οὐ μᾶλλον *and the antecedents of ancient scepticism* [1]

PHILLIP DeLACY

IN the post-Aristotelian period of ancient philosophy οὐ μᾶλλον or οὐδὲν μᾶλλον, expressing the relation, 'no more this than that', appears as a philosophical term in the Pyrrhonists, Plutarch, and the Aristotelian commentators. It is found also in Aristotle's criticisms of certain presocratic philosophers and in Plato's analysis of Heraclitus. Even earlier, Democritus employed it on more than one occasion; and it may be assigned with some plausibility to Gorgias and Nausiphanes. The meaning of οὐ μᾶλλον underwent a number of changes during this long period. Yet its more prominent uses were not unrelated, for it came to be associated with certain persistent problems in Greek thought, the history of which its use in some measure reflects.

For Democritus οὐ μᾶλλον carries no suggestion of scepticism. There is, of course, an element of paradox in his statement that being is no more real than not-being [2], but the paradox is only apparent, as Democritus means to say that atoms are no more real than void. Also Democritean is the statement, 'nothing is any more of one kind than of another'; and as this is used, according to Simplicius, as an argument for the infinite variety of atoms, it probably means that there is no limit to the differences among things.[3] Still a third use of the formula, assigned by Theophrastus (*De Sens.* 69) to Democritus, by Sextus Empiricus (*P. H.* 1. 213) to Democritus and his followers, has to do with the relativity of sense-perception; and Plutarch (*Col.* 1109 ab) implies that the Epicurean Colotes concurred in this interpretation. Moreover, Nausiphanes, who was considered a Democritean [4], is said to have held that 'ex his quae videntur esse nihil magis esse quam non esse.' [5] But Plutarch (*Col.* 1109a) emphatically denied that Democritus used οὐ μᾶλλον of sense-perception, and it is possible that he misinterpreted Colotes, who may well have been criticising the Democritean view that things are infinitely various.[6] Nausiphanes, who came under Pyrrho's influence

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented in December, 1956 before the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy. The author has profited greatly from the many helpful comments made at that meeting.

[1] Aristot. *Metaph.* A. 4 985b8: οὐδὲν μᾶλλον τὸ ὂν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἶναί φασιν Cf. Plut. *Col.* 1109a: μὴ μᾶλλον τὸ δὲν ἢ τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι.

[3] Frags. 67 A 8, 68 A 38 Diels-Kranz; cf. Zeller, I. 2⁶, pp. 1063 f.

[4] Frags 75 A 1, 4, 5 Diels-Kranz.

[5] Sen. *Epist. Mor.* 88.43; 75 B 4 Diels-Kranz.

[6] Cf. *Am. Journ. Philol.* 77 (1956) 434.

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(D. L. IX. 69), may have got the phrase from that source, and Theo-phrastus could have been alluding to a passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* which might be taken to refer ahead to Democritus, though it must also refer back to Protagoras: 'the one set is no more true than the other, but both are alike'.[1] One must conclude, therefore, that while Democritus gave some currency to the phrase he may not have associated it with the problem of knowledge.

Whether Protagoras used οὐ μᾶλλον to express the relativity of sense-perception must remain in doubt. Plutarch (*Col.* 1109a) is alone in assigning it to him, though Aristotle also used it (in the passage just cited) to describe the Protagorean view. It is possible that Plutarch had in mind either the Aristotelian passage or Plato's *Theaetetus* 182e, where the phrase, though used of Heraclitus, might easily be taken to refer also to Protagoras.[2] Presumably if Protagoras had used the formula it would have been as a double affirmation: the statement that honey is no more sweet than bitter means that honey is both sweet and bitter; while for Democritus it would have been a double negation: honey is neither sweet nor bitter.[3] In either case it would be intended as a statement about the nature of things.

But it was soon recognized that the relativity of sense-perception, when expressed in propositional form, raises certain difficulties; for if an object appears to be no more of one description than the opposite, one can hardly be said to have knowledge of it. It is just such 'unsound' perceptions, according to Plato (*Rep.* 523bc), that give rise to thought; for sense-perception reports the same thing as hard and soft, or heavy and light, or one and many, 'so that a thing appears no more one than also its opposite' (524e).

Another statement of the relativity of sense-perception brings out the contradiction even more clearly: honey no more *is* than *is not* sweet. This formulation apparently lies behind the paradox attributed to Gorgias in *MXG* 979a26-7: 'For that which is not is *not*, and that which

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[1] *Met.* Γ. 5 1009b 10-11: οὐδὲν γὰρ μᾶλλον τάδε ἢ τάδε ἀληθῆ, ἀλλ᾽ ὁμοίως Cf. Theophr. *De Sens.* 69: μηδὲν μᾶλλον ἕτερον ἑτέρου τυγχάνειν τῆς ἀληθείας. The Oxford translation of the *Metaphysics* has been used throughout.

