufferings it is not in its power to implant the belief that he is not overjoyed. (*Against the Ethicists*, 147-149)

The sceptic cannot avoid being affected by the appearances since the appearances are not affected by suspension. The sceptic cannot convince himself that he is not cold when he feels cold, or that he is not thirsty when he feels thirsty because these are natural affections. The sceptic is, in this

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[9] The idea of adding to or subtracting from the appearances is attributed to Epicurus as well. While discussing theories of the criterion, Sextus writes that for Epicurus,
presentations are all true, (but opinions are not all true) but possess certain distinctions. For some of them are true, others false, since they are judgements of ours concerning the presentations, and we judge sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly either because of adding and attaching something to the presentations or because of subtracting something from them and, in either case, falsifying the irrational sensation. (*Against the Logicians*, I. 210)

[10] Sextus provides the following example:
For do we not observe frequently how, in the case of those who are being cut, the patient who is being cut manfully endures the torture of the cutting ... because he is affected only by the motion due to the cutting; whereas the man who stands beside him, as soon as he sees a small flow of blood, at once grows pale, trembles, gets in a great sweat, feels faint, and finally falls down speechless, not because of the pain (for it is not present with him), but because of the belief he has about pain being an evil? Thus the perturbation due to the belief about an evil as evil is sometimes greater than that which results from the so-called evil itself. (*Against the Ethicists*, 159-160)

respect, no different than other people, including the dogmatists, and is equally affected by the appearances.[11] On the other hand, the beliefs about the appearances are as much a bother as the appearances themselves. While the belief that the affective conditions are good or bad by nature adds to the disturbances caused by the appearances, this belief can be suspended by the sceptical method - when this belief no longer exists, the overall disturbance is halved, and the sceptic escapes with less discomfort.

Sextus maintains that the sceptic is not excessively disturbed [οὐκ ἄγαν ἐστὶ ταρακτικόν] even by the necessary evils that the sceptic must take pains to avoid. The afflictions that are disturbing are divided into three:

> For the suffering is either small, such as that which befalls us every day, - hunger or thirst or cold or heat or something similar; - or, on the contrary, it is very violent and intense, as in the case of those afflicted with incurable torments, during which the doctors often provide powerful anodynes to assist the patient in obtaining some relief; or else it is moderate and protracted, as in some diseases. (*Against the Ethicists*, 152-154)

The intensity of the affliction is reflected by the degree of disturbance, but it is not exceeded by it. Where the suffering is small it is easily remedied, whereas if the suffering is severe its duration is brief, but if the suffering is extended it is not continuous.[12] While the sceptic is not excessively disturbed because the experience is not tainted by the additional belief, the descriptions of the experiences suggest a reason that can be used to create an equipollence over the question of whether such suffering is evil by nature. Experiencing an intense emotion is not one and the same thing as exceeding the mean, for the sceptic may feel intense pain, or may feel intense pleasure when the pain recedes. Since the intensity of these emotions follows upon intense experiences, an intense emotion is an appropriate response to the circumstances - intensity or lack of intensity need not correspond to an extreme if they are necessitated by the experience.

The deficient response is seldom discussed by Sextus, nor is a particular state or condition explicitly identified as being deficient. This, however, is not without precedent since, in the

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[11] The pain and pleasure that follow some experiences are not within the sceptic's power to prevent, any more than they are able to be affected by suspension.

> [S]o the man who is perturbed at the presence of painful things is not to be blamed; for the perturbation caused by the pain is not due to himself but is bound to occur of necessity whether he wishes it or not; but he who through his own imaginations invents for himself a host of things desirable and to be avoided is deserving of blame; for he stirs up for himself a flood of evils. (*Against the Ethicists*, 156-157)

[12] Diogenes Laertius records Epicurus as making the same divisions among the disturbances. "Continuous pain does not last long in the flesh; on the contrary, pain, if extreme, is present a very short time, and even that degree of pain which barely outweighs pleasure in the flesh does not last for many days together. Illnesses of long duration even permit of an excess of pleasure over pain in the flesh." (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, x. 140)

Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle is similarly hard-pressed to identify the deficient condition because it seldom occurs.[13] One such example concerns pleasure:

> Men erring on the side of deficiency as regards pleasures, and taking less than a proper amount of enjoyment in them, scarcely occur; such insensibility is not human. Indeed, even the lower animals discriminate in food, and like some kinds and not others; and if there be a creature that finds nothing pleasant, and sees no difference between one thing and another, it must be very far removed from humanity. As men of this type scarcely occur, we have no special name for them. (*Nicomachean Ethics*, III. xi. 7)

Plutarch, however, is more helpful in determining the nature and consequences of defect in his discussion of the mean in the *Moralia*.

> The impulsion of passion springs from moral virtue; but it needs reason to keep it within moderate bounds and to prevent its exceeding or falling short of its proper season. For it is indeed true that the passionate and irrational moves sometimes too violently and swiftly, at other times more weakly and slothfully than the case demands ... For wherever, through infirmity and weakness, or fear and hesitation, the impulsion yields too soon and prematurely forsakes the good, there practical reason comes on the scene to incite and rekindle the impulsion; and where, again, the impulsion is borne beyond proper bounds, flowing powerfully and in disorder, there practical reason removes its violence and checks it. (*On Moral Virtue*, 444b-c)

Plutarch discusses only the pursuit of the good, and consequently defines the deficient impulse as one that yields too soon and prematurely forsakes the good, while the excessive impulse is defined as one that is violent and disorderly in pursuit of the good. For scepticism, being in the defect range of the mean can be said to be a matter of yielding too soon and prematurely forsaking what appears to be good, (or not yielding soon enough and continuing to endure what appears to be evil). The consequence of being in the defect range of the mean is that the experience of the appearances is weaker and more slothful than the case demands. Just as the belief that this affection is good in its nature is able to supervene on the experience of a pleasurable affection and increase the pleasure experienced, the belief that this affection is bad in its nature is able to supervene on the experience of a pleasurable affection and decrease the pleasure experienced. Alternatively, the belief that this affection is good in its nature is able to supervene on the experience of a painful affection and decrease the pain experienced. Taken to

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[13] The defect in action and feeling is not simply equivalent to avoidance (as opposed to pursuit) because the action of avoidance need not be less strenuous or excessive than the action of pursuit. The following passage from Stobaeus seems to blur the distinction by defining an ailment as sickness (which is defined as a tendency towards excessiveness) in conjunction with weakness:

Proneness to sickness is a tendency towards passion, towards one of the functions contrary to nature, such as depression, irascibility, malevolence, quick temper, and the like ... Sickness is an appetitive opinion which has flowed into a tenor and hardened, signifying a belief that what should not be pursued is intensely worth pursuing, such as the passion for women, wine and money. By antipathy the opposites of these sicknesses occur, such as loathing for women or wine, or misanthropy. Sicknesses which occur in conjunction with weakness are called ailments. (2.93.1-13) (Quoted in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 418)

its limit, the consequence of the decrease is complete insensibility and inactivity; the deficient state or condition is therefore one of insensibility and inactivity.

The charge against scepticism of insensibility and/or inactivity is noted by Plutarch. "The view that we should suspend judgement about everything was not shaken even by those who undertook elaborate investigations and composed lengthy and argumentative treatises to refute it, but these men at last brought up against it from the Stoa like some Gorgon's head the argument from total inaction and gave up the battle." (*Reply to Colotes*, 1122a-b)[14] A similar accusation was made by Epictetus: "when a man who has been trapped in an argument hardens to stone, how shall one any longer deal with him by argument?" (*Discourses*, Book I, v. 2). Like Medusa, scepticism was thought to turn a person virtually to stone, unable to act or feel.

