DOUBT AND DOGMATISM

Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology

Edited by

MALCOLM SCHOFIELD
MYLES BURNYEAT
JONATHAN BARNES

CLARENDON PRESS, OXFORD

This book has been printed digitally and produced in a standard specification in order to ensure its continuing availability

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Bangkok Buenos Aires Cape Town Chennai
Dar es Salaam Delhi Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi Kolkata
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi
São Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto

with an associated company in Berlin

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

Reprinted 2002

ISBN 0-19-824601-3

CAN THE SCEPTIC LIVE HIS SCEPTICISM?

M. F. Burnyeat

HUME'S CHALLENGE

A Stoic or Epicurean displays principles, which may not only be durable, but which have an effect on conduct and behaviour. But a Pyrrhonian cannot expect, that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind: or if it had, that its influence would be beneficial to society. On the contrary, he must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence. It is true; so fatal an event is very little to be dreaded. Nature is always too strong for principle. And though a Pyrrhonian may throw himself or others into a momentary amazement and confusion by his profound reasonings; the first and most trivial event in life will put to flight all his doubts and scruples, and leave him the same, in every point of action and speculation, with the philosophers of every other sect, or with those who never concerned themselves in any philosophical researches. When he awakes from his dream, he will be the first to join in the laugh against himself, and to confess, that all his objections are mere amusement, and can have no other tendency than to show the whimsical condition of mankind, who must act and reason and believe; though they are not able, by their most diligent enquiry, to satisfy themselves concerning the foundation of these operations, or to remove the objections, which may be raised against them (David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, § XII, 128).[1]

I begin with Hume, both in deference to the vital influence of Pyrrhonian scepticism on modern thought, following the rediscovery and publication of the works of Sextus Empiricus in

[1] Cited from the third edition of Selby-Bigge's edition, with text revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975). One of Nidditch's revisions is restoring the word 'only' to the first sentence of the quoted passage.

the sixteenth century,[2] and because Hume is so clear on the philosophical issues I wish to discuss in connection with Sextus Empiricus. Pyrrhonism is the only serious attempt in Western thought to carry scepticism to its furthest limits and to live by the result, and the question whether this is possible, or even notionally coherent, was keenly disputed in ancient times and had been a major focus of renewed debate for some two hundred years before Hume wrote. My purpose is to return to those old controversies from the perspective of a modern scholarly understanding of Sextus Empiricus.

The background to the passage I have quoted is Hume's well-known contention that our nature constrains us to make inferences and to hold beliefs which cannot be rationally defended against sceptical objections He has particularly in mind the propensity for belief in external bodies and for causal inference, but not only these. And he has a particular purpose in showing them to be rationally indefensible. Since exposure to the sceptical objections does not stop us indulging in belief and inference, it does not appear that we make the inferences and hold the beliefs on the strength of the reasons whose inadequacy is shown up by the sceptical arguments; for when a belief or a practice is genuinely based on reasons, it is given up if those reasons are invalidated. Since we do not give up the inferences and the beliefs in the face of overwhelming sceptical objections, there must be other factors at work in our nature than reason—notably custom and imagination—and it is to these, rather than to man's much-vaunted rationality, that the beliefs and the inferences are due.[3] In the passage quoted Hume's claim is a double one: first, that what the sceptic invalidates when his arguments are successful, and hence what he would take from us if such arguments could have a 'constant influence on the mind', is nothing less than reason and belief; second, that what makes it impossible to sustain a radical scepticism in the ordinary business of life is that

[2] The exciting story of this influence has been pursued through the ins and outs of religious and philosophical controversy in a series of studies by Richard H. Popkin. See, in particular, *The History of Scepticism, from Erasmus to Descartes* (revised edn., New York, Evanston and London, 1968); 'David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and His Critique of Pyrrhonism', *Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1951), 385–407; 'David Hume and the Pyrrhonian Controversy', *Review of Metaphysics* 6 (1952/3), 65–81.

[3] On the role and importance of this argument within Hume's general programme for a naturalistic science of man, see Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London, Henley, and Boston, 1977), esp. Ch. 1.

'mankind . . . must act and reason and believe'. A brief comment on each of these claims in turn will give us a philosophical context in which to consider what Sextus Empiricus has to say in defence and advocacy of his Pyrrhonist ideal.

All too often in contemporary discussion the target of the sceptic is taken to be knowledge rather than belief. Sceptical arguments are used to raise questions about the adequacy of the grounds on which we ordinarily claim to know about the external world, about other minds, and so on, but in truth there are few interesting problems got at by this means which are not problems for reasonable belief as well as for knowledge. It is not much of an oversimplification to say that the more serious the inadequacy exposed in the grounds for a knowledge-claim, the less reasonable it becomes to base belief on such grounds. To take a well-worn, traditional example, if the evidence of our senses is really shown to be unreliable and the inferences we ordinarily base on this evidence are unwarranted, the correct moral to draw is not merely that we should not claim to know things on these grounds but that we should not believe them either. Further, in the normal case, that which we think we should not believe we do not believe: it takes rather special circumstances to make intelligible the idea that a man could maintain a belief in the face of a clear realization that it is unfounded. If scepticism is convincing, we ought to be convinced, and that ought to have a radical effect on the structure of our thought.

It is very clear that Hume appreciated this. He presses the Pyrrhonist not on the matter of knowledge-claims, which are easily given up, but on the question whether he can stop holding the beliefs which his arguments show to be unreasonable. Sextus appreciated the point also. The objection that a man cannot live without belief was familiar, indeed much older than the Pyrrhonist movement, since it goes right back to the time when Arcesilaus in the Academy first urged *epochē* about everything.[4] Accordingly,

[4] Witness the title of the polemical tract by Arcesilaus' contemporary, the Epicurean Colotes, 'On the fact that the doctrines of the other philosophers make it impossible to live' (Plu. *Col.* 1107 d, 1108 d). The section dealing with Arcesilaus borrowed the Stoic argument that total *epochē* must result in total inaction (ibid. 1122 ab)—essentially, Hume's charge of total lethargy. For the controversy around this issue in the period of Academic scepticism, see the references and discussion in Striker, Chapter 3 below. Subsequently, the Pyrrhonist *epochē* encountered similar criticism: (1) Aristocles *apud* Eus. *PE* XIV 18, 23–4 argues that judgement, hence

Sextus defends exactly the proposition Hume challenged the Pyrrhonist to defend, the proposition that he should, can, and does give up his beliefs in response to the sceptical arguments; and out of this continuing resignation of belief he proposes to make a way of life. Likewise with the Pyrrhonist's abandonment of reason: that too, according to Sextus, is not only desirable but practicable, subject to the complication that the abandonment of reason is itself the result of argument, i.e. of the exercise of reason. Consequently—and here I come to my second point of comment—Hume has no right to assume without argument that it is impossible to live without reason and belief. No doubt it seems an obvious impossibility, but Sextus claims otherwise, and he purports to describe a life which would substantiate his claim. That description ought to be examined in detail before we concede Hume's dogmatic claim that the Pyrrhonist cannot live his scepticism.[5] We ought to try to discover what the life without belief is really meant to be.

BELIEF, TRUTH, AND REAL EXISTENCE

We may begin, as the sceptic himself begins, with the arguments. *Skepsis* means enquiry, examination, and Pyrrhonian scepticism is in the first instance a highly developed practice of argumentative enquiry, formalized according to a number of modes or patterns of argument. The Ten Modes of Aenesidemus (*PH* I 36 ff., DL IX 79 ff.) and the Five of Agrippa (*PH* I 164–77, DL IX 88–9) are the most conspicuous of the patterns, but there are others besides, all of which recur with quite remarkable regularity on page after page of the sceptic literature, and always with the same result: *epochē*, suspension of judgement and belief. These patterns of argument, with this outcome, constitute the essence of scepticism (*skepsis*, enquiry) as that is defined by Sextus Empiricus in the

belief, is inseparably bound up with the use of the senses and other mental faculties; (2) Galen, *De dignosc. puls.* VIII 781, 16–783, 5 K=Deichgräber [10], frag. 74, p. 133, 19–p. 134, 6, asks scoffingly whether the Pyrrhonist expects us to stay in bed when the sun is up for lack of certainty about whether it is day or night, or to sit on board our ship when everyone else is disembarking, wondering whether what appears to be land really is land; (3) Sextus has the lethargy criticism in view at *M* XI 162–3.

[5] I call it dogmatic because Hume offers no argument to support his claim against the alternative, Pyrrhonist account of life and action, available in Sextus or in modern writers like Montaigne.

Outlines of Pyrrhonism; it is, he states, 'a capacity for bringing into opposition, in any way whatever, things that appear and things that are thought, so that, owing to the equal strength of the opposed items and rival claims, we come first to suspend judgement and after that to *ataraxia* (tranquillity, freedom from disturbance)' (*PH* I 8; cp. 31–4). The definition delineates a journey which the sceptic makes over and over again from an opposition or conflict of opinions to *epochē* and *ataraxia*.