[2] At 166c Plato puts the phrase in the mouth of Protagoras, but not as indicative of the relativity of sense-perception.

[3] Cf. E. Pappenheim, *Die Tropen der griechischen Skeptiker*, Berlin, 1885, p. 8 n. 1; Sextus, *P.H.* I. 213; II. 63.

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is, is, so that things will no more be than not be'.[1] There is some question, however, whether Gorgias actually used the phrase, as it does not appear in Sextus' version of the Gorgian argument (*A.M.* vii. 65 ff.).

In *Theaetetus* 182 e Plato uses οὐ μᾶλλον of a relation between contradictories. Socrates argues that on a Heraclitean view seeing 'has no right to be called seeing, any more than not-seeing, nor is any other perception entitled to be called perception rather than not-perception, if everything is changing in every kind of way'; and as Socrates and Theaetetus had said that perception is knowledge, 'in that case, our answer to the question, what knowledge is, did not mean knowledge any more than not-knowledge' (Cornford's translation). Here, as in the presumed Gorgian usage, οὐ μᾶλλον has become a formula of refutation, as a view which has been shown to be self-contradictory has been discredited.[2]

But Plato's concern here is perhaps less with a violation of the law of contradiction than with the loss of identity that follows on the admission of contrary or contradictory predicates: 'nothing is one thing just by itself, nor can you rightly call it by some definite name, nor even say it is of any definite sort'.[3] Things without a determinate character cannot be known (*Cratylus* 439 d-440 a), and οὐ μᾶλλον easily conveys the sense of indeterminateness. This may be seen again in *Timaeus* 49 b: 'It is hard to say, with respect to any one of these, which we ought to call really water rather than fire, or indeed which we should call by any given name rather than by all the names together or by each severally, so as to use language in a sound and trustworthy way' (Cornford's translation).

In *Met.* Γ and K οὐ μᾶλλον is once more a formula of refutation, now associated quite explicitly with the charge that certain systems are self-contradictory, that they make knowledge impossible by destroying the differences among things, and, in consequence, that they remove the grounds of action and moral choice. *Met.* Γ. 5 1009 b 10-11 has already been cited, and Alexander's commentary on *Met.* Γ interprets several other passages from this book in terms of οὐ μᾶλλον.[4] A more generalized

[1] Kerferd's translation, *Phronesis* 1 (1955) 10; see also V. Di Benedetto, "Il περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος di Gorgia e la polemica con Protagora", *Rendiconti morali Lincei*, Ser. viii, vol. x (1955) 287-307.

[2] οὐδὲν μᾶλλον is used of a rejected view also in *Theaetetus* 181 e and *Rep.* 340 b.

[3] *Theaet.* 152 d, Cornford's translation; cf. 156 e-157 a and *Rep.* 524 c.

[4] At 1007 a 20 he says that Aristotle is here giving further proofs that it is not possible to say universally that each thing no more is than is not (p. 285. 3-4 Hayduck; cf. 285. 21-25). At 1008 a 2 he formulates the position that Aristotle is refuting as 'no more man than not-man' (p. 293. 1-2), and again at 1008 a 7 he characterizes Aristotle's opponents as wanting to say of all things no more the affirmation than the negation

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statement appears in K. 5 1062a23-30: 'Further, if the affirmation is no more true than the negation, he who says 'man' will be no more right than he who says 'not-man'. It would seem also that in saying the man is not a horse one would be either more or not less right than in saying he is not a man, so that one will also be right in saying that the same person *is* a horse; for it was assumed to be possible to make opposite statements equally truly. It follows then that the same person is a man and a horse, or any other animal.'

In his refutation of Heraclitus, Aristotle speaks as if this philosopher admitted contradictory predicates not only in statements about the properties of objects but in any statements whatever. This means that he would have to admit the truth of statements contradicting his own doctrine. If an affirmation is no more true than its negation, then the affirmation that 'an affirmation is no more true than its negation' is itself no more true than its negation.[1] It follows that οὐ μᾶλλον as a universal principle is self-contradictory and hence untenable. In the refutation of Anaxagoras, Aristotle makes a similar transition from statements about objects to statements generally, and so concludes that Anaxagoras makes all predication impossible.[2] This universalization of οὐ μᾶλλον to apply even to statements about statements (and so to itself) is a prominent feature of its post-Aristotelian use.