Sextus denies that scepticism results in inactivity or insensibility, and replies variously that the sceptic is not precluded from activity, or that the sceptic cannot remain wholly inactive. However, Sextus explicitly rehearses the criticism only once, and seems to have little patience with those who claim that the sceptic is restricted to a life of inactivity on the basis that "as all life consists in desires and avoidances, he that neither desires nor avoids anything is virtually rejecting life and remaining like a vegetable". His response is simply to accuse such critics of being confused. "Now in arguing thus they do not comprehend that the Sceptic does not conduct his life according to philosophical theory (for so far as regards this he is inactive), but as regards the non-philosophic regulation of life he is capable of desiring some things and avoiding others."

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[14] The Stoics were also accused of bringing about the extreme of insensibility, as evidenced by the following two passages from *The Attic Nights*.

[Discussing the conduct of Plutarch while having a slave beaten] Now the sum and substance of Taurus' whole disquisition was this: he did not believe that ἀοργησία or "freedom from anger", and ἀναλγησία, or "lack of sensibility", were identical: but that a mind not prone to anger was one thing, a spirit ἀνάλγητος and ἀναίσθητος, that is, callous and unfeeling, quite another. For as of all the rest of the emotions which the Latin philosophers call *affectus* or *affectiones*, and the Greeks πάθη, so of the one which, when it becomes a cruel desire for vengeance, is called "anger", he did not recommend as expedient a total lack, στέρησις as the Greeks say, but a moderate amount, which they call μετριότης. (Book I. xxvi. 10-11)

[Herodes Atticus speaking against the ἀπάθεια, or the lack of feeling of the Stoics] [N]o man, who felt and thought normally, could be wholly exempt and free from those emotions of the mind, which he called πάθη, caused by sorrow, desire, fear, anger and pleasure; and even if he could so resist them as to be free from them altogether, he would not be better off, since his mind would grow weak and sluggish, being deprived of the support of certain emotions, as of a highly necessary stimulus ... if we should in our ignorance eradicate them altogether, there would be danger lest we lose also the good and useful qualities of the mind which are connected with them ... those disciples of insensibility, wishing to be though calm, courageous and steadfast because of showing neither desire nor grief, neither wrath nor joy, root out all the more vigorous emotions of the mind, and grow old in the torpor of a sluggish and, as it were, nerveless life. (Book XIX. xii. 3-10)

(*Against the Ethicists*, 163-165)[15] On the one hand, the appearances affect both sceptic and dogmatist alike, and such affections are unavoidable. On the basis of these affections alone the sceptic cannot be said to be insensible. On the other hand, the appearances and their affections are sufficient to motivate the sceptic to act on the appearances.[16] Moreover, the sceptic adopts those practices that are common within the community so as to preserve an equable flow of life, and consequently cannot be said to be inactive. In so far as the responses are not influenced by any opinion as to whether the appearances are actually good or bad, then the responses are neither exaggerated or abbreviated and thus remain within the mean.

iv.

Aiming at the mean is an indirect procedure in scepticism because this involves aiming away from the extremes rather than aiming towards the mean. Avoiding the extremes of excess and defect involves suspending belief as to whether anything is good or evil by nature.

> Now every unhappy state occurs because of some perturbation. But every perturbation in men is a consequence due either to an eager pursuit of certain things or to an eager avoidance of certain things. And all men eagerly pursue what is believed by them to be good and avoid what is supposed to be evil. Therefore, every case of unhappiness occurs owing to the pursuit of the good things as good, and the avoidance of the evil things as evil ... If then, a man should assume that everything which is in any way pursued by anyone is good by nature and that everything which is avoided is by nature to be avoided, he will have a life that is unlivable, through being compelled both to pursue and to avoid at the same time the same thing, - to pursue it, in as much as it is conceived by some to be desirable, but to avoid it, in so far as it is deemed by others a thing to be avoided. - But if he were to say not that everything which is pursued or avoided is desirable and to be avoided, but that some one of them is desirable and some one to be avoided, he will have a life indeed, but not a life free from perturbation; for through continually pursuing what he believes to be good by nature and shunning what he supposes to be evil he will never be clear of perturbation, but both when he has failed as yet to grasp the good he will be extremely perturbed because of his desire to gain it, and when he has gained it he will never be at rest owing

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[15] Cicero gives a similar response to a similar complaint: "In fact as we hold that he who restrains himself from assent about all things nevertheless does move and does act, the view is that there remain presentations of a sort that arouse us to action" (*Academica*, II. 104). The sceptic both is affected by the appearances and acts on them.

[16] According to Sextus, the critic who accuses the sceptic of being unable to act, mistakenly (stubbornly) insists that desires and avoidances are dependent *solely* on philosophical theory. By rejecting philosophical theory, the sceptic is said to be rejecting life. For Sextus, the assumption that theory is the only motivating force is just simply incorrect. "For the sceptical philosopher, if he is not to be entirely inert and without a share in the activities of daily life, was necessarily obliged to possess some Criterion both of choice and of aversion - that is to say, the appearances." (*Against the Logicians*, I. 30) Sextus explains on a number of occasions that the sceptic rejects the criterion in the sense of the standard regulating belief in reality or unreality (meaning the theoretical or logical criteria), but accepts the criterion when this denotes the standard of action by conforming to which in the conduct of life the sceptic performs some actions and abstains from others.

to the excess of his joy or on account of keeping watch over his acquisition. And the same argument applies also to evil; for neither he who is without it is care-free, as he is no little tormented by the perturbation caused both by avoiding it and by taking precautions; nor does he who is in an evil state have any cessation of his torments, through taking thought -

How to escape from the sleep of destruction.

But if a man should declare that nothing is by nature an object of desire any more than of avoidance, nor of avoidance more than of desire, each thing which occurs being relative, and, owing to differences of time and circumstances, being at one time desirable, at another to be avoided, he will live happily and unperturbed, being neither exalted at good, as good, nor depressed at evil, manfully accepting what befalls him of necessity, and being liberated from the distress due to the belief that something evil or good is present. This, in fact, will accrue to him from his belief that nothing is good by nature or evil. Therefore it is not possible to live happily if one posits anything good or evil by nature. (*Against the Ethicists*, 112-118)

Hitting the mean for Sextus is a matter of not exceeding what is necessitated by the appearances, and is the result of not believing that the appearances are good or bad by nature. An excessive pursuit or an excessive avoidance of anything indicates that the response is not within the mean, because both the eager pursuit or the eager avoidance of anything is disturbing. Since all men seem to pursue things that they desire, and to desire those things that they believe to be good, then it is the belief that these things are good that is the cause of their being pursued, and ultimately the cause of being disturbed. Sextus does not locate the direct cause of being disturbed in the nature of the pursuit; it is not because the pursuit is *excessive* that there is disturbance since excessive pursuit is simply the result of pursuing things that are thought to be good by nature - excessive pursuit is a symptom rather than a cause of disturbances. Similarly, since all men seem to avoid those things that they do not desire, and do not desire them because they believe these things to be bad, then it is the belief that these things are bad by nature that is the cause of their being avoided, and ultimately the cause of being disturbed. So if a man were to pursue all things that were thought to be good by nature and to avoid all things that were thought to be bad by nature he would find that he was required to both pursue and avoid the same things. Since the same thing is pursued by some at some time, and avoided by others, being pursued or being avoided is not a sign of whether a thing is good or evil by nature. On the basis of whether a thing is pursued or avoided, the thing would be both good and evil by nature.