The journey begins when he is investigating some question or field of enquiry and finds that opinions conflict as to where the truth lies. The hope of the investigation, at least in the early stages of his quest for enlightenment, is that he will attain *ataraxia* if only he can discover the rights and wrongs of the matter and give his assent to the truth (*PH* I 12, 26–9, *M* I 6). His difficulty is that, as sceptics through the ages have always found, in any matter things appear differently to different people according to one or another of a variety of circumstances, all catalogued in great detail by the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus. We are to understand, and sometimes it is explicitly stated (e.g. *M* VII 392, VIII 18, IX 192, XI 74), that conflicting appearances cannot be equally true, equally real. Hence he needs a criterion of truth, to determine which he should accept. But the sceptic then argues, often at some length, that there is no intellectually satisfactory criterion we can trust and use—this is the real backbone of the discussion, corresponding to a modern sceptic's attempt to show we have no adequate way of telling when things really are as they appear to be, and hence no adequate insurance against mistaken judgements. Assuming the point proved, the sceptic is left with the conflicting appearances and the conflicting opinions based upon them, unable to find any reason for preferring one to another and therefore bound to treat all as of equal strength and equally worthy (or unworthy) of acceptance. But he cannot accept them all, because they conflict. Hence, if he can neither accept them all (because they conflict) nor make a choice between them (for lack of a criterion), he cannot accept any. That is the standard outcome of the sceptic discovery of the equal strength (*isostheneia*) of opposed assertions. So far as truth is concerned, we must suspend judgement. And when the sceptic does suspend judgement, *ataraxia* follows—the tranquillity he sought comes to him, as if by chance, once he stops actively trying to get it; just

as the painter Apelles only achieved the effect of a horse's foam when he gave up and flung his sponge at the painting (*PH* I 26–9).

All this is compressed into Sextus' definition of scepticism. The sequence is: conflict—undecidability—equal strength—*epochē*, and finally *ataraxia*. The arguments bring about *epochē*, suspension of judgement and belief, and this, it seems, effects a fundamental change in the character of a man's thinking and thereby in his practical life. Henceforth he lives *adoxastōs*, without belief, enjoying, in consequence, that tranquillity of mind (*ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance) which is the sceptic spelling of happiness (*eudaimonia*).[6] But note: the conflict of opinions is inconsistency, the impossiblity of being true together (cf. *M* VII 392); the undecidability of the conflict is the impossibility of deciding which opinion is true; the equal strength of conflicting opinions means they are all equally worthy (or unworthy) of acceptance as true; *epochē* is a state in which one refrains from affirming or denying that any one of them is true; even *ataraxia* is among other things a matter of not worrying about truth and falsity any more. All these notions depend on the concept of truth; no stage of the sequence would make sense without it. And it is a fact of central importance that truth, in the sceptic's vocabulary, is closely tied to real existence as contrasted with appearance.[7]

When the sceptic doubts that anything is true (*PH* II 88 ff., *M* VIII 17 ff.), he has exclusively in view claims as to real existence. Statements which merely record how things appear are not in question—they are not called true or false—only statements which say that things are thus and so in reality. In the controversy between the sceptic and the dogmatists over whether any truth exists at all, the issue is whether any proposition or class of propositions can be accepted as true of a real objective world as distinct from mere appearance. For 'true' in these discussions means 'true of a real objective world'; the true, if there is such a thing, is what conforms with the real, an association traditional to the word *alēthēs* since the earliest period of Greek philosophy (cf. *M* XI 221).[8]

[6] The claim that sceptic *ataraxia* alone is *eudaimonia* is argued at length in *M* XI 110–167.

[7] Cf. Stough [29], 142 ff.

[8] If the modern reader finds this an arbitrary terminological narrowing, on the grounds that if I say how things appear to me my statement ought to count as true if, and only if, things really do appear as I say they do (cf. Stough [29], loc. cit.), the

Now clearly, if truth is restricted to matters pertaining to real existence, as contrasted with appearance, the same will apply right back along the sequence we traced out a moment ago. The notions involved, consistency and conflict, undecidability, *isostheneia*, *epochē*, *ataraxia*, since they are defined in terms of truth, will all relate, via truth, to real existence rather than appearance. In particular, if *epochē* is suspending belief about real existence as contrasted with appearance, that will amount to suspending all belief, since belief is the accepting of something as true. There can be no question of belief about appearance, as opposed to real existence, if statements recording how things appear cannot be described as true or false, only statements making claims as to how they really are.

This result is obviously of the first importance for understanding the sceptic's enterprise and his ideal of a life without belief. Sextus defines 'dogma'—and, of course, the Greek word *dogma* originally means simply 'belief' (cf. Pl. *Rep.* 538 c, *Tht.* 158 d)—as assent to something non-evident, that is, to something not given in appearance (*PH* I 16).[9] Similarly, to dogmatize, as Sextus explains the term, is what someone does who posits the real existence of something (*hōs huparchon tithetai*, *PH* I 14, 15, from a context where it has been acknowledged that not everyone would use the word in this restricted sense).[10] Assent is the genus;

---

answer is that his objection, though natural, is anachronistic. The idea that truth can be attained without going outside subjective experience was not always the philosophical commonplace it has come to be. It was Descartes who made it so, who (in the second *Meditation*) laid the basis for our broader use of the predicates 'true' and 'false' whereby they can apply to statements of appearance without reference to real existence. See Burnyeat [59].

[9] The notion of that which is evident (*dēlon*, *prodēlon*, *enargés*) is a dogmatist's notion in the first instance. Things evident are things which come to our knowledge of themselves (*PH* II 97, *M* VIII 144), which are grasped from themselves (*PH* II 99), which immediately present themselves to sense and intellect (*M* VIII 141), which require no other thing to announce them (*M* VIII 149), i.e. which are such that we have immediate non-inferential knowledge of them, directly from the impression (*M* VIII 316). Examples: it is day, I am conversing (*M* VIII 144), this is a man (*M* VIII 316). Sextus declares that this whole class of things is put in doubt by the sceptic critique of the criterion of truth (*PH* II 95, *M* VIII 141–2). Consequently, any statement about such things will be dogma in the sense the sceptic eschews.

[10] The reader should be warned that some interpretations take *PH* I 13–15 as evidence that 'dogma' and 'dogmatize' are still more restricted than I allow, with the consequence that the sceptic does not eschew all belief. It will be best to postpone

opinion, or belief, is that species of it which concerns matters of real existence as contrasted with appearance. The dogmatists, the endless variety of whose opinions concerning real existence provides the sceptic with both his weapons and his targets, are simply the believers; to the extent that it is justified to read in the modern connotation of 'dogmatist', viz. person with an obstinate and unreasonable attachment to his opinions, this belongs not to the core meaning of the Greek term but to the sceptic's argued claim, to which we shall come, that *all* belief is unreasonable. All belief is unreasonable precisely because, as we are now seeing, all belief concerns real existence as opposed to appearance.

HISTORICAL INTERLUDE

We can trace this polemic against belief at least as far back as Aenesidemus, the man who was chiefly responsible for founding, or at any rate reviving, Pyrrhonism in the first century B.C.—some two hundred years or more before Sextus compiled his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Aenesidemus' own *Outline Introduction to Pyrrhonism* was presumably the first work to bear such a title, and we know something of it from a report in Diogenes Laertius (IX 78 ff.; cf. also Aristocles *apud* Eus. *PE* XIV 18, 11). Aenesidemus set out to classify the various modes or ways in which things give rise to belief or persuasion[11] and then tried to destroy, systematically, the beliefs so acquired by showing that each of these modes produces conflicting beliefs of equal persuasiveness and is therefore not to be relied upon to put us in touch with the truth.[12] Most obviously, where our senses deliver consistent reports we tend to be persuaded that things really are as they appear to be,[13] but if we take full account of the different impressions which objects produce on different animals and different people and people in different conditions or circumstances, and all the other considerations adduced under the Ten Modes, we will see that in any such case as much evidence of the

---

controversy until the rest of my interpretation has been set out, but meanwhile the examples in the previous note will serve as well as any to illustrate the sorts of thing about which, in my view, the sceptic suspends judgement.