In *Met.* K Aristotle touches on the implications of οὐ μᾶλλον for action (K.6 1063a28-35): 'Further, when the doctor orders people to take some particular food, why do they take it? In what respect is 'this is bread' truer [μᾶλλον] than 'this is not bread'? And so it would make no difference whether one ate or not. But as a matter of fact they take the

(p. 294. 1-2). On 1010b19 (p. 315. 14-18) he points out that if everything can be said to be no more one thing than its opposite, there is no οὐσία of anything. For other instances see 305.30, 312.18, 319.36-37, 320.23; I have not attempted to compile an exhaustive list.

[1] *Met.* K. 5, 1062b2-7: καθάπερ γὰρ καὶ διῃρημένων αὐτῶν οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἡ κατάφασις ἢ ἡ ἀπόφασις ἀληθεύεται, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ τοῦ συναμφοτέρου καὶ τοῦ συμπεπλεγμένου καθάπερ μιᾶς τινὸς καταφάσεως οὔσης οὐδὲν μᾶλλον <ἢ> ἡ ἀπόφασις [ἢ] τὸ ὅλον ὡς ἐν καταφάσει τιθέμενον ἀληθεύσεται.

[2] *Met.* K. 6 1063b26-35: ὅταν γὰρ ἐν παντὶ φῇ παντὸς εἶναι μοῖραν, οὐδὲν μᾶλλον εἶναί φησι γλυκὺ ἢ πικρὸν ἢ τῶν λοιπῶν ὁποιανοῦν ἐναντιώσεων, εἴπερ ἐν ἅπαντι πᾶν ὑπάρχει μὴ δυνάμει μόνον ἀλλ' ἐνεργείᾳ καὶ ἀποκεκριμένον. ὁμοίως δὲ οὐδὲ πάσας ψευδεῖς οὐδ' ἀληθεῖς τὰς φάσεις δυνατὸν εἶναι, δι' ἄλλα τε πολλὰ τῶν συναχθέντων ἂν δυσχερῶν διὰ ταύτην τὴν θέσιν, καὶ διότι ψευδῶν μὲν οὐσῶν πασῶν οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτό τις φάσκων ἀληθεύσει, ἀληθῶν δὲ ψευδεῖς εἶναι πάσας λέγων οὐ ψεύσεται. Cf. *Met.* A. 8 989b6-12; Γ.4 1007b25-26; Γ.7 1012a24-28.

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food which is ordered, assuming that they know the truth about it and that it is bread. Yet they should not, if there were no fixed constant nature in sensible things, but all natures moved and flowed for ever'. And in Γ.4 1008b14-20 Aristotle asks, 'For why does a man walk to Megara and not stay at home, when he thinks he ought to be walking there? Why does he not walk early some morning into a well or over a precipice, if one happens to be in his way? Why do we observe him guarding against this, evidently because he does not think that falling in is alike good and not good? Evidently, then, he judges one thing to be better and another worse. And if this is so, he must also judge one thing to be a man and another to be not-a-man, one thing to be sweet and another to be not-sweet'. We hardly need Alexander to tell us (p.299. 13-15, Hayduck) that the supposition that not falling in is good, and falling in is bad, and that the two are not alike but one is better and the other worse, is incompatible with the position that the thing is 'no more this way than not this way' (οὐδὲν μᾶλλον οὕτως ἢ οὐχ οὕτως). A few lines later, commenting on Aristotle's statement that 'all men make unqualified judgements, if not about all things, still about what is better and worse' (1008b26-7), Alexander again uses the formula: 'He says that all who say of everything, οὐδὲν μᾶλλον, and who assert that both of two contradictories are true, nevertheless make unqualified judgements in their suppositions, if not about all things, at least about the better and worse, expedient and inexpedient, and in general, matters that have to do with action' (p. 299.30-33 Hayduck). Theophrastus' refutation of the Democritean οὐ μᾶλλον (De Sens. 69-70) also rests in part on an appeal to ethical judgements.

Finally, in Aristotle's words, 'There is a more and a less in the nature of things' (Met. Γ.4 1008b32-33); this means, according to Alexander (p. 301.9-10 Hayduck), that we cannot say of all things indiscriminately, 'no more this than that'.

Thus for Aristotle and his school οὐ μᾶλλον was linked with the untenable position that two contradictory or otherwise incompatible propositions may both be true, that there is no essential nature in things, that good and bad, better and worse, have no basis in nature – a position to which presocratics and sophists, whether intentionally or not, came dangerously close to committing themselves. Of course, as a common Greek phrase, οὐ μᾶλλον is not limited to these contexts; one fairly frequent philosophical usage is simply to indicate that a philosopher has failed to make his case, as opposed to some alternative view.[1] Perhaps

[1] Cf. Met. A.8 990a15; A.9 991a3; B.2 996b33; Theophr. De Sens. 13,33.