The sceptic finds that both the belief that those things that are pursued are good by nature and the belief that those things that are avoided are bad by nature are disturbing. To desire a thing on the one hand because it is thought to be good by nature, would be to be disturbed over not having it; yet on the other hand, for the pursuit to be blocked because the thing pursued is also thought to be evil by nature and therefore to be avoided, would be to be disturbed that there is a desire for something that is believed to be evil by nature. The extent of the disturbance would

seem to be reduced if not everything was pursued or avoided (the pursuit or avoidance being limited to a small number of things, or even restricted to a single thing), but although this would relieve the disturbance caused by the confusion over whether a thing should be pursued or avoided, it would still not dispel all the disturbances. Desiring a single object rather than a multitude of objects will not reduce the desire nor will it reduce the disturbance caused by the desire being unfulfilled. This would seem to simply focus the desire and quite possibly to intensify it by concentrating it on a single thing. Furthermore, even if this object of desire were to be obtained the pursuer would remain unsettled, since obtaining the object of desire would result in an excessive pleasure over having realized the desire. The pleasure would be excessive because the object of desire would be valued as an absolute, as something good in itself, and therefore would be over-valued. Moreover, even after having realized the desire, an anxiety or fear would follow close behind over the possibility of not being able to maintain a grasp of it. A desire such as wealth, once obtained, must be constantly guarded lest it slip away or be taken away, while a desire such as reputation would demand constant vigilance over conduct so that it might continue to conform with expectations.

Since the opinions differ on what is good by nature and, therefore, what ought to be pursued, those who follow one opinion or another do not escape the perturbation by changing the object of desire. According to Sextus,

> to say that one ought to pursue this object as being base, but to strive after that object as being more noble, is the action of men who are not getting rid of the perturbation but effecting a change in its position; for just as the man who pursued the first object was distressed, so also he who pursues the second will be distressed, so that the philosopher's discourse creates a new disease in place of the old, since, by turning away the man who strives after wealth or fame or health, as being a good, towards the pursuit not of these things but of "the fair" (shall we say) and of virtue, he does not set him free from the pursuit but makes him change over to another pursuit. (*Against the Ethicists*, 134 -135)

Sextus does not differentiate between the objects of desire, allowing some to be more good by nature than others, and therefore more worthy of pursuit than others. To insist that it is better to pursue one object rather than another only serves to redirect the pursuit and consequently to retain the disturbance.

To exchange one object for another in the belief that it is better by nature is simply to exchange one disease for another. It is as if a physician would cure a patient of pleurisy but infect him with some other ailment; but to rid the patient of one disease only to leave him stricken with another cannot be considered a cure, or even to be of much benefit.

For it is not possible to argue that the perturbation introduced is a moderate [μέτριός] one,

whereas the one removed was more violent. For the perturbed person has the same sort of belief about the second object of pursuit as he had about the previous one; but he believed that the first object was good and because of this he went after it eagerly; so, as he also believes that the second is good and goes after it with equal eagerness, he will be equally perturbed, or perhaps even more violently in so far as he has been converted to the belief that his present object of pursuit is of greater value. (*Against the Ethicists*, 137-138)

Changing one object of desire for another will not remove the disturbance, nor will the disturbance be *moderated* or lessened by the change from one object of desire to another because moderation or the lack of it, is not to be found within the object. The desire for honour is not more moderate than the desire for wealth, nor is the desire for justice more moderate than the desire for courage. If wealth is thought to be good by nature then it will be pursued as something that ought to be obtained. Disturbances will follow upon both the getting and the not getting of wealth. If wealth is now to be replaced by honour, honour must be thought to be good by nature and also something that ought to be obtained. But as with wealth, both the getting and not getting of honour will just as surely bring about disturbances. The pursuit of honour is no less excessive than the pursuit of wealth, even if it is granted that honour ought to be pursued before or instead of wealth, because the excessiveness of the action is not determined by the object of the action, but by pursuing the object as something naturally good. Pursuing honour will not bring about less disturbance, because if honour is pursued as eagerly as wealth was pursued (or perhaps more eagerly since honour is now thought to be the greater good), then the pursuit will remain excessive.

If the pursuit is excessive because the desire for honour, wealth, or whatever, is excessive, then if the desire could be controlled it would seem that the pursuit would be moderated. But Sextus does not allow self-control to be the way to attain the mean, because the exercise of self-control does not dispel the disturbances.[17] Those who are said to be self-controlled can be described as those who are not inclined towards good nor evil, or those who are so inclined but who resist these inclinations by means of reason. Of the first sort, Sextus will not grant that they are self-controlled since if the inclinations towards good or evil do not arise, there is not anything to be self-controlled about. According to Sextus, one might as well call the eunuch self-controlled as regards sexual appetites, or call the man with a bad stomach self-controlled for his lack of appetite, as call those self-controlled whose inclinations or appetites for good and evil do not arise

[17] Even for Aristotle being in the mean is not a matter of self-control. For Aristotle virtue is not merely a disposition *conforming to* right principle, but one *cooperating with* right principle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VI. xiii.5).

in them. Of the second sort, although they are self-controlled, they continue to be bothered by that which they control.

If [the Dogmatists] shall maintain that [the wise man] forms foolish judgements but keeps them in control by his reason, they will be granting, firstly, that his wisdom has not benefitted him at all, as he is still beset by perturbations and needing succour, and, secondly, that he is found to be even more unhappy than the foolish. For in that he has an inclination for something he is certainly perturbed, and in that he controls it by his reason he retains the evil within himself and is on this account, more perturbed than the fool who is no longer affected in this way; for the latter is perturbed in that he feels inclination, but in that he obtains the things desired he has his perturbation gradually diminished. (*Against the Ethicists*, 213-214)

So the wise man is disturbed in two respects, since despite being wise he is still required to be self-controlled, and by being self-controlled he remains bothered by his inclinations.[18] The fool, on the other hand, has a more natural desire in that it is not coloured or distorted by the additional beliefs of how things are by nature. The fool pursues his desire without reflecting on whether it is a good thing to have, but is simply concerned with satisfying the want. When the pursuit is won the fool is satisfied, at least temporarily; there are no lingering disturbances.[19]

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[18] Virtually the same argument is presented in Chapter XXXI of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, although Bury here translates the Greek ἐγκρατεια as temperance rather than self-control:
And if they [the Dogmatists] shall claim that he is temperate in virtue of his forming bad resolutions but overcoming them by reason, then, firstly, they will be admitting that prudence was of no benefit to him just when he was in a state of perturbation and needed assistance, and, secondly, he is found to be even more unfortunate than those they term bad. For if he feels an impulse towards anything, he is certainly perturbed; while if he overcomes it by reason, he retains the evil, and because of this he is more perturbed than the bad man who no longer experiences this feeling; for the latter, though he is perturbed if he is feeling an impulse, yet ceases from his perturbation if he gains his desires. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, III. 276-277)

This ignores the Aristotelian distinction drawn between temperance and self-control, between σωφροσύνη and ἐγκρατεια. Plutarch comments that self-control is something less than a virtue: "For it is not a mean which has been produced by the harmony of the worse with the better, nor has the excess of passion in it been eliminated, nor has the desiderative part of the soul become obedient and compliant to the intelligent part, but is vexed and causes vexation and is confined by compulsion and, though living with reason, lives as in a state of rebellion against it, hostile and inimical" (*On Moral Virtue*, 445c-d). Temperance, on the other hand, "belongs to the sphere where reason guides and manages the passionate element, like a gentle animal obedient to the reins, making it yielding in its desires and willingly receptive of moderation and propriety" (*On Moral Virtue*, 445b).

[19] This is acknowledged by the Stoics, for Galen records the observation that when the desires are satisfied the disturbances naturally subside:
[Posidonius quoting Chrysippus from *On the Affections*] "In the case of distress also there are some who appear similarly to take leave of it as though sated. Thus the poet speaks in this way about Achilles grieving for Patroclus:

'But when he had his fill of weeping and rolling on the ground,
and the longing for such things had gone from his mind and limbs'
he undertook to comfort Priam by setting before him the irrationality of his distress."