[11] DL IX 78: *καθ' οὓς τρόπους πείθει τὰ πράγματα.*

[12] DL IX 79: *ἐδείκνυσαν οὖν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων τοῖς πείθουσιν ἴσας τὰς πιθανότητας.*

[13] DL IX 78: *πείθειν γὰρ τά τε κατ' αἴσθησιν συμφώνως ἔχοντα.*

same kind, or as good, can be adduced for a contrary opinion; each type of evidence can be matched by evidence of the same sort but going the other way, each source of belief is a source of conflicting beliefs.[14] The moral, naturally, is *epochē* about what is true (DL IX 84); but this is also expressed by saying we must accept our ignorance concerning the real nature of things (DL IX 85, 86), which confirms once again the intimate connection of truth and reality. Then there is the additional consideration that some of the modes in which beliefs are acquired have little or no bearing on truth and falsity, as when we believe something because it is familiar to us or because we have been persuaded of it by an artful speaker. In sum

> We must not assume that what persuades us (*to peithon*) is actually true. For the same thing does not persuade every one, nor even the same people always. Persuasiveness (*pithanotēs*) sometimes depends on external circumstances, on the reputation of the speaker, on his ability as a thinker or his artfulness, on the familiarity or the pleasantness of the topic. (DL IX 94, tr. Hicks)[15]

Now this talk of persuasion and persuasiveness has an identifiable historical resonance. In a context (*M* VIII 51) closely parallel to the passage just quoted, and not long after a mention of Aenesidemus (*M* VIII 40), Sextus equates what persuades us (*to peithon hēmas*) with the Academic notion of *to pithanon*. '*Pithanon*' is often mistranslated 'probable', but what the word normally means in Greek is 'persuasive' or 'convincing', and

[14] Note the partial overlapping between the *τρόπους* in DL IX 78 and the *δέκα τρόπους, καθ' οὓς τὰ ὑποκείμενα παραλλάττοντα ἐφαίνετο* in 79 ff.: cp *τά τε κατ' αἴσθησιν συμφώνως ἔχοντα* with Modes I–IV, VII, *τὰ νόμοις διεσταλμένα* with Mode V, *τὰ μηδέποτε ἢ σπανίως γοῦν μεταπίπτοντα* and *τὰ θαυμαζόμενα* with Mode IX.

[15] I should explain why, without explicit textual warrant, I attribute the content of this last paragraph also to Aenesidemus. The paragraph is one of two (IX 91–4) which intrude into a sequence of arguments announced earlier at IX 90. Not only is it likely, therefore, to derive from a different source, but the sequence of arguments follows immediately on the account of the Five Modes of Agrippa (IX 88–9), and its argumentation is largely Agrippean in construction, while the intruding paragraphs have a certain affinity of content and expression with the section 78–9 which is definitely associated with the name of Aenesidemus. For example, both passages are dismissive of belief due to something being familiar (*σύνηθες*) or pleasing (79: *τέρποντα*, 94: *κεχαρισμένον*). Perhaps the most telling affinity is in the use of the verb *πείθειν* to denote the dogmatic belief which the author opposes: the verb does not occur in (what I suppose to be) the Agrippean sequence IX 88–91, 94–101, nor is it usual for Sextus to employ it as part of his own technical vocabulary for the key concept of dogmatic belief. Where he does use it is in discussing Academic fallibilism, as we are about to see. Cp. also *PH* I 226, 229–30.

Carneades defined a *pithanē* impression as one which appears true (*M* VII 169, 174).[16] The important point for our purposes is that in the sceptic historiography, as in most history books since, Carneades was supposed to have made *to pithanon* the Academic criterion for the conduct of life (*M* VII 166 ff.): a fallible criterion, since he allowed that in some instances we would be persuaded of something which was actually false (*M* VII 175). He also said that our belief is greater—and the Pyrrhonists read him as meaning that it should be greater—when our senses deliver consistent reports (*M* VII 177); this idea, which we saw to be one of Aenesidemus' targets, is the basis for the second and stricter criterion in Carneades' three-level criterial scheme, the impression which is not only *pithanē* but also not 'reversed' by any of the associated impressions. If, then, *to peithon* is the Academic *pithanon*, and if I am right to detect Aenesidemus behind the passages in Diogenes and Sextus where *to peithon* is under fire, then his campaign against persuasion and belief was at the same time a polemic against the Academy from which he had defected.[17] The general purpose of the Ten Modes is to unpersuade us of anything which persuades us that it represents truth and reality. Aenesidemus' more particular target is the idea, which he attributes to the Academy (whether rightly or polemically),[18] that one has a satisfactory enough criterion of action in taking to be true that which is persuasive in the sense that it appears true. In Aenesidemus' view, one should not take anything to be true, and he had arguments to show that, in fact, nothing is true (*M* VIII 40 ff.).

I conclude, then, not only that the life without belief was a fundamental feature of Pyrrhonism from Aenesidemus onwards, but that it was put forward by Aenesidemus in conscious opposition to (what he represented as) the teaching of the New

[16] For the correct translation of *πιθανός*, see Couissin [60], 262, Striker (Chapter 3 below), § III. Getting the translation right is a first step towards undoing the myth of Carneades as a proponent of 'probabilism': see Burnyeat [58].

[17] The evidence for Aenesidemus having begun his philosophical career in the Academy is that he dedicated his *Pyrrhonian Discourses* to L. Tubero, described as a fellow associate of the Academy (Phot. *Bibl.* 169 b 33). Zeller [18], Abt. 2, p. 23 n. 2, is perhaps right in suggesting that because Photius' report of this work (which is mentioned also at DL IX 106 and 116) says nothing of the Ten Modes, it is to be distinguished from the *Outline Introduction to Pyrrhonism* which Aristocles and Diogenes indicate as the place where the Modes were developed.

[18] Both rightly and polemically if his target is Philo of Larissa: see below.

Academy. If the Ten Modes have their intended effect, we will be weaned from the Academic criterion for the conduct of life to Aenesidemus' new Pyrrhonist ideal of a life without belief. It is quite possible, however, that this was not so much a new proposal as the revival of one much older.

The idea that one should live without belief (the word used is *adoxastous*, as in Sextus) is prominent in the most extended doxographical account we possess of the philosophy of Pyrrho himself: the quotation in Eusebius (*PE* XIV 18, 2–4) from Aristocles, a Peripatetic writer of the second century A.D., which gives what purports to be a summary of the views attributed to Pyrrho by his follower Timon.[19] We should not put any trust in our perceptions or beliefs, says the summary, since they are neither true nor false, and when we are thus neutrally disposed, without belief, tranquillity results. It is possible that Aristocles received this report through Aenesidemus himself,[20] but that need not mean it gives a distorted interpretation of Timon's account of Pyrrho. Quite a few of the fragments of Timon which have come down to us are at least suggestive of later Pyrrhonism.[21] Moreover, various stories relating how Pyrrho's friends had to follow him about to keep him from being run over by carts or walking over precipices (DL IX 62—the precipice fantasy may derive from Aristotle, *Metaph.* Γ4, 1008^{b} 15–16) are exactly of the type one would expect to grow up around a man known for teaching a life without belief. And these stories are old. They are cited from the biography of Pyrrho written by Antigonus of Carystus in the late third century B.C., well before Aenesidemus; in fact Aenesidemus felt it necessary to combat the idea that a philosophy based on suspending belief would make Pyrrho behave without foresight (DL IX 62). This seems rather clear evidence that for Aenesidemus himself the life without belief was the revival of a much older ideal.

It is not difficult, moreover, to guess something of the philosophical reasons why Aenesidemus should have resorted to Pyrrho for his model. On the one hand, the Academy at the time of Philo of Larissa appeared less sharply sceptical than it had

[19] Timon, frag. 2 in Diels [9]; translation and discussion in Stough [29], Ch. 2.

[20] The ground for this suspicion is a somewhat odd, textually disputed, reference to Aenesidemus tacked on at the end of the summary. See Dumont [46], 140–7.

[21] For discussion, see Burnyeat [57]. The question of the historical accuracy of Timon's account of Pyrrho is a further matter which need not concern us here.

been; in particular, on Philo's controversial interpretation of Carneades (cf. *Acad.* II 78, *ind. Acad. Herc.* XXVI, 4), *to pithanon* could be and was offered as a positive criterion of life.[22] On the other hand, the great difficulty for Academic scepticism had always been the objection—Hume's objection—that total *epochē* makes it impossible to live.[23] The tradition concerning Pyrrho offered a solution to both problems at once. The way to live without belief, without softening the sceptical *epochē*, is by keeping to appearances. This was the plan or criterion for living that Aenesidemus adopted (DL IX 106), again not without some support in the fragments of Timon,[24] and we shall find it elaborated in Sextus Empiricus. It is a pleasing thought that not only does Sextus anticipate Hume's objection, but also, if I am right about the philosophical context which prompted Aenesidemus to his revival of Pyrrhonism, it was in part precisely to meet that objection more effectively than had been done hitherto that Aenesidemus left the Academy and aligned himself to Pyrrho.

LIVING BY APPEARANCES

A sceptical restructuring of thought, a life without belief, tranquillity—these are not ideas that we would nowadays associate with philosophical scepticism, which has become a largely

[22] For the controversy about Carneades, see Striker, Chapter 3 below. That Aenesidemus' target was the Academy of Philo is indicated above all by Photius' report (*Bibl.* 170 a 21–2) that he characterized his Academic opponents as determining many things with assurance and claiming to contest only the cataleptic impression. This corresponds not to Carneades' sceptical outlook but to the distinctive innovation of Philo, according to whom it is not that in their own nature things cannot be grasped but that they cannot be grasped by the Stoics' cataleptic impression (*PH* I 235). The alternative target would be Antiochus, but he does not fit Aenesidemus' scornful description of contemporary Academics as Stoics *fighting* Stoics (Phot. *Bibl.* 170 a 14–17). It would appear that Aenesidemus was also provoked by Philo's claim (*Acad.* I 13) that there were not two Academies, but a single unified tradition reaching right back to Plato. This amounted to the assertion that Plato stood for scepticism as Philo understood it, and Aenesidemus was at pains to deny that Plato could rightly be regarded as a sceptic (*PH* I 222, reading *κατὰ τούς* with Natorp and noting the disjunctive form of the argument: Plato is not sceptical if either he assents to certain things as true *or* he accepts them as merely persuasive For a decisive defence of Natorp's reading against the alternative *κατὰ τῶν*, which would mean that Aenesidemus thought Plato was sceptical, see Burkhard [45], 21–7).