Aristotle did not yet think of οὐ μᾶλλον as a technical term; that Alexander did so is evident from his use of it with the article, τὸ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον (e.g. p. 285. 3 Hayduck).

The philosophical issues associated with οὐ μᾶλλον continued to be of central importance in the post-Aristotelian period, and the several Hellenistic schools may in large part be differentiated in terms of their method of handling the οὐ μᾶλλον predicament. They appear to have owed much to Aristotle's formulation.

In early Pyrrhonism οὐ μᾶλλον had a prominent place. Pyrrho gave it a universal application, with complete suspension of judgement (ἐποχή) as its consequence. It is said that he lacked even a basis for action and, like Aristotle's adversary, was in danger of falling over precipices.[1] Timon, his successor, explained οὐδὲν μᾶλλον as 'to determine nothing, but to withhold assent' (D.L. IX. 76); and it is possible that the phrase 'to determine nothing' echoes the indeterminate (ἀόριστον) which Aristotle associated with those who fail to choose between opposites and so have no principle of individuation (*Met.* Γ. 4 1007 b 26-29). Timon was also said to have maintained the doctrine of ἀφασία, the avoidance of assertion;[2] compare Aristotle's 'for he says nothing' of the person who admits contradictories to be true.[3] Other aspects of Pyrrhonism may best be discussed in connection with the later Pyrrhonism of Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus, but first it is necessary to trace our problem through the other Hellenistic schools.

The avoidance of precipices (cf. Lucr. IV. 509) is a basic consideration in Epicureanism. If precipices are to be avoided, that is, if life is to be lived at all, there must be distinctions among things, and these distinctions must be knowable. But the things with which action deals are particulars, and these are known by sense-perception; hence the Epicurean insistence that sense-perception is accurate and reliable. And if things are to have distinct natures, their qualitative differences must rest on some firm foundation. Although not properties of individual atoms, such qualities as sweet and bitter are properties of combinations of atoms – here the Epicureans depart from Democritus – and thus provide an objective ground for practical judgements. Qualities cannot be ultimate, because they are unstable and tend to change into one another. Nor would the atoms produce an orderly universe if their

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[1] D.L. IX. 61-62. It is chronologically possible that Pyrrho, as a younger contemporary, influenced Aristotle's use of the phrase.
[2] Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* XIV. 18.4.
[3] *Met.* Γ. 4 1008 a 31; cf. K. 6 1063 b 10-11.

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possible combinations were infinitely various. The Epicurean limitation both of the kinds of atoms and of their possible combinations appears therefore as a deliberate attempt to escape the οὐ μᾶλλον predicament.

The phrase itself occurs infrequently in Epicurean texts, and only in the refutation of rival philosophers, for example in Lucretius' rejection of the four qualitative elements on the ground that in a continual process of qualitative change it is impossible to say what is the element of what: 'how can they be called the first-beginnings of things any more than things the first-beginnings of them?' (1.765-6, Bailey's translation). Colotes, one of Epicurus' early followers, charged that Democritus 'confounded life' by saying that 'each thing is no more of one kind than of another' (Plut. *Col.* 1108f); and indeed the whole of Colotes' attack on the philosophers is centered on the demands of everyday life. Parmenides destroyed the real differences among things; Empedocles ruled out generation; Socrates and the sceptics, by calling into question the validity of sense-perception, were left with no means of distinguishing food from fodder, or the wall from the door. Colotes' argument is thus an extravagant elaboration of certain aspects of the Aristotelian οὐ μᾶλλον and testifies to the Epicureans' desire to avoid its pitfalls.

But the Epicureans found themselves vulnerable to charges of οὐ μᾶλλον from other quarters. Stoic logicians attacked Epicurean inference from similar to similar by asking why inference holds between some sets of similars more than others (Philod. *Sign.*, col. v. 8-36); Epictetus (*Diss.* II. 20. 26) charged that the Epicurean neglect of moral principles makes slavery no more shameful than honorable, and freedom no more honorable than shameful; and Plutarch pointed out that the Epicurean insistence on the accuracy of sense-perception involves them in the old Protagorean predicament (*Col.* 1109a-1110e; cf. *Mor.* 651f-653b and Sextus, *A.M.* VII. 369) and reduces all things to ἀφασία (*Col.* 1123c). That the Epicureans were not unaware of the difficulties of their position is seen in Lucretius' remarkable statement (IV. 500-506) that it is better to give faulty explanations of optical illusions than to shake the foundation on which life and safety rest.