... For as the affective part of the soul strives after certain objects of desire that are proper to it, so when it obtains them it is satiated; and thereupon it puts an end to its own motion, which was controlling the animal's conation and in keeping with its nature was leading (the animal) to this or that misguided end. (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* IV, 7.26-33)

The wise man is continually disturbed because he continues to search for quietude through wisdom. The Stoics maintained that "wisdom [φρόνησιν], which is the science of things good and evil and neither, is an act of life and only those who attain this become fair, only they rich, as only they are wise" (*Against the Ethicists*, 170). The wise man, then, is wise in those things that are good, evil, and indifferent, which are the very things about which the sceptic would practice suspension. If the wise man is bothered because he is compelled to pursue those things which he has learned as being good by nature, and to avoid those things which he as learned as being evil by nature, then being self-controlled does not rid the wise man of these compulsions but only confines them, leaving them to rage inside him much the same as they were. The compulsions have not become moderate by being controlled, even though the actions of the wise man may appear to be moderate. The compulsions are reined in and the self-controlled man will not act on them, but they are simply frustrated rather than dispelled. The inability of self-control to attain the mean is commented on by Plutarch in the *Moralia*. "[T]he self-controlled [ἐγκρατὴς] man, while he does indeed direct his desire by the strength and mastery of reason, yet does so not without pain, nor by persuasion, but as it plunges sideways and resists, as though with blow and curb, he forcefully subdues it and holds it in, being the while himself full of internal struggle and turmoil." (*On Moral Virtue*, 445b-c) Self-control does not result in *ataraxia* because the mastery of desire by reason is a painful process. Furthermore, by forcibly subduing the desires or emotions they are prevented from being given the proper expression and therefore fall short of the mean. The mean, therefore, cannot be realized by being self-controlled because self-control is in the service of defect.

In Chapter VIII of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus admits that the sceptic follows a rule in determining how to live, but not before first defining a doctrinal rule in two ways. On the one hand, a doctrinal rule is said to be an adherence to dogma, which is in turn defined as *assent* to non-evident propositions. The sceptic does not have a doctrinal rule according to this definition. On the other hand, it is defined as a "procedure which, in accordance with appearances, follows a certain line of reasoning, that reasoning indicating how it is possible to live rightly ... and tending to enable one to suspend judgement ... For we follow a line of reasoning which, in accordance with appearance, points us to a life conformable to the customs of our country and its laws and institutions, and to our own instinctive feelings" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 17). The doctrinal rule is described as a *procedure* that is followed, but following the procedure is a matter of following appearances and suspending the determination of whether the anything is good or bad by nature. Since this life is aligned with conventional persuasions it would seem to be

conservative by definition, because to live rightly would be to act and feel with the least amount of friction. *Ataraxia* cannot be brought about by continuing to pursue some things as good by nature and to avoid others as being bad by nature because both paths generate friction and are disturbing. The sceptic who declares that something is no more good by nature than it is evil by nature is able to turn this way and that, pursuing something when it seems proper to do so and avoiding the same thing when it seems proper to do so, in cooperation with the regulative principles of ordinary life. He is accordingly neither overjoyed at what appears to be good, nor overly dismayed at what appears to be evil, but is able to rest content with how things seem.

Chapter 5: flexibility and the unhindered flow of life

The practice of scepticism does not prevent the sceptic from living an ordinary life, since suspending judgement on all things so as not to become dogmatic does not leave the sceptic helpless to act. Neither education nor occupation are necessarily incompatible with the practice of scepticism. For the sceptic it is "sufficient to conduct one's life empirically and undogmatically in accordance with the rules and beliefs that are commonly accepted, suspending judgement regarding the statements derived from dogmatic subtlety and furthest removed from the usage of life" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 246). And again.

> [I]t would seem that this regulation of life is four fold, and that one part of it lies in the guidance of Nature, another in the constraint of the passions, another in the tradition of laws and customs, another in the instruction of the arts. Nature's guidance is that by which we are naturally capable of sensation and thought; constraint of the passions is that whereby hunger drives us to food and thirst to drink; tradition of customs and laws, that whereby we regard piety in the conduct of life as good, but impiety as evil; instruction of the arts, that whereby we are not inactive in such arts as we adopt. But we make all these statements undogmatically. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 23-24)

The sceptic is first and foremost concerned with practical matters and not with theoretical ones; matters that are not useful to living are of little interest to the sceptic. According to Jonathan Barnes the concern for utility is common throughout the first six books of *Adversus Mathematicos* (generally known collectively as *Against the Professors*, and individually directed against the grammarians, the rhetoricians, the geometers, the mathematicians, the astrologers, and the musicians). "[These] arts, if they are to pass the Pyrrhonian test, must be 'useful' (χρειώδης, χρήσιμος, εὔχρηστος), or 'advantageous' (ὠφέλιμος), or 'advantageous in life' (βιωφελής); putative arts are rejected if they are 'useless' (ἄχρηστος) or 'not advantageous' (ἀνωφελής) or 'futile' (περισσος, μάταιος) - or, as happens in some cases, 'harmful' (βλαβερός, ἐπιβλαβής, βλαπτικός)." (*Scepticism and the Arts*, 63)

Despite the significant presence of the concept of utility in *Against the Professors*, utility does not serve to determine an acceptable practice, since not all useful practices are necessarily acceptable, but all acceptable practices are necessarily useful. The sceptical criticism is not directly concerned with whether or not a particular practice is useful or advantageous, but is directed against claims that move beyond the appearances. The sceptical procedure is contrasted with the procedure of Epicurus - "Epicurus took the ground that the subjects taught are of no help in perfecting wisdom" (*Against the Professors*, I. 1), while the Pyrrhonians "were not moved either by the view that these subjects are of no help to gaining wisdom (for that is a "dogmatic"

assertion) or by any lack of culture attaching to themselves ... but in the fact that in respect of the Arts and Sciences they have met with the same experience as they did in respect of philosophy as a whole" (*Against the Professors*, I. 5-6). To reject a certain practice because it is thought not to be of any use is just as dogmatic as to embrace a certain practice because it is thought to be of use. The sceptic therefore practices suspension, following the same procedure as described in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, though on occasion the dogmatic procedure is made use of as well.

i.

The end or telos of an art is said to be useful for life (*Against the Professors*, I. 50-51), while the useful arts are distinguished into those that prevent or relieve distress, and those that discover things that are beneficial; an example of the first sort of art is medicine, while an example of the second sort is navigation, but neither medicine nor navigation are discussed in *Against the Professors*. The six categories that are included in *Against the Professors* are called cyclical studies and are concerned with the subjects of grammar, rhetoric, geometry, mathematics, astrology, and music which make up a general and basic education.[1] The six subjects are not treated equally - grammar receives nearly as much attention as the other five subjects combined.[2] The extensive criticism of grammar with its broad distinction between what is useful and what is not useful can be extended, not just to the other cyclical studies, but to other practices in general.

Some arts have been introduced mainly with the object of averting things hurtful, others with the object of discovering things beneficial; medicine is an example of the first kind, being a curative and pain-relieving art, and navigation of the second, for all men are very much in need of the assistance of the other nations. Since then "grammatistic" by its comprehension of letters cures a most inactive disease, forgetfulness, and contains a most necessary activity, memory, almost

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[1] This corresponds to the seven liberal arts standardized in the Middle Ages (the *trivium*, which included grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, and the *quadrivium*, which included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music), with the exception of dialectic or logic which Sextus treats separately.