[23] Above, p. 22 n. 4.

[24] Esp. frags. 69: 'But the phenomenon prevails on every side, wherever it may go'; and 74: 'I do not assert that honey (really) is sweet, but that it appears (sweet) I grant' (tr. Stough).

dialectical exercise in problem-setting, focused, as I noted earlier, on knowledge rather than belief. Even Peter Unger, who has recently propounded a programme for a sceptical restructuring of thought,[25] does not really try to dislodge belief. Having assiduously rediscovered that scepticism involves a denial of reason, and the connection between scepticism and the emotions, as well as much else that was familiar to Sextus Empiricus, he agrees that all belief is unreasonable, and he even has an argument that in fact no one does believe anything—belief itself is impossible. But he does not really believe this last refinement, since his programme envisages that concepts like *knowledge* and *reason* be replaced by less demanding assessments of our cognitive relation to reality, rather in the spirit of Academic fallibilism; thus it seems clear that, while a great number of our present beliefs would go (for a start, all those beliefs having to do with what is known and what is reasonable), believing as such would remain firmly entrenched at the centre of our mental life. The ancient Greek Pyrrhonist would not let it rest there. He is sceptical about knowledge, to be sure: that is the burden of all the arguments against the Stoics' cataleptic impression—the impression which, being clear and distinct (DL VII 46), affords a grasp of its object and serves as a foundation for secure knowledge. But his chief enemy, as we have seen, is belief. So the question arises, What then remains for a man who is converted by the sceptic arguments to a life without belief, where this means, as always, without belief as to real existence? This is the question we have to ask if we want to probe the secret of sceptic tranquillity.

The sceptic's answer, in brief, is that he follows appearances (*PH* I 21). The criterion by which he lives his life is appearance. In more detail, he has a fourfold scheme of life (*PH* I 23–4), allowing him to be active under four main heads, as follows. First, there is the guidance of nature: the sceptic is guided by the natural human capacity for percipience and thought, he uses his senses and exercises his mental faculties—to what result we shall see in due course. Second comes the constraint of bodily drives (*pathōn anankē*): hunger leads him to food, thirs tto drink, and Sextus agrees with Hume that you cannot dispel by argument attitudes the casual origin of which has nothing to do with

[25] Peter Unger, *Ignorance—A Case for Scepticism* (Oxford, 1975).

reason and belief (*M* XI 148). In this respect, indeed, perfect *ataraxia* is unattainable for a human being, physical creature that he is, and the sceptic settles for *metriopatheia* (*PH* I 30, III 235–6): the disturbance will be greatly moderated if he is free of the additional element of belief (*to prosdoxazein*) that it *matters* whether he secures food and drink. Third, there is the tradition of laws and customs: the sceptic keeps the rules and observes in the conduct of life the pieties of his society.[26] Finally, the fourth element is instruction in the arts: he practises an art or profession, in Sextus' own case medicine, so that he has something to do. All of this falls under the criterion of appearance, but Sextus does not really aim to develop the scheme in practical detail. Once he has pointed us in these four directions, his main concern, and therefore ours here, is with the general criterion of appearance.

In the section of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* where it is formally stated that the criterion by which the sceptic lives his life is appearance (*PH* I 21–4), not only does appearance contrast with reality but living by appearances contrasts with the life of belief. Evidently, the mental resources left to the sceptic when he eschews belief will be commensurate with whatever falls on the side of appearance when the line is drawn between appearance and real existence. So it becomes important to ask, as I have not so far asked, just what the sceptic is contrasting when he sets appearance against real existence. By the same token, if appearance is identified with some one type of appearance—and the most likely candidate for this is sense-appearance—that will have restrictive implications for the mental content of the life without belief.

Let us go back briefly to the passage where Sextus gave his definition of scepticism as a capacity for bringing into opposition things that appear and things that are thought etc. When Sextus

[26] I have done a little interpretation here, taking *τὸ μὲν εὐσεβεῖν παραλαμβάνομεν βιωτικῶς ὡς ἀγαθὸν τὸ δὲ ἀσεβεῖν ὡς φαῦλον* in the light of such passages as *PH* I 226, II 246, III 12, *M* IX 49. Note the verb forms *τὸ εὐσεβεῖν, ἀσεβεῖν*: not attitudes but practices (which were in any case the main content of Greek piety and impiety) are what the sceptic accepts. To say that it is *βιωτικῶς*, not as a matter of belief, that he accepts the one as good and the other as bad comes to little more than that he pursues the one and avoids the other; in short, he tries to observe the pieties of his society. If custom demands it, he will even declare that gods exist, but he will not believe it (*PH* III 2) or mean it *in propria persona* as do both the dogmatists and the ordinary man (*M* IX 49–50): on the existence of the gods, as on any question of real existence, the sceptic suspends judgement (*PH* III 6, 9, 11; *M* IX 59, 191).

comes to elucidate the terms of his definition, he says that by 'things that appear' (*phainomena*) we *now* mean sensibles (*aisthēta*) in contrast to things thought (*nooumena* or *noēta*) (*PH* I 8–9). This surely implies that he does not always or even usually mean sensibles alone when he speaks of what appears (cp. *M* VIII 216). Some scholars, most recently Charlotte Stough, have taken the sceptic criterion to be sense-appearance, in the narrow meaning, because when Sextus says the criterion is what appears (*to phainomenon*), he adds that the sceptics mean by this the impression (*phantasia*) of the thing that appears (*PH* I 22).[27] But the point here is simply to explain that what the sceptic goes by in his daily life is not, strictly, the thing itself that appears, but the impression it makes on him, and in Sextus' vocabulary (as in Stoic usage—cf. DL VII 51) there are impressions (*phantasiai*) which are not and could not possibly be thought to be sense-impressions. I need only cite the impression, shared by all opponents of Protagoras, that not every impression is true (*M* VII 390). As for *to phainomenon*, what appears may, so far as I can see, be anything whatever. Sextus is prepared to include under things appearing both objects of sense and objects of thought (*M* VIII 362), and sometimes he goes so far as to speak of things appearing to reason (*logos*) or thought (*dianoia*) (ambiguously so *PH* II 10, *M* VIII 70, unambiguously *M* VII 25, VIII 141). Finally, there is a most important set of appearances annexed to the sceptic's own philosophical utterances; as Michael Frede has emphasized,[28] these are hardly to be classed as appearances of sense.

Time and again Sextus warns that sceptic formulae such as 'I determine nothing' and 'No more this than that' (*PH* I 15), or the conclusions of sceptic arguments like 'Everything is relative' (*PH* I 135), or indeed the entire contents of his treatise (*PH* I 4), are to be taken as mere records of appearance. Like a chronicle (*PH* I 4), they record how each thing appears to the sceptic,

[27] Stough [29], 119 ff. Stough's initial mistake (as I think it) is to treat the statement as a contribution to a theory of experience. She then elicits the consequence that one perceives only one's own impressions, not the external object, since that which appears *is* (according to Stough's reading of the present passage) our impression. This goes flatly against the innumerable passages where that which appears is the very thing whose real properties cannot be determined, e.g. the honey at *PH* I 20. A further undesirable and unwarranted feature of Stough's interpretation is the divergence it leads her to postulate between Aenesidemus and Sextus (p. 124–5).

[28] Frede [62].

announcing or narrating how it affects him (his *pathos*) without committing him to the belief or assertion that anything really and truly is as it appears to him to be (cp. also *PH* I 197). Clearly it would be impossible to regard all these appearances as impressions of sense.[29] But the practice of argumentative enquiry is so considerable a portion of the sceptic's way of life that they must certainly be included under the sceptic criterion. They are one outcome, surely, and a most important outcome, of his natural capacity for percipience *and thought*. Sense-appearance cannot be all that is involved when the sceptic says he follows appearances.

It may be granted that the conclusion of a sceptic argument is typically that the real nature of something cannot be determined and that we must content ourselves with saying how it appears, where this frequently does mean: how it appears to the senses. But essentially the same formulae are used when the subject of enquiry is, say, the existence of species and genera (*PH* I 138–40), the rightness or wrongness of certain customs and practices (*PH* I 148 ff.), or, quite generally, objects of thought (*noēta*) as contrasted with sensible things (*PH* I 177). Further, the conclusion of a sceptic argument may be also that a certain concept cannot be formed: for example, the concept of man (*PH* II 27). In this connection Sextus contrasts asserting dogmatically that man really is e.g. a featherless two-footed animal with broad nails and a capacity for political science and putting forward this same definition as something merely persuasive (*pithanon*); the former is the illegitimate thing which is the target of his argument, the latter what he thinks Plato would do (*PH* II 28). I think it would be wholly in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of this text to add the properly Pyrrhonist alternative of saying what man appears to one to be. For Sextus insists[30] that the sceptic is not prohibited from *noēsis*, the forming of conceptions. He can form his own conceptions just so long as the basis for this is that things he experiences appear clearly to reason itself and he is not led into any commitment to the reality of the things conceived (*PH* II 10).