The Stoics, like the Epicureans, escaped some of the difficulties of οὐ μᾶλλον, only to fall into others. In the Stoic universe *being* (ὄν) is equated with *body* (σῶμα), which is characterized by power to act or be acted upon. The specific character of individual bodies is determined largely or perhaps entirely by their relation to other bodies, and all parts of the universe are related to each other and to the whole. Knowledge is

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secured through a special kind of appearance, the φαντασία καταληπτική, which is itself relational; it could not appear as it does if its object were not such as the appearance shows it to be.

Stoicism thus escaped a Protagorean relativity without recourse to a Platonic dualism; it provides a principle of individuation and the discernment of differences that practical judgements require.[1] Its weakness lies in the uniqueness that is required if every knowable object is to present to us its own identifiable appearance. How is it possible, the Academic Sceptics asked, to perceive the differences between eggs, for example, or between identical twins, and how can we be sure that there is not for every true appearance a false appearance indistinguishable from it?[2] Nor is there any subjective test by which true appearances may be distinguished from false; those that are true receive no more credence than those that are only thought to be true (Cic. Luc. 90). The Academics may also have asked how the Stoics could maintain the individual identity of things in the face of their doctrine of mixture (κρᾶσις).[3]

In self-defense the Stoics appealed to the practical situation. The New Academy 'throws everything into confusion' (Plut. Mor. 1077c) by questioning the power to differentiate; and however difficult it may be to explain perception, there can be no doubt, says Epictetus (Diss. 1.27.17-19), 'that you and I are not the same person'. 'Never, when I wish to eat something, do I carry the morsel of food there, but here; never, when I want bread, do I take chaff, but I always go to the bread like an arrow to its mark. And you who deny perception, do you do otherwise? Who of you goes to the mill-house, meaning to go to the bath?'[4] Scepticism, in short, is a Medusa that turns men to stone.[5]

If it was difficult for the Epicureans and Stoics to explain how they detected the μᾶλλον in things, it was in a way more difficult to hold that this μᾶλλον does not exist or cannot be known; for, as Aristotle had shown, οὐ μᾶλλον, when raised to the status of a universal principle,

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[1] Cf. Sextus, A.M. VII. 252. There is, to be sure, an area of 'indifferents' in ethics, where presumably discrimination is not required, e.g. in selecting one of two identical coins. Our inclination is to select one, but is 'no more toward this than toward that'. Cf. Sextus, P.H. III. 177; Plut. Mor. 1045ef.

[2] Cic. Luc. 56-58; Sextus, A.M. VII. 409-410.

[3] Plut. Mor. 1077e-1078e. Compare Aristotle's criticism of Anaxagoras. The Stoic category of "relative disposition" (πρός τί πως ἔχον) also results in οὐ μᾶλλον: A.M. XI. 118.

[4] Cf. II. 20. 28-31, where the τί μᾶλλον formula occurs.

[5] Plut. Mor. 1122a; Epict. Diss. I. 5. 2.

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sooner or later removes itself along with everything else and so becomes untenable.

Arcesilaus, the first of the Academic Sceptics, apparently paid little attention to this problem. His aim was to find for every argument an opposing argument of equal weight, and such positive views as are assigned to him may all be explained as developed merely to counter Stoicism. The 'dogma' ascribed to the Academy by Antiochus (Cic. *Luc.* 29), A. Gellius (XI. 5. 8) and Sextus Empiricus (*P.H.* 1. 226), that 'nothing is comprehensible', is no more than the contradictory to the Stoic view that some things are comprehensible. The analysis of action preserved by Plutarch in the reply to Colotes (1122b-d), that appearances give rise to impulses, and impulses to action, is a demonstration that the Stoic psychology makes possible action without assent. Suspense of judgement is itself defended as a consequence of the Stoic view that the wise man will not have opinions (Cic. *Luc.* 77); and perhaps the appeal to the εὔλογον as a guide in practical matters is intended to show that it is possible to act in accordance with reason without commitment.[1]

Carneades, like Arcesilaus, did not regard scepticism as a position, as he insisted that even the statement 'nothing can be comprehended' cannot be comprehended (Cic. *Luc.* 28), and he continued the device of constructing for every argument an opposing argument of equal weight. Against Stoicism he held that there is no appearance which might not be false (*Luc.* 27), and presumably he is to be counted among those who 'cry out that those things [which they themselves defend] are no more true than false' (*Luc.* 43). There was a dispute among Carneades' followers whether or not he held that the wise man would have opinions. Cicero, I think rightly, agrees with Clitomachus that Carneades must have maintained this for the sake of argument (*Luc.* 78, cf. 59), doubtless against the Stoic view that the wise man never errs.