[2] The emphasis on grammar does not seem to be unusual. *The Attic Nights* of Aulus Gellius is concerned in large part with grammar, either with the origin of words, or their meaning, or whether they are properly used, or with the inflection of certain words, or with barbarisms or solecisms, or with the presumptuousness of grammarians in general. Examples of the last aspect include Book IV. i., with the following heading: "A discourse of the philosopher Favorinus carried on in the Socratic manner with an over-boastful grammarian..."; Book VI. xvii., with the heading: "A conversation held with a grammarian, who was full of insolence and arrogance, as to the meaning of the word *obnoxius*..."; Book VIII. x., with the heading: "A discussion that I had in the town of Eleusis with a conceited grammarian who, although ignorant of the tenses of verbs and the exercises of schoolboys, yet ostentatiously proposed abstruse questions of a hazy and formidable character, to impress the minds of the unlearned"; and Book XVIII. vii., with the heading: "How Favorinus treated a man who made an unseasonable inquiry about words of ambiguous meaning...", that continues in the text as follows: "Domitius was a learned and famous grammarian in the city of Rome, who was given the surname *Insanus*, or 'The Madman', because he was by nature rather difficult and churlish".

everything depends upon it, and without it it is impossible to teach any necessary thing to others, and it will be impossible to learn anything profitable from another. Thus the "grammatistic" is one of the most useful arts. (*Against the Professors*, I. 51-52)

Grammar has a central place of importance among the six cyclical arts, as well as generally among the studies deemed useful, since it is necessary in order to be able to teach or learn.[3] Grammar is likened to medicine in that it is a curative art - the disease that it alleviates is forgetfulness.[4]

The art of grammar is divided into two aspects - the practical aspect promises to teach the elements and their combinations and enables the general practice of reading and writing; the theoretical aspect attempts to go beyond the bare knowledge of letters to investigate both their discovery and their nature. Sextus does not argue against the usefulness of the general art of reading and writing, he even presents an argument for its usefulness. If the sceptical arguments that show that grammar is useless are themselves useful, but can neither be remembered or passed on to others without grammar, then grammar itself must be useful to the extent that it enables the sceptical arguments to be transmitted. By contrast, there are extensive arguments against the theoretical aspect of grammar, concerned in general with the precise nature or definition of grammar, and specifically with the correct usage of language. Of these arguments, a large part are directed against the attempt to lay down rules for the correct usage of language in absolute or natural terms.

For while the handling of the elements contributes to the conduct of life, not to be contented with what is given by the observation of the elements and attempting further to show that some of them are naturally vowels, others consonants, and that of the vowels some are naturally short, others long, others doubtful and indifferently long or short, and in general all the other rules that are taught by the conceited Grammarians (are unprofitable proceedings). (*Against the Professors*, I. 55-56)

Letters are said to be naturally vowels or consonants, vowels are said to be naturally long or short,

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[3] This does not rule out the possibility of teaching or learning by imitation, despite the fact that *almost everything* is said to depend on grammar.

[4] Unlike Plato who believes writing enables or causes forgetfulness as shown by the following discussion from the *Phaedrus*:
But when it came to writing Theuth said, 'Here, O king, is a branch of learning that will make the people of Egypt wiser and improve their memories; my discovery provides a recipe for memory and wisdom.' But the king answered and said, 'O man full of arts, to one it is given to create the things of art, and to another to judge what measure of harm and of profit they have for those that shall employ them. And so it is that you, by reason of your tender regard for the writing that is your offspring, have declared the very opposite of its true effect. If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder. (*Phaedrus*, 274e-275a)

syllables are said to be long or short by nature or by position (*Against the Professors*, chapter vi.), nouns are said to be naturally masculine, feminine, or neuter, or to signify by nature (*Against the Professors*, chapter vii.), and so on. The criticisms against these matters are similar. In the case of nouns that are said to be naturally masculine or feminine, the concept of "naturally" is said to mean either the original sound of the utterance, "just as crying is natural in pain and shouting in joy or in admiration, so some nouns, they say, are 'naturally' of this sort and others of that sort"; or else it means "that at the present moment each of them naturally affects us as being masculine, even if we do not consider that it is masculine, or again naturally indicates that it is feminine, even if we are not willing" (*Against the Professors*, I. 143-144). The argument against the first alternative turns on being unable to advance a preference because of being party to the dispute.[5] The Grammarians are ridiculed for thinking themselves capable of settling the dispute when even those who have attained the summit of natural science have been unsuccessful due to the equipollent nature of the dispute. Further, granting for the moment that language is naturally indicative, the language should be capable of being understood by both Greeks and barbarians, but this is not the case, therefore language is not naturally indicative. The second alternative is untenable for the similar reason that if nouns are naturally gendered and thus appear or affect us as being masculine or feminine or neuter, then such nouns should appear consistently as one gender. Unlike fire or snow which appears consistently to Greek and barbarian alike, or to educated and uneducated alike, the same nouns are said to be masculine by some, feminine by others, or neuter by yet others. Moreover, those things that are masculine or feminine are not always referred to by a noun with the corresponding gender. Therefore, if it is unable to be determined whether language signifies by nature or by convention, then the Grammarian is unable to censure or correct the use of language by others. Such practices simply are not of any use to the practice of living, and create more disturbances than they resolve.

Two arguments are rehearsed against the usefulness of the theoretical aspect of writing: firstly, it is said to be without use because of the existing and on-going disagreement over the particulars of writing; and secondly, it is said to be without use because circumstances are not worsened if the disagreements that are occasioned by the theoretical concerns are simply ignored. Given that the technicians fight and will fight to eternity with one another about the particulars of writing, such disagreements could be expected to be debilitating to the practice of writing, but

[5] Sextus suggests that the dispute was concerned with which or whether any aspect of language is indicative of something non-linguistic, in the way a certain cry can be said to be indicative of being in a state of pain, or a certain scream can be said to be indicative of being in a state of fear.

the experience is otherwise.

If the technology which deals with orthography is profitable for life, both we and each of the Grammarians who dispute about it ought to have been in a tangle as to what we ought to write, seeing that the dispute about it is still unsettled. But neither any of us nor any of them is in a tangle, but we all achieve our purpose without dispute, inasmuch as we set out not from this technology but from more general and undisputed practice, in accordance with which we all - Grammarians and non-Grammarians alike - adopt the elements which necessarily must be adopted for the indication of the noun, while as to such as are not necessary we are indifferent. (*Against the Professors*, I. 71-72)

The details of writing are unimportant so long as the practice is successful. It makes little difference that the practice of writing is seldom in accord with the theories of writing, or while being in accord with one theory it is not in accord with others. The success of the practice is not hindered, nor are we injured in any way if the writing of certain words vary, except in cases where the variation in spelling accidentally indicates something other than what was intended. Even in such cases, the resulting confusion is easily dispelled and the misunderstanding corrected.

Despite being conducted empirically and undogmatically according to what is commonly accepted, the practice of language use is not entirely free from problems; but even the settling of these problems is not a matter for theory or for theoreticians as evidenced by the settling of ambiguities.

For if the Ambiguity is a word or phrase having two or more meanings, and it is by convention that words have meaning, then all such ambiguities as can be usefully cleared up - such, that is, as occur in the course of some practical affair - will be cleared up, not certainly by the dialectician, but by the craftsmen trained in each several art, as they have personal experience of the conventional way adopted by themselves of using the terms to denote the objects signified. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 256)[6]

The difficulties that arise concerning the proper use of language are not left to be resolved by theorists such as the grammarian or the dialectician, but are corrected at the time of use by those with whom the problem arises. Their expertise is a matter of having the personal experience in the conventional use of language within their particular sphere of activity. The sceptic, then, aligns himself with the moment, allowing himself to be guided by the circumstances.