I suggest, therefore, that the sceptic contrast between appearance and real existence is a purely formal one, entirely independent

[29] *Contra* Stough [29], 146 n. 83.
[30] *Contra* Naess [50], 51.

of subject matter. The sceptic does not divide the world into appearances and realities so that one could ask of this or that whether it belongs to the category of appearance or to the category of reality. He divides questions into questions about how something appears and questions about how it really and truly is, and both types of question may be asked about anything whatever.

In his chapter on the sceptic criterion Sextus says: 'No one, I suppose, disputes about the underlying subject's appearing thus or thus; what he enquires about is whether it is such as it appears' (*PH* I 22). The point is one familiar in modern philosophy, that how a thing appears or seems is authoritatively answered by each individual. When Sextus says that a man's impression is *aẓētētos*, not subject to enquiry (*PH* I 22), the claim is that his report that this is how it appears to him cannot be challenged and he cannot properly be required to give reason, evidence or proof for it. It is only when he ventures a claim about how something really is that he can be asked for the appropriate justification. It follows that the sceptic who adheres strictly to appearance is withdrawing to the safety of a position not open to challenge or enquiry. He may talk about anything under the sun—but only to note how it appears to him, not to say how it really is. He withdraws to this detached stance as the result of repeatedly satisfying himself that enquiry as to the real nature of a thing leads to unresolvable disagreement. We can understand, now, why the only use the sceptic has for reason is polemical. Quite simply, nothing he wants to say in his own person is such as to require a reasoned justification.[31] Reason is one more important notion which is tied to truth and real existence.

It turns out, then, that the life without belief is not the mental blank one might at first imagine it to be. It is not even limited as to the subject matter over which the sceptic's thoughts may range. Its secret is rather an attitude of mind manifest in his thoughts. He notes the impression things make on him and the contrary impressions they make on other people, and his own impressions seem to him no stronger, no more plausible, than

[31] In keeping with this Sextus does not claim knowledge or (*pace* Hossenfelder, [6], 60–1) certainty about how things appear to him. If pressed, the radical Pyrrhonist will actually deny that he knows such things (Galen, *De diff. puls.* VIII 711, 1–3 K= Deichgräber [10], frag. 75, p. 135, 28–30). See further Burnyeat [59].

anyone else's.[32] To the extent that he has achieved *ataraxia*, he is no longer concerned to enquire which is right. When a thing appears in a certain light to him, that no more inclines him to believe it is as it appears than would the fact of its so appearing to someone else. It is merely one more impression or appearance to be noted. Thus the withdrawal from truth and real existence becomes, in a certain sense, a detachment from oneself.

ASSENT AND CONSTRAINT

With this conclusion we reach, I think, the real point of scepticism as a philosophy of life. So thoroughgoing a detachment from oneself is not easy to understand—indeed, it is here that I would locate the ultimate incoherence of the sceptic philosophy—but the attempt must be made if we are to appreciate the kind of restructuring which the sceptic arguments aim to produce in a man's thought, and thereby in his practical life. To this end I must now broach the difficult topic of assent and the will.

I have already explained that assent is a wider notion than belief. The sceptic's non-belief, his *epochē*, is his withholding assent to anything not given in appearance (*PH* I 13). But there are things he assents to: *ta phainomena*, anything that appears. This doctrine is stated in full generality at *PH* I 19–20, with no restriction to any specific class of appearances; although the example to hand is a sensible appearance, the taste of honey, I hold, as before, that Sextus means any kind of appearance and hence that the important further characterization he gives in this connection is to be applied to all appearances without exception.

The further characterization is as follows: things that appear lead us to assent (sc. to them) *aboulētōs*, without our willing it, in accordance with the impression they affect us with (*kata phantasian pathētikēn*). Much the same is said on numerous occasions elsewhere. When the sceptic assents, it is because he experiences two

[32] It is of the essence of scepticism, as defined *PH* I 8 and as practised throughout the sceptic literature, to set one person's impressions against those of another. Questions could be raised about the sceptic's entitlement to talk of other people's impressions, and suitable answers could be devised. But on the whole such questions are not raised, any more than the sceptic inquires into the basis for his extensive historical surveys of the views of other philosophers. The radically first-person stance of the scepticisms we are familiar with is a distinctively modern development (cp. p. 25 n. 8 above).

kinds of constraint. First, what he assents to are *kata phantasian katēnankasmena pathē*, states with which we are forcibly affected in accordance with an impression (*PH* I 13). He can assent to an impression, or, as Sextus also puts it (*PH* II 10), he can assent to what is presented in accordance with an impression he is affected with in so far as it appears, because the impression itself, the way the thing appears, is a passive affection not willed by the person who experiences it and as such is not open to enquiry or dispute (*en peisei kai aboulētōi pathei keimenē azētētos estin*) (*PH* I 22); in other words, it is merely what is happening to him now. But second, besides having the impression forced upon us, we are also constrained in these cases to assent. The sceptic yields to things which move us affectively (*tois kinousin hēmas pathētikōs*) and lead us by compulsion to assent (*kai anankastikōs agousin eis sunkatathesin*) (*PH* I 193).

What, then, is the content of the sceptic's assent? Assent is described as assent to something in so far as it appears, or to the state/impression which is its appearing to us, but the expression of this assent is propositional: e.g. 'Honey appears sweet' (*PH* I 20). In another place (*PH* I 13) Sextus puts the point in a negative way: when the sceptic is warmed or chilled, he would not say 'I think I am not warmed/chilled.'[33] Arne Naess takes the negative formulation to be an attempt to articulate the idea that the sceptic does not accept or reject 'It now seems cold to me' as a proposition.[34] I do not find in Sextus any evidence of a contrast between assenting to a state or to the impression of a thing and assenting to a proposition about how something appears to one. We concede, says Sextus (*PH* I 20), that honey appears sweet because we are sweetened perceptually (*glukazometha aisthētikōs*), which I take to mean: we have a perceptual experience featuring the character of sweetness. The sceptic's assent is simply the acknowledging of what is happening to him, and the compulsion to assent, to acknowledge what is happening to him, is equally simple. It is not that there is resistance to overcome, but that there can be no dispute about what the impression is; it is

[33] On the translation of *θερμαίνεσθαι* and *ψύχεσθαι*, see below.

[34] Naess [50], 8. Naess, however, has a rather special theory about what it is to accept or reject something as a proposition, a theory which is claimed to rescue Pyrrhonism from Hume's critique: see Alistair Hannay, 'Giving the Sceptic a Good Name', *Inquiry* 18 (1975), 409–36.

azētētos, not open to enquiry. The impression is just the way something appears to one, and assent to it is just acknowledging that this is indeed how the thing appears to one at the moment.

So far, I have illustrated these points, as Sextus does, by reference to impressions of sense. As it happens, however, at least one of the statements cited occurs in a context describing the attitude of mind which the sceptic brings to the practice of argumentative enquiry. This is the statement (*PH* II 10) that the sceptic assents to things presented to him in accordance with an impression which they affect him with (*kata phantasian pathētikēn*), in so far as they appear to him. Given the context, it is natural to refer the remark to the appearances annexed to the sceptic's various philosophical pronouncements. That the *phantasia*, the impression, is characterized as *pathētikē*, something one is affected with, is no hindrance to this; we have already seen that an impression need not be an impression of sense, and to call it *pathētikē* simply means it is a passivity (*peisis*) or *pathos*, as at *PH* I 22. Sextus is perfectly prepared to speak of a *pathos*, affection, annexed to the sceptic formula 'I determine nothing' (*PH* I 197; cp. I 203). As he explains, when the sceptic says 'I determine nothing', what he is saying is, 'I am now affected (*egō houtō pepontha nun*) in such a way as not to affirm or deny dogmatically any of the matters under enquiry.' At *PH* I 193 this is generalized to all expressions of sceptical non-assertion (*aphasia*) and linked with the topic of compulsory assent to states of appearance. Clearly, 'I determine nothing', as an expression of the sceptic's non-assertion, does not indicate a sense-impression. But it does indicate a *pathos*, a passive affection. It would seem, therefore, that this *pathos*, and assent to it, is forced upon the sceptic 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.

I think this is right. Look through a sample of sceptic arguments and you will find that a great number of them end by saying that one is forced to suspend judgement, the word most commonly used being *anankazō*, the same word as describes our passive relationship to an impression of sense and the assent it engages. The sceptic assents only when his assent is constrained, and equally when he withholds assent, suspends judgement, this is because he finds himself constrained to do so. A marked

passivity in the face of both his sensations and his own thought-processes is an important aspect of the sceptic's detachment from himself. But, once again, there is neither mystery nor effort involved in the constraint.