Apart from *Luc.* 43 Cicero's accounts of Academic Scepticism attest the use of οὐ μᾶλλον only in restricted contexts[2]; two other passages, however, assign it specifically to the Academy. One is from Numenius' account of Carneades (Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* XIV. 8. 7): 'Having taken on one side something false but like the truth, and on the other a like thing apprehended by the φαντασία καταληπτική, and having balanced them against each other, he granted neither the true nor the false, or no more

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[1] Sextus, *A.M.* VII. 158. Cf. Epictetus' description of ethical situations as hypotheses which in themselves we do not admit to be either good or bad, but the consequences of which we work out, as of mathematical problems, and act accordingly; *Diss.* 1. 25. 7-13.
[2] E.g. *Luc.* 96, 128; *Nat. Deor.* III. 36; *Div.* II. 9, 37, 62, 65, 67, 106, 126.

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the one than the other – or rather, that which rested on the probable'.[1]
The second is a much emended passage from Hippolytus, *Haer.* 1.23.3:
'Some followers of the Academy say that one should make no assertion
at all about things, but only construct arguments about them, then let
them be. Others added οὐ μᾶλλον, saying that fire is no more fire than
something else. Indeed they did not assert of anything *what it is*, but that
it is *of such a sort*'.[2] If, as seems possible, this latter passage ultimately
derives in part from *Timaeus* 49b-e, it may reflect some authentic
Academic tradition.

In the ethical sphere Carneades avoided the overthrow of life (*vitae
eversio*, *Luc.* 99) by his doctrine of the πιθανόν, which Cicero translated
probabile or *veri simile* (*Luc.* 32, with Reid's note). It does not carry
with it the assent to the truth of anything, as the 'probable' may be, and
often is, false; it means merely that under the proper circumstances
certain appearances receive our approval and provide a basis for action
(*Luc.* 104). Nevertheless, this doctrine in a sense reintroduces a μᾶλλον
into things (one thing is more persuasive than its opposite) and is un-
acceptable to Sextus (*P.H.* 1.226), to whom even a statement of
preference is a departure from scepticism (*P.H.* 1.223). So Aristotle
(*Met.* Γ.4 1008b31-1009a5) had said that even a 'more true', that is,
the recognition that one proposition is closer to the truth than another,
eliminates οὐ μᾶλλον.

The later Pyrrhonists accepted οὐ μᾶλλον as one of their characteristic
formulas (*P.H.* 1.187; Photius, *Bibl.* 169b29-30). It appears in two of
the ten tropes (D.L. IX. 81-82; cf. *A.M.* VIII. 54), but even more promi-
nently in the juxtaposition of conflicting dogmas, for example (*A.M.*
IX. 50): 'some say that there is a god, some that there is not, some [i.e.,
the Pyrrhonists, cf. 59] that there no more is than is not'; or again
(*A.M.* X.45), 'some say that motion exists, some that it does not, some
[i.e., the Pyrrhonists, cf. 49] that it no more exists than not'. Other
examples include the indicative sign (*A.M.* VIII, 201), proof (*A.M.*

[1] παραλαβὼν γὰρ ἀληθεῖ μὲν ὅμοιον ψεῦδος, καταληπτικῇ δὲ φαντασίᾳ καταληπτὸν ὅμοιον
καὶ ἀγαγὼν εἰς τὰς ἴσας, οὐκ εἴασεν αὐτὸ τὸ ἀληθὲς εἶναι οὔτε τὸ ψεῦδος, ἢ οὐ μᾶλλον τὸ
ἕτερον τοῦ ἑτέρου ἢ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τοῦ πιθανοῦ. The concluding clause indicates that
Numenius found the Carneadean theory of probability inconsistent with the principle of
οὐ μᾶλλον.
[2] I follow Wendland's text: οἱ μὲν οὖν τῶν Ἀκαδημαϊκῶν λέγουσιν μὴ δεῖν τὴν ἀρχὴν
περὶ μηδενὸς ἀποφαίνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἁπλῶς ἐπιχειρήσαντας ἐᾶν. οἱ δὲ τὸ <οὐ> μᾶλλον προσέ-
θεσαν, λέγοντες οὐ μᾶλλον τὸ πῦρ <πῦρ> εἶναι ἢ ἄλλο τι. οὐ μέντοι ἀπεφήναντο αὐτὸ <τὸ> τί
ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ τοιόνδε. It is true that Hippolytus draws no distinction between Aca-
demic and Pyrrhonic scepticism.