Proper language use is a matter of being flexible enough to suit the particular

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[6] *The Attic Nights* of Aulus Gellius records the following disagreement about ambiguities, which distinguishes ambiguities from obscurities:
Chrysippus asserts that every word is by nature ambiguous, since two or more things may be understood from the same word. But Diodorus, surnamed Cronus, says: "No word is ambiguous, and no one speaks or receives a word in two senses; and it ought not to seem to be said in any other sense than that which the speaker feels that he is giving to it. But when I", said he, "meant one thing and you have understood another, it may seem that I have spoken obscurely rather than ambiguously; for the nature of an ambiguous word should be such that he who speaks it expresses two meanings who has felt that he is expressing but one". (Book XI. xii. 1-3)

circumstances, without adopting or insisting on a standard of use. Sextus recognises that language usage differs between specific or technical disciplines and ordinary conversation, and that certain disciplines have terms or words specific to them, even as different geographical areas have dialects or vocabularies that are specific to the area.

> Hence, in philosophy we shall fall in with the usage of the philosophers, and in medicine with that proper to that science, and in ordinary intercourse with that which is more usual, free from affectation, and native to the district. Consequently, when the same object is indicated by two names we shall try to suit ourselves to the persons present by employing the name which they do not laugh at, whatever the object's natural name may be. (*Against the Professors*, I. 233-234)

In technical or ordinary conversation the sceptic will speak in the manner that strikes him as appropriate for so long as he is unopposed. Although the sceptic will vary his language to the required use, this is not a matter of trying to anticipate the correct usage as if it could be determined *a priori*; correctness is determined moment by moment, situation by situation, conversation by conversation. For the sceptic, being able to use language correctly is simply to be unhindered in the use of language, which is vividly illustrated by the following analogy:

> For just as in a city where a certain local coinage is current, he who makes use of this is able to carry on his business in that city without hindrances, but he who does not adopt it, but coins for himself some new money and desires to have this passed, is a fool, so also in ordinary intercourse the man who refuses to follow the mode of converse - like the coinage - which is usually adopted, and cuts out a new way of his own, is near to madness ... those who wish to discourse correctly must cleave to the non-technical, simple and ordinary style and to the observing of the rules which accord with the usage of the majority. (*Against the Professors*, I. 178-179)

The language is especially strong - like the man who avoids the local currency and mints his own money, whoever avoids the local mode of conversation and tries to use another is a *fool* and *near to madness*.

The hindrances that do arise in the use of language will be eliminated quite easily, since the sceptic is not concerned to privilege any particular usage over any other, but is content to be corrected if the circumstances warrant it.

> In familiar intercourse ordinary people will either oppose us about certain phrases or will not oppose us. And if they oppose us, they will at once correct us, so that we have good Greek from those who live ordinary lives and not from the Grammarians. And if they are not vexed but concur in the phrases we use as being clear and correct, we too shall abide by them. (*Against the Professors*, I. 191-192)

By being corrected in this manner by ordinary people the sceptic is said to have good Greek; but the purpose is not to speak good Greek, but to be correctly understood by whomever the sceptic is speaking to. "Certainly, in the case of nearly all the things which are of use in ordinary life, the fact that one is not hindered in supplying one's needs is a sufficient criterion." (*Against the*

Professors, I. 193) Outside of such circumstances of supplying one's needs it makes little difference to the sceptic how the language is used, since it is only within such circumstances that a consensus about language has a use.[7]

ii.

By comparison the final two books offer somewhat of a contrast between the dogmatic manner, and the sceptical manner of refutation. The fifth book which is directed against the astrologers makes little criticism of the utility of astrology, instead adopting "a method of attack at close quarters" (*Against the Professors*, V. 49) to overthrow the principles and elements of astrology and thereby undermine the whole. The Art of Astrology is divided broadly into astronomy and astrology, which are directed towards somewhat different ends. Although both astronomy and astrology begin from the observation of natural phenomena, and both astronomy and astrology are concerned with making forecasts or predictions, astrology is contested while astronomy is not. What is contested is not

> the complete Art as composed of arithmetic and geometry ... nor yet that of prediction practised by Eudoxus and Hipparchus and men of their kind, which some also call "astronomy" (for this, like Agriculture and Navigation, consist in the observation of phenomena, from which it is possible to forecast droughts and rainstorms and plagues and earthquakes and other changes in the surrounding vault of a similar character); it is rather the casting of nativities. (*Against the Professors*, V. 1-2)

The difference between prediction and the casting of nativities is rather slight - prediction is concerned with the forecasting of weather, whether it be storms or droughts or earthquakes; the casting of nativities is concerned with forecasting horoscopes to determine the heavenly influences on fate or character. The former is acceptable because it is based on the observation of phenomena. In principle, the casting of nativities is acceptable because it too is based on the observation of phenomena, the configuration of the heavens and its alterations; but in practice, the casting of nativities is unacceptable because it is based on insufficient observation.

> And in general, since they declare that it is not the stars that inform them of the differences in men's lives but they themselves observe them together with the positions of the stars, I affirm that if the prediction is to be reliable, the same position of the stars ought not to be observed once only

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[7] The same procedure accompanied by a readiness of turning is extended well beyond the use of language. "And in the ordinary affairs of life we see already how people - ay, and even the slave-boys - distinguish ambiguities when they think such distinction is of use ... Thus it is the experience of what is useful in each affair that brings about the distinguishing of ambiguities." (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, II. 257-258) In the affairs of life ambiguities can take the form of disagreements about practically anything, but the sceptic can continue to act by remaining with the appearances and being guided by the circumstances, while avoiding such ambiguities whose resolution does not seem useful.

in connexion with the life of some one person, but a second time with a second life, and a third time with a third, so that from the equality of the resultant effects in all the cases we might learn that when the stars have assumed a certain configuration the result will certainly be of one particular kind; and just as in medicine we have observed that a puncture of the heart is the cause of death, after having observed together with it not only the death of Dion but also of Theon and Socrates and many others, so also in astrology, if it is credible that this particular configuration of the stars is indicative of that particular kind of life, then it certainly has been observed not once only in one single case but many times in many cases. (*Against the Professors*, V. 103-105)

While the casting of nativities simply records the concurrence of the celestial phenomena and a pattern of life, often it is not possible to make such observations more than once, since the same configuration of stars only reoccurs after a very long time (9977 years is given as the interval between the occurrences of The Great Year). Unlike medicine, where a puncture of the heart has frequently been observed along with the death of the patient, any particular configuration of the heavens is not able to be repeatedly observed occurring with any particular kind of life. At bottom the criticism against the casting of nativities, or astrology in general, rests on the insufficiency of experience.[8]

The final book directed against the musicians makes full use of the borrowed dogmatic manner of refutation. Although arguing against utility is contrasted with the more sceptical procedure of undermining the principle assumptions of the study of music the procedure remains much the same. The common view supposedly held by the majority of people is that music is similar to philosophy in that it represses the passions of the soul, thereby enabling life to be more easily regulated. Various circumstances are related in support of the common view, such as Pythagoras noticing that youths who were in a drunken frenzy became calm and appeared sober when a spondean tune was played; or that the Spartans, who were renowned for their bravery, were led into battle with music; or how the rage of Achilles was soothed and dissipated by the music of the zither; further, reputable men such as Plato and Socrates are shown as favouring the

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[8] If the critical sceptical procedure intended to directly contest the utility or benefit of the practice the following dogmatic sort of argument against utility could easily have been rehearsed:
[Diogenes Laertius quoting Epicurus] But when we come to subjects for special inquiry, there is nothing in the knowledge of risings and settings and solstices and eclipses and all kindred subjects that contributes to our happiness; but those who are well-informed about such matters and yet are ignorant what the heavenly bodies really are, and what are the most important causes of phenomena, feel quite as much fear as those who have no such special information - nay, perhaps even greater fear, when the curiosity excited by this additional knowledge cannot find a solution or understand the subordination of these phenomena to the highest causes. (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, X. 79)
The study of astrology is not of any use to happiness, moreover, the study of astrology appears to actually increase unhappiness. The limitations inherent in the study serve to increase curiosity, to increase the level of frustration and disappointment, even perhaps to increase the level of fear in the unknown. Thus the study of astrology is not conducive to happiness or tranquillity, and tends to generate disturbances rather than dispel them.

study of music.