We are all familiar with the way in which an argument or overwhelming evidence may compel assent. In just this way, the sceptic's arguments are designed to check assent (*epechein* has a transitive use = 'to check', as well as the standard intransitive meaning 'to suspend judgement'). Imagine a man so placed that he really can see no reason at all to believe *p* rather than not-*p*; the considerations for and against seem absolutely equal no matter how hard he tries to resolve the question. Then, as Sextus puts it, he will be checked (*epischethēsetai*—*PH* I 186; cp. I 180, *M* VII 337). If it was a matter of acting where he could see no reason to choose this rather than that, he could toss a coin or simply do whatever one has been brought up to do in the circumstances. In effect, that is what the sceptic does do when he adheres to the conventions of whatever society he lives in without himself believing in them or having any personal attachment to their values. But believing is not like that. Of course, it is a good philosophical question whether it is not possible in some circumstances to decide or will to believe something, but these will have to be circumstances more auspicious than those I have described, where one can literally see nothing to choose between *p* and not-*p*. To quote Epictetus (*Diss.* I 28.3), just try to believe, or positively disbelieve, that the number of the stars is even.[35]

I repeat: try it. Make yourself vividly aware of your helpless inability to mind either way. *That* is how the sceptic wants you to feel about everything, including whether what I am saying is true or false (you are not to be convinced by the reputation or the artfulness of the speaker). That is *ataraxia*. If a tyrant sends a message that you and your family are to perish at dawn unless you commit some unspeakable deed, the true sceptic will be undisturbed both about whether the message is true or false and

[35] The example is traditional, i.e. much older than Epictetus. It is a standard Stoic example of something altogether non-evident, which can be discerned neither from itself nor through a sign (*PH* II 97, *M* VII 393, VIII 147, 317; cp. VII 243, XI 59). It occurs also in Cicero's reference (*Acad.* II 32) to certain *quasi desperatos* who say that everything is as uncertain as whether the number of the stars is odd or even, a reference which is sometimes taken to point to Aenesidemus: so Brochard [25], 245, Striker (Chapter 3 below), p. 64.

about whether it would be a good thing or a bad thing to comply with the command. You will be undisturbed not because your will has subjugated the tendency to believe and to be emotionally disturbed, but because you have been rendered unable to find any reason to think anything is true rather than false or good rather than bad. This is not to say that you will do nothing—Hume's charge of total lethargy. Sextus meets this old complaint, first by acknowledging the role of bodily drives like hunger and thirst and by the rest of the fourfold scheme of activity, and in the case of the tyrant (*M* XI 162–6) by saying that of course the sceptic will have his preconceptions, the result of being brought up in certain forms of life (cf. *PH* II 246), and these will prompt him to act one way or the other. But the point is that he does not identify with the values involved. He notes that they have left him with inclinations to pursue some things and avoid others, but he does not believe there is any reason to prefer the things he pursues over those that he avoids.[36]

The assumptions at work here are reminiscent of Socrates, as is much else in Hellenistic moral psychology. The emotions depend on belief, especially beliefs about what is good and bad. Remove belief and the emotions will disappear; as fear, for example, fades when one is dissuaded of one's belief that the thing one was afraid of is dangerous. At least, to the extent that emotions derive from reason and thought, they must disappear when judgement is suspended on every question of fact and value. This will not eliminate bodily disturbances such as hunger and thirst, nor the tendencies to action which result from the endowments of nature and from an upbringing in human society (cf. *PH* I 230–1). For they do not depend on reason and thought. But they will be less disturbing without the added element of belief about good and bad, truth and falsity (above, p. 33). One may feel that this added element of belief is the very thing that gives meaning and sense to a life, even if it is also the source of trouble and disturbance. Without it, the sceptic's life will be a hollow shell of the existence he enjoyed, and was troubled by, prior to his sceptical enlightenment. Such is the price of peace and tranquillity, however, and the sceptic is willing to pay it to

[36] Compare, perhaps, Feyerabend's reply to the question why his 'epistemological anarchist' does not jump out of the window: Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London, 1975), 221–2. He notes his fear, and its effect on his behaviour, but he does not endorse any reasons for the fear. See further p. 42 n. 37 below.

the full. Or rather, he is constrained by argument to suspend judgement and belief, and then finds that this just happens to bring tranquillity (*PH* I 28–30; above, pp. 24–5). He exercises no deliberated choice in the matter, any more than when hunger leads him to get food.[37] So far from relying on the will to control assent, the sceptic panacea, beginning with the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus, is to use reason to check all the sources of belief and destroy all trust in reason itself, thereby eliminating the very inclination to believe. The life without belief is not an achievement of the will but a paralysis of reason by itself.[38]

[37] According to Timon, frag. 72, quoted *M* XI 164, the follower of Pyrrho is *ἀφυγὴς καὶ ἀναίρετος*. According to Sextus (*PH* I 28) he does not pursue or avoid anything eagerly (*συντόνως*), i.e. he does not mind how it turns out. This detachment in action is interestingly discussed by Hossenfelder [6], esp. 66–74. On Socratic assumptions, it is the logical outcome of the sceptical conclusion that nothing is by nature good or bad, i.e. nothing is really *worth* pursuit or avoidance (Timon, frag. 70 = *M* XI 140, discussed in Burnyeat [57]; *PH* I 27, III 235–8, *M* XI 69 ff.).

[38] The passivity of the sceptic's *epochē* has not, I think, been appreciated in the modern scholarly literature, Hossenfelder [6] excepted. One reason for this is the tendency to read appearance as sense-appearance wherever possible, with the consequence that Sextus' remarks about compulsion are taken to extend no further than bodily and perceptual sensation. That I have already taken issue with. The other reason is that it has been widely held to be common ground to philosophers of different persuasions in the period we are concerned with that 'assent is free' (so e.g. Brochard [25], 138, 391). If that is so, it is easy to assume that, except when the sceptic is compelled to assent, he is free to give his assent or withhold it, and always he chooses—chooses of his own volition—to withhold it.

The idea that assent is free is Stoic doctrine in the first place, and there are indeed plenty of Stoic texts which say that assent is voluntary or in our power. But there are also texts which say that at least some impressions compel assent. The cataleptic impression lays hold of us almost by the hairs, they say, and drags us to assent (*M* VII 257; cp. 405); in another image, the mind yields to what is clear as a scale yields to the weights (*Acad.* II 38; cf. Epict. *Diss.* II 26.7). Assent in such cases is still voluntary because, it would seem, all that is meant by saying it is voluntary is that it depends on my judgement, hence on me, whether I assent or not. At any rate, that is all there is to Sextus' account of the Stoic view in a passage (*M* VIII 397) which explicitly contrasts voluntary assent with involuntary impression. The impression is involuntary (*ἀκούσιος*), not willed (*ἀβούλητος*), because whether or not I am affected by an impression does not depend on me but on something else, namely, the thing which appears to me; the impression once received, however, it does depend on me whether I assent to it, for it depends on my judgement. This leaves it quite open what factors influence my judgement, and how, and therefore leaves it open whether the influence could be regarded as in any sense a type of compulsion. In fact, recent studies on the Stoic side have pursued with illuminating results a line of interpretation according to which assent is determined internally, by a man's character and the education of his mind, and is voluntary just because and in the sense that it is internally determined in this way: see Long [106], Voelké [79], and cp. Epict. *Diss.* I 28. 1–5. If that is the content of the doctrine that assent is free, it fits perfectly well with the emphasis I have placed on the passivity of the sceptic's *epochē*. He does not and could not choose *epochē* for the sake of *ataraxia*.

CONTROVERSIAL INTERLUDE

It is time to take stock. A life has been described, and we want to know whether it is a possible life for man. But there is a prior question of some moment to face first: is the life described a life without belief, as Sextus so often claims (*adoxastōs bioumen* etc., *PH* I 23, 226, 231, II 246, 254, 258, III 235)?[39] The sceptic is supposed to content himself with appearances in lieu of beliefs, but it may be objected that, whatever Sextus may say, at least some of these appearances are beliefs in disguise. 'Honey tastes sweet' may pass muster as the record of a perceptual or bodily experience, but when it comes to 'All things appear relative' (*PH* I 135) or 'Let it be granted that the premisses of the proof appear' (*M* VIII 368) or 'Some things appear good, others evil' (*M* XI 19), we can hardly take 'appear' (*phainesthai*) other than in its epistemic sense. That is, when the sceptic offers a report of the form 'It appears to me now that *p*', at least sometimes he is chronicling the fact that he believes or finds himself inclined to believe that something is the case.

This epistemic reading of the sceptic's talk of appearances may be presented in either of two forms: as an objection to Sextus or as an objection to my interpretation of Sextus. In the second version, which I take up first, the claim will be that the sceptic's assent to appearance, as Sextus describes it, is not the assertion of the existence of a certain impression or experience but the expression of a non-dogmatic belief about what is the case in the world. It will then follow that what the sceptic eschews, when he suspends judgement about everything, is not any and every kind of belief about things, but belief of a more ambitious type, which we may call (pending further elucidation) dogmatic belief.[40]

I do not doubt that a good number of the appearance-statements in Sextus Empiricus *can* be read epistemically. But if this fact is to yield an objection not to Sextus but to my interpretation of him, it needs to be shown that the epistemic reading has the approval of Sextus himself. The passage which comes closest to showing

[39] Cp. the talk of stating or assenting to something ἀδοξάστως at *PH* I 24, 240, II 13, 102, III 2, 151.