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VIII. 3 28), cause and effect (*A.M.* IX. 228-29), wealth as a good (*A.M.* XI. 147), and the choice among authorities in philosophy (*A.M.* VII. 3 28).[1]

As the Pyrrhonists thought of their scepticism as a *position*, it was necessary for them to find an answer to the logical difficulties inherent in οὐ μᾶλλον. For one thing, the statement that one of two contradictories is no more true than the other may be taken either affirmatively (both are true) or negatively (both are false); but neither alternative is tenable, as Aristotle had pointed out that of any two contradictories one must be true and the other false (*Met.* Γ. 8 1012 b 10-13). Moreover, either alternative would commit the sceptic to the truth or falsity of something. Diogenes Laertius (IX. 75) says that the Pyrrhonists, recognizing that οὐ μᾶλλον could be taken in either an affirmative or a negative sense, chose to use it negatively; perhaps the formulation preserved by Eusebius (*Praep. Ev.* XIV. 18. 3) is more accurate: 'saying of each thing that it no more *is* than *is not*, or *both is and is not*, or *neither is nor is not*'. Here I take the concluding compounds to be parallel to *is not*, giving the formulations, 'each thing no more *is* than *both is and is not*', and 'each thing no more *is* than *neither is nor is not*'. Compare the truncated formula in A. Gellius (XI. 5. 4): 'this is no more this way than that way or neither way'.

A second logical difficulty had been pointed out by Aristotle: if an affirmation is no more true than its negation, then the affirmation, 'an affirmation is no more true than its negation', is itself no more true than its negation. Hence οὐ μᾶλλον destroys its own validity.[2] Carneades, similarly, had held that the statement, 'nothing can be comprehended', cannot be comprehended; and of course the opponents of scepticism had seized on the point:

> Denique nil sciri siquis putat, id quoque nescit
> an sciri possit, quoniam nil scire fatetur.[3]

Compare also Photius, *Bibl.* 170 a 11-12: 'Universally the Pyrrhonist determines nothing, not even the very fact that he determines nothing'[4]; and the paradox in Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* XIV. 18. 7: 'Furthermore, if all

[1] This last is used against the Pyrrhonists in Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* XIV. 18. 14, 17.

[2] Cf. *Met.* Γ. 8 1012 b 14 f.: αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοὺς ἀναιρεῖν. The idea is doubtless older than Aristotle; cf. Sen. *Epist. Mor.* 88. 43: Protagoras ait de omni re in utramque partem disputari posse ex aequo et de hac ipsa, an omnis res in utramque partem disputabilis sit.

[3] Lucr. IV. 469-70; cf. D.L. IX. 102. The idea was earlier expressed by Metrodorus of Chios, frags. 70 A 25, B 1 Diels-Kranz.

[4] καθόλου γὰρ οὐδὲν ὁ Πυρρώνιος ὁρίζει, ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι οὐδὲν διορίζεται. Cf. D.L. IX. 104; Gellius XI. 5. 8.

things are indifferent and one should therefore hold no opinions, these things too are indifferent – I mean, being indifferent or not, and holding opinions or not. For why are they any more of this kind than not? Or, as Timon says, why 'yes', and why 'no', and why the very question, 'why?'?[1]

That οὐδὲν μᾶλλον 'includes itself' is recognized by Sextus (P.H. 1.14); it thus eliminates itself and does not constitute a tenable position.[2] And yet (Photius, Bibl. 169b36-170a38) the Pyrrhonists claim to avoid the self-contradiction into which the Academic Sceptics fall when they hold that nothing is comprehensible. They can make good this claim only by giving to οὐ μᾶλλον and the other formulas of scepticism some special status differentiating them from the dogmas they attack. Having accepted the Aristotelian formulation, they were not able to do this simply by stating that οὐ μᾶλλον is not a member of the class of propositions to which it refers. Such a solution (for the statement, 'nothing can be comprehended') had apparently been suggested by the Stoic Antipater (Cic. Luc. 28), but had been rejected by the Academic Sceptics as impairing the universality of their scepticism. Instead, the Pyrrhonists give a special meaning to οὐ μᾶλλον, or even transform it into another kind of sentence. It is not assertive. It makes neither an affirmation nor a denial, but merely reports the speaker's failure to assent to one alternative rather than the other. As Timon had said, it means 'to determine nothing, but to withhold assent' (D.L. IX. 76). Elsewhere Diogenes Laertius describes it as a 'confession' (ἐξομολόγησις, IX. 104), and Sextus terms it 'interrogative'.[3] Again, one may say that οὐ μᾶλλον and the other formulas give information about the sceptic; they report a πάθος (P.H. 1.190), revealing the way in which things appear to the sceptic at the time he utters them (P.H. 1.191-93, 197). Hence they may be called narrative or descriptive (cf. P.H. 1.15, 197, 200). Thus understood, οὐ μᾶλλον and the other formulas are no longer self-contradictory.