The principle reasons that can be given for the utility of music is that those skilled in the art of music experience greater pleasure from a musical performance than those who are unskilled; or that it is impossible to be good without having been trained by musicians; or that the elements of music and philosophy are the same; or that the art of music is necessary to understand the harmony of the universe; or because certain musical tunes affect the character of the soul.

Against this is said "that it is not conceded off-hand that some tunes are in their nature stimulating, others repressive. For such a thing is contrary to our belief" (*Against the Professors*, VI. 19). Experience suggests that not all alike are stimulated by [illegible] piece of music, nor are all alike soothed by the same music. Even if it is conceded that music has the effects it is said to have, to bring about a change in the emotional state is not necessarily to dispel the disturbance. Music "does not repress the mental state because it possesses a moderating influence, but because its influence is distracting; consequently, when tunes of that sort have ceased to sound, the mind, as though not cured by them, reverts to it original state" (*Against the Professors*, VI. 21-22). The effect of music is similar to that of wine or sleep, and seems only to postpone the disturbance by diverting the mind, keeping it occupied for the moment with something other than the disturbance. Nor can it be said that the study of music enables virtue to be attained more easily, for on the contrary, the pursuit of music can be shown to lead to a life of debauchery and idleness rather than a life of virtue.

Despite setting out the considerations against utility in a somewhat equipollent manner, the effort seems rather perfunctory; Sextus soon passes on to the principles of music which supposedly involve an inquiry of a more practical nature. A familiar procedure is repeated whereby the theory of music is distilled to the idea of notes, whose existence is said to depend on the existence of sound, but the existence of sound is itself in dispute as shown by the disagreement among the Dogmatists.

> For the Cyrenaic philosophers assert that only the feelings exist, and nothing else; and hence that sound, not being a feeling but productive of feelings, is not an existent. Democritus, indeed, and Plato, by destroying every sense-object, destroy therewith sound, which is held to be an object of sense. - Furthermore, if sound exists it is either corporeal or incorporeal; but it is not corporeal, as the Peripatetics demonstrate by numerous arguments; nor is it incorporeal, as the Stoics prove; therefore sound does not exist. (*Against the Professors*, VI. 53-54)

Given the ongoing disagreement about the existence of sound, and the equipollence of the considerations for existence and for non-existence, the sceptic is unable to make a determination as to whether sound exists or does not exist. In addition, numerous considerations are suggested

against the existence of rhythm and against the existence of time. Despite the various aspects of music criticized, the common purpose still remains suspension; therefore even music is still able to be accommodated within the practice of scepticism.

iii.

Sextus suggests that the instruction in an art is something like instilling a skill or craft rather than transmitting theoretical knowledge. Learning a useful practice can be understood to be similar to learning a skill, if training is a matter of apprenticeship with much of its basis in imitation and repetition. In the case of learning a medical procedure, the medical knowledge that is passed on does not need to go beyond knowing how to recognize the symptoms of a disease, knowing which treatments affect the symptoms, and knowing how to administer the treatment. The physician, like the sceptic, is guided in large part by experience, as in medicine where it is observed that a puncture of the heart is frequently the cause of death, from having observed the condition together with it the death of Dion and Theon and Socrates and many others (*Against the Professors*, V. 104). It would seem that the Greek practice of medicine at the time was divided between an emphasis on causes and an emphasis on symptoms. In so far as the medical practices confined themselves to seeking treatment by means of the appearances, the practice does not seem incompatible with scepticism. The physician is able to treat the symptoms simply by relying on experience, without having to know the particular cause of the symptoms.

Sextus distinguishes between the medical practices of the Empiricists and of the Methodists, disparaging the Empiric school of medicine for positively affirming the inapprehensibility of what is non-evident. The medical system of the Methodists is more consistent with scepticism, for the system of the Methodists

> appears to avoid rash treatment of things non-evident by arbitrary assertions as to their apprehensibility or non-apprehensibility, and following appearances derives from them what seems beneficial, in accordance with the practice of the Sceptics ... So then, just as the Sceptic, in virtue of the compulsion of the affections, is guided by thirst to drink and by hunger to food, and in like manner to other such objects, in the same way the Methodical physician is guided by the pathological affections to the corresponding remedies - by contraction to dilatation, as when one seeks refuge in heat from the contraction due to the application of cold, or by fluxion to the stoppage of it, as when persons in a hot bath, dripping with perspiration and in a relaxed condition, seek to put a stop to it and for this reason rush off into the cool air. It is plain, too, that conditions which are naturally alien compel us to take measures for their removal, seeing that even the dog when it is pricked by a thorn proceeds to remove it. And in short ... I suppose that all the facts described by the Methodic School can be classed as instances of the compulsion of the affections, whether natural or against nature. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 237-239)

The Methodic school follows the appearances and its members are guided by a natural necessity

in their responses. In the same way as there is a compulsion to drink when thirsty and to eat when hungry, the physician is compelled by the disease or affliction to act accordingly. The compulsion involves being affected by the particular symptom and then acting against it, following the appearances and utilizing the skills acquired for treatment. The compulsion is explained further by making the Methodic procedure analogous to the dog removing a thorn from its paw. The dog is compelled to remove the thorn by whatever means possible because the thorn is naturally alien. The dog does not need to reflect on whether being stuck by the thorn is good or bad, or to know any of the particular circumstances that resulted in being stuck by the thorn to be pained by it - being pained by the thorn, the dog will take measures to remove it. Similarly, the Methodic physician does not need to know whether an ailment is good or bad by nature, or to know the circumstances surrounding the ailment to act according to how it seems.

Although practicing medicine in this manner might seem to be haphazard, Sextus does not suggest that the Methodic school is an oddity; the practices of the Empiricists are not contrasted with those of the Methodists which suggests that their procedures were similar. In *On the Medical Sects: For Beginners*, Galen records that the Methodists often suggest the same prescriptions and procedures as both the Dogmatists and the Empiricists, for the reason that the same facts or appearances form the basis of both observation and of theorising. As to the differences:

> [The Methodists] say, in fact, that nothing useful as regards *indications for treatment* is to be got either from the part affected, the immediate cause, the time of life, the season or locality, nor from an investigation of the patient's strength, nature, or bodily habit. Further, they will hear nothing of *customs*, but they affirm that they derive sufficient indication for treatment from *the diseases themselves* ... Indeed, they define their teaching in its entirety as "a knowledge of *visible communities*". And in order that this definition may not seem to include all other arts (for they hold that these others, too, are sciences of visible communities), they have also added. "which follow the aim of medicine". And some of them add not "which follow", but "which harmonise with"; most combine the two and say that Methodism is a knowledge of the visible communities which follow and harmonise with the aim of medicine ... This, therefore, is the reason why they hold that they should not be called Dogmatists - they have no use, like these, for hidden causes - nor Empiricists, even though they busy themselves mainly with the phenomenal - for they differ from them on the subject of indications. Nay, even in regard to their manner of attending to the phenomenal they deny that they agree with the Empiricists; for the latter avoid hidden causes on the ground that they are *unknowable*, while the Methodists themselves do so because hidden causes are *useless*; from phenomena the Empiricists draw an observation, and the Methodists an indication. (*On the Medical Sects: For Beginners*, chapter vi.)

The importance of utility in the medical practice of the Methodists is emphasised in this account far more than in the account given by Sextus. *Nothing useful* is to be had from the surrounding circumstances as regards indications for treatment; neither the season, nor the age of the patient,

nor even the immediate cause of the ailment will provide an *indication* for the treatment.[9] The treatment will be suggested by the disease alone. Such hidden causes are avoided by the Methodists because they are *useless* for the practice of medicine, whereas the Empiricists avoid the hidden causes as well, but for the reason that they are thought to be unknowable. Despite such differences both medical practices are akin to the sceptical practice in as much as they begin with and remain with the appearances, neither choosing nor requiring to speculate about non-evident matters.

iv.