[40] For the challenge to try to meet this objection I am indebted to the conference and to discussions with Michael Frede. In the space available I cannot hope to do justice to the subtlety with which Frede [63] expounds a very different interpretation of Sextus from that advocated here.

it is *PH* I 13. There Sextus says that some people define a broad sense of '*dogma*' meaning to accept something or not contradict it,[41] and with this he contrasts a narrower sense explained by some (? the same) people as assent to one of the non-evident things investigated by the sciences. The point of this distinction is to clarify the sense in which the sceptic does not dogmatize: he will have nothing to do with *dogma* in the second and narrower sense, 'for the Pyrrhonist does not assent to anything that is non-evident'. But he does assent to states with which he is forcibly affected in accordance with an impression, and such assent (we are given to understand) is or involves *dogma* in the broader sense to which the Pyrrhonist has no objection. For example (an example we have met before), 'He would not say, when he is warmed or chilled, "I think I am not warmed or chilled." ' Two questions now arise. First, does Sextus' tolerance of the broad sense signify approval of an epistemic reading for appearance-statements generally? Second, does his account of the narrower sense restrict his disapproval to what we have provisionally called dogmatic belief?

(1) What the sceptic accepts or does not contradict is 'I am warmed/chilled'. This is a *dogma* (in the broad sense) inasmuch as the sceptic thinks, or it seems to him, that he is warmed/chilled.[42] But it does not follow that it is an epistemic seeming, in the sense relevant to our discussion, unless its content 'I am warmed/chilled' is a proposition about what is the case in the world rather than a proposition about the sceptic's experience.

We must be careful here. The Greek verbs *thermainesthai* and *psuchesthai* do not normally *mean* 'I feel hot/cold', although translators (Bury, Hossenfelder) have a tendency to render them in such terms here, just because Sextus is illustrating an affection (*pathos*). They normally mean 'be warmed/chilled'.[43] On the other hand, neither does 'I am warmed/chilled' necessarily refer to an objective process of acquiring or losing heat. And my own view is that to insist that Sextus' illustrative *pathos* must be either a subjective feeling or an objective happening is to impose a Cartesian choice which is foreign to his way of thinking.

[41] εὐδοκεῖν, on which see Frede [63].

[42] Sextus evidently intends to bring out the semantic connection between δόγμα and δοκεῖν.

[43] See Frede [63].

Sextus' terminology here is probably Cyrenaic. *Thermainesthai* and *psuchesthai* appear (by a well-motivated editorial insertion) on a list of Cyrenaic terms for *pathē* of perception in Plutarch, *Col.* 1120 e, along with *glukainesthai*, 'to be sweetened', which Sextus uses at *M* VIII 211 (cp. *glukazesthai PH* I 20, 211, II 51, 72, *M* VIII 54, IX 139); *leukainesthai*, 'to be whitened', and the like, applied by Sextus to the activity of the senses, look to be of similar provenance (*M* VII 293 with 190–8). As Plutarch describes the Cyrenaic doctrine which was the original home of this peculiar terminology,[44] it is that I can say *thermainomai*, 'I am warmed', but not *thermos ho akratos*, where this does not mean 'Neat wine is warm' but 'Neat wine is warming' (*thermos* = *thermantikos*, *Col.* 1109 f.). The case is exactly comparable to one we find in Aristocles (*apud* Eus. *PE* XIV 19, 2–3): according to the Cyrenaics, when I am being cut or burned I know I am undergoing something (*paschein ti*), but whether it is fire that is burning or iron that is cutting me, I cannot say. Do they mean, when they talk of undergoing something, the physical event or the way it feels? To that question *there is no clear answer*, and the terminology makes it impossible to decide. It is the same with Sextus. The reference of these funny verbs is plainly to a perceptual process rather than to the transmission of heat (cf. the case of the neat wine: conversely, the warming of a man so chilled that he could not feel a thing when you rubbed his hands would not illustrate Sextus' point at all), but we should keep the translation 'be warmed/chilled'. The man is being affected perceptually (cf. 'We are sweetened perceptually', *glukazometha aisthētikōs*, at *PH* I 20 and the uses of *thermainein* at *PH* I 110, II 56, *M* I 147, VII 368, IX 69), but we cannot 'split' the affection (*pathos*) into separate mental (subjective) and physical (objective) components. The moral to draw is not that the Pyrrhonist allows himself some beliefs about what is the case, but that scepticism is not yet associated with a Cartesian conception of the self.[45]

If this is correct, *PH* I 13 offers no justification for an epistemic reading of the sceptic's appearance-statements. The broader sense of '*dogma*' is simply the accepting of a perceptual experience as the

[44] Plutarch's report shows that the Cyrenaic terminology was caricatured as peculiar.

[45] This is a topic that has come up before: see p. 25 n. 8 above and Burnyeat [59].

experience it is, in the manner we have found amply attested already (above, pp. 38–9).[46] Sextus is not going out of his way to leave room for a non-dogmatic type of belief about matters of real existence. On the contrary, he says that when as a sceptic he makes statements with the verb 'to be', he is to be understood as meaning 'to appear' (*PH* I 135, 198, 200), and he glosses this use of 'to be' at *M* XI 18 in terms which are unmistakably non-epistemic:

> The word 'is' has two meanings: (a) 'is actually (*huparchei*)', as we say at the present moment 'It is day' in place of 'It is actually day', (b) 'appears', as some of the mathematicians are accustomed to say often that the distance between two stars 'is' a cubit's length, meaning this as equivalent to 'It appears so and doubtless is not actually so'; for perhaps it is actually one hundred stades, but appears a cubit because of the height and distance from the eye.

He then applies this elucidation to one of the statements that troubled us earlier, 'Some things appear good, others evil' (*M* XI 19).

(2) Moving on to the narrower sense of '*dogma*', the point to observe is that *any* thing which is non-evident is something for the sciences to investigate, the non-evident being by definition that which can only be known by the mediation of inference.[47] The scope for investigation or enquiry will be determined by the extent of things non-evident, 'for', as Sextus says, 'the Pyrrhonist does not assent to anything that is non-evident.' But the Pyrrhonist attack on the criterion of truth abolishes the evidence of everything that the dogmatists consider evident (*PH* II 95, *M* VIII 141–2). Take one of the dogmatists' favourite examples of things too patently obvious to be doubted, 'It is day', which turns up both in connection with the criterion (*M* VIII 144) and in the passage just quoted: the sceptic denies it is evident and, as we have seen, he accepts it only as a non-epistemic statement of appearance, 'It appears to be day [sc. but may not actually be so]'. *Anything* which goes beyond (non-epistemic) appearances is subject to enquiry (*PH* I 19; above, p. 36; cp. *M* VIII 344–5).

In sum, I do not think that one solitary reference to the sciences (for it is not repeated elsewhere in Sextus) in a definition borrowed

[46] δοκῶ θερμαίνεσθαι is thus parallel to φαίνεται ἡμῖν γλυκάζειν τὸ μέλι at *PH* I 20.

[47] See p. 26 n. 9 above.

from someone else[48] is sufficient basis to credit Sextus with a distinction between dogmatic and non-dogmatic belief. It is not sufficient even when we add to the scales that Sextus frequently restricts what he suspends judgement about to the question how things are 'in nature' (*pros tēn phusin* etc., *PH* I 59, 78, 87, *et al.*) or how things are 'so far as concerns what the dogmatists say about them' (*PH* II 26, 104, III 13, 29, 135, *M* VIII 3) or, ambiguously, how things are 'so far as this is a matter for *logos* (statement, definition, reason)' (*PH* I 20, 215).[49] Just how restrictive these qualifications are depends on what they are contrasted with, and in every case the contrast is with how things appear, where this, as we have seen, is to be taken non-epistemically. All we are left with, then, is a passive impression (*phantasia*) or experience (*pathos*), expressed in a statement which makes no truth-claim about what is the case. As Sextus sums up the sceptic's avoidance of dogmatism, at the end of the passage which has detained us so long, it is simply this: 'He states what appears to himself and announces his own experience without belief, making no assertion about external things' (*PH* I 15).

To which we may add that if the sceptic did allow himself some belief, opponents of Pyrrhonism would be guilty of serious *ignoratio elenchi* when they bring up the simple instinctive beliefs which, they claim, are inseparable from the use of the senses and from everyday actions (see the arguments from Aristocles and Galen cited p. 22 n. 4 above). Aristocles repeatedly takes his target to be a philosophy which pretends to eschew all judgement and belief whatever, so that he can say that it is inconsistent for

[48] That the two definitions of '*dogma*' are borrowed from some previous sceptic writer is evidenced not only by Sextus' saying so, but by the structurally parallel *PH* I 16–17. Here too we have a contrasting pair of 'someone's' definitions, this time of the term αἵρεσις ('philosophical system'), to one of which the sceptic objects and one he does not, and the first definition, couched (it would appear) in terms of the narrower sense of '*dogma*', can be found almost verbatim in an unfortunately truncated passage of Clement (*SVF* II, p. 37, 8–10), where it is again attributed to 'some people'.