Having thus disposed of the logical difficulties of οὐ μᾶλλον, the Pyrrhonist can now accept a Protagorean relativism without falling into the Protagorean contradictions. He can agree with Aristotle in rejecting

[1] ἔτι γε μὴν οἱ ἐπ' ἴσης ἐστὶν ἀδιάφορα πάντα καὶ διὰ τοῦτο χρὴ μηδὲν δοξάζειν, οὐκ ἂν οὐδὲ ταῦτα διαφέροι· λέγω δὲ τὸ διαφέρειν ἢ μὴ διαφέρειν, καὶ τὸ δοξάζειν ἢ μὴ δοξάζειν. τί γὰρ μᾶλλον τοιαῦτα ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν; ἤ, ὥς φησι Τίμων, διὰ τί ναὶ καὶ διὰ τί οὔ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ διὰ τί διὰ τί;

[2] D.L. IX. 76: ἀναιροῦσι δ' οἱ σκεπτικοὶ καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν οὐδὲν μᾶλλον φωνήν· ὡς γὰρ οὐ μᾶλλόν ἐστι πρόνοια ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον οὐ μᾶλλόν ἐστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστι. Cf. P.H. 1.206; Euseb. Praep. Ev. XIV. 18. 21.

[3] A.M. 1.315 (πυσματική). Cf. the alternate formula, τί μᾶλλον; (P.H. 1.189).

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the view that all appearances are false or that all are true (*A.M.* VIII. 55) yet agree with Protagoras that all is relative [1] and can appropriate as 'tropes' the considerations that were presumed to have led Protagoras and Democritus to their mistaken views. He can further agree with Aristotle that this relativism destroys individuation, proof, and meaningful assertion. 'No form, no words, no object of taste, smell, or touch, no other object of perception has any distinctive character' [2]; and terms used by the dogmatists, such as 'proof' (*A.M.* VIII. 327), 'definition' (*P.H.* II. 212), and 'genus' (*P.H.* II. 219-227), have no precise meaning.

Appearance, not reality, is for the Pyrrhonist the proper locus of human thought and action. With the Academic Sceptics (Cic. *Luc.* 103; Plut. *Col.* 1118 ab) he protests that he does not deny to appearances their apparent qualities (*P.H.* I. 19-20, 22; D.L. IX. 103-106), and he maintains that observation and memory give to these appearances a kind of order. It is as if he accepted the lower regions of Plato's cave as the true picture of human life and decided to make the most of it. Necessary relations between things, as expressed by indicative signs, give way to observed and remembered relations, or admonitive signs (*P.H.* II. 100, 102; *A.M.* VIII. 152, 156-158), and proofs give way to reminders (ὑπόμνησις is used as a substitute for ἀπόδειξις in *A.M.* VIII. 444; X. 15, 85; *P.H.* II. 130, 206; III. 20). Words regain their meanings as signifying those appearances with which we agree to associate them (*A.M.* VIII. 202, 289), and even arts and sciences become possible (cf. *A.M.* I. 49; V. 2). So life is not overthrown (*A.M.* VIII. 157).

The problem of action thus finds its solution on the phenomenal level. Some of our activities come to us naturally, as the satisfaction of hunger or the act of perceiving. Others are in pursuance of empirical arts and sciences. In the strictly ethical sphere nothing is by nature more to be desired than to be avoided (*A.M.* XI. 118; cf. D.L. IX. 101); we therefore follow human laws and customs without commitment, that we may not be inactive.[3]

Whatever one may think of the adequacy of the Pyrrhonic analysis, it seems safe to conclude that the terms of the problem which they were attempting to solve were in large part dictated by Aristotle and his predecessors.

Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.

[1] Cf. Aristot. *Met.* Γ. 6 1011 a 17; Sextus, *P.H.* I. 216; Gellius XI. 5. 7; and the anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus*, col. 63. 1-4.

[2] Comm. on *Theaet.*, col. 63. 6-11; cf. the Pyrrhonic ἀφασία: *P.H.* I. 192-93.

[3] *P.H.* I. 23-24, 231, 237-38; D.L. IX. 61. See also the reply to this position in Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* XIV. 18. 20.