According to Sextus, the criterion of action "denotes the standard ... by conforming to which in the conduct of life we perform some actions and abstain from others ... The criterion, then, of the Sceptic School is, we say, the appearance, giving this name to what is virtually the sense presentation" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 21). In the Tenth Mode all social conventions are balanced against different conventions, which leads to the sceptical suspension about their nature. Included with laws and customs are rules of conduct, legendary beliefs, and dogmatic conceptions. Opposing each convention to every other shows that no particular convention is preferable by nature. The sceptic acts along with these persuasions without the added belief that these persuasions are good or bad, or right or wrong, by nature. These persuasions allow the sceptic to both desire and to avoid according to the particular dictates of the persuasions; to perhaps desire what seems good by custom, or perhaps to avoid what seems evil by law. Neither act commits the sceptic, either to the belief that what seems good by custom is good by nature, or to the belief that what seems evil by law is evil by nature. Acting in accordance with these persuasions is therefore not inconsistent with the suspension of the belief about things being good or evil by nature, or the lack of conviction with which they are held.[10]

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[9] The Methodists seem to have Hippocrates in mind, and the discussion of exercise:
And it is necessary, as it appears, to discern the power of the various exercises, both natural exercises and artificial, to know which of them tends to increase flesh and which to lessen it; and not only this, but also to proportion exercise to bulk of food, to the constitution of the patient, to the age of the individual, to the season of the year, to the changes of the winds, to the situation of the region in which the patient resides, and to the constitution of the year. A man must observe the risings and settings of stars, that he may know how to watch for change and excess in food, drink, wind and the whole universe, from which diseases exist among men. But even when all this is discerned, the discovery is not complete. (*Regimen*, I. ii. 20-40)

[10] A criticism by Epictetus is concerned with the possibility of scepticism being used to act against the social persuasions. "I greatly fear that a noble-spirited young man may hear these statements and be influenced by them, or, having been influenced already, may lose all the germs of the nobility which he possessed; that we may be
(continued...)

It is according to the traditions of laws and customs that the sceptic regards piety as good and impiety as evil. Like habits, these social persuasions are cooperated with so that the sceptic is not acting against them, although cooperation with these persuasions does not commit the sceptic to the belief that any particular law or custom is good by nature. In the case of religion, the sceptic undogmatically affirms that the gods exist and accords to them all that custom demands. "In conformity with his ancestral customs and the laws, [the sceptic] declares that the Gods exist, and performs everything which contributes to their worship and veneration, but so far as regards philosophic investigation, declines to commit himself rashly." (*Against the Physicists*, I. or *Adversus Mathematicos* ix., 49) The sceptic prudently accepts that gods exist and acts accordingly. When asked to defend such actions, the sceptic explains that he is acting as custom dictates, without attempting to justify the rightness of the custom. The sceptic is not concerned with justifying his beliefs because justification depends on what is non-evident. The difference is that a "[d]ogmatic conception is the acceptance of a fact which seems to be established by analogy or some form of demonstration" (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I. 147), while a defense of sceptical beliefs would be more like giving an explanation of how the beliefs were acquired. Such an explanation might appeal to lifestyle, or upbringing, or education, or simply to the norms of the community. "[I]t is the Sceptic practice not to advocate things that are believed, but in their case to be satisfied with the general presumption as a sufficient ground in itself." (*Against the Logicians*, I. or *Adversus Mathematicos* vii., 443)

The sceptic is not hampered or restricted from acting in ordinary situations since the suspension does not prevent the sceptic from choosing and acting on any particular choice. Even in extraordinary situations the sceptic will normally have sufficient resources from which to act. Against those who say that the sceptic is inconsistent "because, should he ever be subject to a tyrant and compelled to do something unspeakable, either he will not submit to the order given him but will choose a voluntary death, or else to avoid torture he will do what is commanded, ... which is the action of those who confidently hold that something to be avoided and desirable exists"; Sextus gives the following reply: "[W]hen compelled by a tyrant to commit any forbidden

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[10](...continued)
giving an adulterer grounds for brazening out his acts; that some embezzler of public funds may lay hold of a specious plea based upon these theories; that someone who neglects his own parents may gain additional affrontery from them." (*Discourses*, Book II. xx. 34-35) The criticism that scepticism may be used to further unscrupulous ends is in some ways unanswerable. In this scepticism is not alone, the same charge may be made against the Dogmatic theories as well, but although scepticism is not able to be prevented from being misused, it is not necessarily more susceptible to misuse.

act [the sceptic] will perchance choose the one course and avoid the other owing to the preconception due to his ancestral laws and customs; and as compared with the Dogmatist he will certainly endure hardship more easily because he has not, like the other, any additional beliefs beyond the actual suffering" (*Against the Ethicists* or *Adversus Mathematicos* xi., 164-166).

The criticism assumes that the sceptic is unable to act for or against the tyrant on pain of inconsistency since any choice betrays the sceptic's commitment to that choice. But the sceptic can choose to act one way or the other without the choice being made on the basis of a firmly held belief. This, however, does not make such choices groundless. To *perchance* choose either to do something unspeakable or to choose a voluntary death should not be understood as being an arbitrary decision. *Perchance* is not meant to suggest that the sceptic could choose either alternative as if there was no more inclination for one than for the other. There is almost certainly an inclination towards one alternative rather than another owing to one or the other of the social persuasions. *Perchance* qualifies the choice because the choice cannot be determined abstracted from particular circumstances; it is not as if a course of action could be determined without considering anything other than the action itself. The sceptic would act either with or against the tyrant according to custom and other relevant, determining factors. So even in extraordinary circumstances the sceptic can act in cooperation with a set of normalized persuasions.

Julia Annas finds such a situation disturbing:

> For such a response to the tyrant's command, even if it results in the right action ... is an essentially *uncritical* response. The sceptic *just does* what his intuitions tell him. He has no basis for considering alternatives, or for wondering whether this occasion might prove an exception ...We do not think of moral choice this way, because we do not think of our moral intuitions and principles this way, as just happening to be there and working themselves out one way or another while we, so to speak, look on. Whatever he or she actually does in the end, the person threatened by the tyrant will identify with his or her moral outlook and intuitions; moral motivation is seen as part of the self, not as something external to the self from which one might be detached. Here there is an immense split between scepticism and ordinary life, given which it is unimportant that the sceptic will usually come out with the same action as the ordinary person. (*Doing Without Objective Values*, 20-21)

Despite such worries, this is simply to beg the question against Sextus by assuming that this is just how things happen in ordinary life. It can as easily be said that moral intuitions and principles do happen to be there, and that they do happen to work themselves out one way or another, while we simply look on. Identifying with our moral outlooks and intuitions can be said to happen after the fact, in the course of justifying any particular choice. While the sceptic would stop short of justifying such choices and actions, they need not be understood as external to the self since the choices and actions are still dependent upon the particular social persuasions that affect and

influence the sceptic. Acting according to appearances need not be acting against ordinary life.

Living an ordinary life is not inconsistent with scepticism, nor can a scepticism that acts along with the social persuasions be considered extreme. The sceptic remains active in ordinary life, maintaining quietude with respect to matters of opinion and moderate feeling with respect to those things unavoidable. Acting, feeling, and reasoning are within the mean, the intermediate position between excess and defect, because they are accomplished according to the appearances. They are not distorted into excess by the addition of any beliefs about the goodness or badness of things by nature, nor are they restricted through self-control into defect. They are appropriate to the appearances and the four-fold regulative principles of ordinary life. The life of the sceptic is therefore a life of propriety and harmony, free from the disturbances of dogmatism...a life of natural unhindered activity.

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