[49] ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ: it is a nice question for interpretation how to take λόγος here. Bury translates 'in its essence' at *PH* I 20, while *PH* III 65, *M* X 49, XI 165 ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ λόγῳ may seem to favour 'reason', but Sextus' own elucidation at *PH* I 20 (what honey is ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ is what is said about the thing that appears) has decided several scholars for 'statement': Janáček [49], Ch. 2, Hossenfelder [6], 64 n. 124. Perhaps 'theory' would do justice to the resonances of ambiguity (cp. e.g. *PH* III 167, *M* VII 283, VIII 3), provided we remember that what counts as theory and what as evidence is itself part of the dispute between Sextus and his opponents.

the Pyrrhonist to advance any assertion or argument (*apud* Eus. *PE* XIV 18, 8–9; 15; 16–17; 24). Sextus, as we have seen, connects dogmatism with claims that something is (simply) true, and he needs to do so if he is to undercut the ordinary man's hopes and fears. For clearly, hope and fear can come from any type of belief about what is or will be the case; it need not be dogmatic belief in some more stringent sense. What is at issue here is the ordinary man's ordinary belief that it is good and desirable to have money, say, or fame or pleasure, and bad to be without them (*M* XI 120–4, 144–6; cp. *PH* I 27–8). Belief, in the sense Sextus is attacking, is responsible for *all* the things men pursue and avoid by their own judgement (*M* XI 142, using *doxa*). The internal logic of Pyrrhonism requires that *dogma* and *doxa*—Sextus does not differentiate between these two terms—really do mean: belief.[50]

Behind this issue of interpretation lies a philosophical question

[50] The same is implied by the original sense of several key words in the sceptical vocabulary. προσδοξάζειν is the Epicurean term for the judgement or belief which is added to perception, where perception is ἄλογος, involving no judgemental element at all (see Taylor, Chapter 5 below). ἀδοξαστός credits the Stoic sage with the capacity to avoid *all* belief falling short of certainty (DL VII 162). δογματίζειν may again be Epicurean, as at DL X 120 (the earliest occurrence I can find), where it appears to mean nothing more stringent than not being in a state of puzzlement (ἀπορεῖν). The first instance I can find of δογματικός is attributed to Aenesidemus, who calls the *Academics* δογματικοί because they affirm some things without hesitation and deny others unambiguously, whereas the the Pyrrhonists are aporeutic (N.B.) and free of all belief (παντὸς ἀπολελυμένοι δόγματος) and do not say that things are such rather than such (Phot. *Bibl.* 169 b 36–170 a 2; on the general accuracy of the relevant sections of Photius' report, see Janáček [66]). Equally, it is Aenesidemus' contention, as it is Sextus', that one dogmatizes if one gives credence to what is *pithanon* (*Bibl.* 170 a 18–20, *PH* I 222, 230).

δόγμα itself may look harder since, although it originally means just 'belief' (above, p. 26), some contrast with δόζα is indicated by Cicero's translating the terms *decretum* and *opinio* respectively. But the reason for this contrast would seem to be that the Stoics contrast δόξα (mere opinion, defined as assent to something uncertain or to something false—*Acad.* II 59, 68, 77, *M* VII 151) with κατάληψις and ἐπιστήμη. They therefore need another word than δόξα for the wise man's belief. The wise man avoids δόξα (opinion as opposed to knowledge) but he has δόγματα, every one of them unwavering and true (*Acad.* II 27, 29; cp. *SVF* II, p. 37, 10–11). Notice that in Cicero's account it is not part of the meaning of δόγμα that it should be firmly held, but rather the consequence of its being the wise man who holds it: for the Academics say that all their *decreta* are 'probabilia non percepta' (*Acad.* II 109–10). Readers of Plato are often perplexed by the way δόξα sometimes means 'opinion' in contrast to knowledge and sometimes 'belief' or 'judgement' in the broad sense in which it is a component of knowledge: my suggestion is that δόγμα in Hellenistic usage conveniently takes over the latter role. It is a broader and more nearly neutral term than δόξα, not a term for a more stringently defined type of belief.

of considerable interest, the question whether and in what terms a distinction between non-dogmatic and dogmatic belief can be made out. One promising line to start might be to distinguish a belief that honey is sweet and a belief that honey is *really* sweet in the sense that sweetness exists in the honey, as part of its objective nature. Such talk has a familiar philosophical ring where the sensible qualities are concerned, but it would need to be explained what it amounted to when applied to such examples as 'It is day', 'I am conversing' (*M* VIII 144), or 'This is a man' (*M* VIII 316). Again, one may suggest that non-dogmatic belief ir belief not grounded in or responsive to reasons and reasoning—but that will bring with it a breaking of the connection between belief and truth. What Sextus objects to is the accepting of anything as true. Any such acceptance he will count as dogmatizing (*PH* I 14–15; above, pp. 25–6). I do not myself think there is a notion of belief which lacks this connection with truth and, in a more complicated way, with reason.[51] Nor, at bottom, did Hume: else he would not have found it paradoxical that the sceptical arguments fail to dislodge belief. But all I have contended here is that Sextus has no other notion of belief than the accepting of something as true.

DETACHMENT AND PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEF

It remains to consider whether it is an objection to Sextus that many of his appearance-statements seem to demand the epistemic reading which he refuses. One instance out of many would be the following: 'To every dogmatic claim I have examined there appears to me to be opposed a rival dogmatic claim which is equally worthy and equally unworthy of belief' (freely rendered from *PH* I 203). Sextus insists that this utterance is not dogmatic, i.e. not expressive of belief. It is an announcement of a human state or affection (*anthrōpeiou pathous apangelia*), which is something that appears or is apparent to the person who undergoes it (*ho esti phainomenon tōi paschonti*). And this would be all right if 'It appears to me to be so' meant here 'I have some inclination to believe it is so'. Perhaps there could be an experience it was appropriate to record in those terms. But an inclination to believe is the last thing the sceptic wants to enter in his chronicle. The verb 'appears' in the above statement, and dozens like it, is to be

[51] For a contrary view, see Striker, Chapter 3 below, pp. 80–1.

taken non-epistemically, as we have seen. At times, no doubt, the non-epistemic reading is sheer bluff on Sextus' part, but the objector's opposition will itself be no better than bare counter-assertion unless he can muster more to say. I think there is more to say about the appearances annexed to the sceptic's philosophical pronouncements. They form a class of appearances which lie at the centre of the sceptic's conception of himself and his life.

Remember that we know perfectly well *why* it appears to the sceptic that any dogmatic claim has a contrary equally worthy or unworthy of acceptance. It is the result of a set of arguments designed to show, compellingly, that this is in fact the case. Such arguments can compel him to suspend judgement because they compel him to accept their conclusion—to accept, that is, that in each and every case dogmatic claims are indeed equally balanced and hence that one ought to suspend judgement. (Which is often enough, of course, the way Sextus does conclude his arguments.) But 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*. In being shown that there is as much, or as little, reason to believe the first-level proposition that honey is bitter as that it is sweet, the sceptic has been given reason to believe the second-level proposition that the reasons for and against are equally balanced. In being shown, both on general grounds and by the accumulation of instances, that no claim about real existence is to be preferred to its denial, he has, again, been given reason to believe that generalization true. Certainly it appears to him that dogmatic claims are equally balanced, but this appearance, so called, being the effect of argument, is only to be made sense of in terms of reason, belief and truth—the very notions the sceptic is most anxious to avoid.[52] He wants to say something of the form 'It appears to me that *p* but I do not believe that *p*', with a non-epistemic use of 'appears', but it looks to be intelligible only if 'appears' is in fact epistemic, yielding a contradiction: 'I (am inclined to) believe that *p* but I do not believe that *p*.' How is this result to be avoided?

[52] Notice that it is for these higher-level generalizations that Sextus invokes the defence of cheerful self-refutation (*PH* I 14–15 and other passages discussed in Burnyeat [55]). Self-refutation presupposes that the propositions do make a truth-claim. Sextus would not need (and could not use) the defence if the generalizations were really the expressions of appearance which he simultaneously claims them to be.

The difficulty is not to be overcome by suggesting 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 (cf. *M* VII 243). The problem is to see why this should produce tranquillity rather than acute anxiety.[53]

Nor should we allow Sextus to deny that the sceptic's philosophical appearances are the effect of argument. He does on occasion claim that the sceptical arguments do not give demonstrative disproof of the dogmatists' views but mere reminders or suggestions of what can be said against them, and through this of the apparently equal strength of opposed positions (*PH* II 103, 130, 177, *M* VIII 289). In the technical terms of the period the arguments are not indicative but commemorative signs. I need not enlarge on the technicalities because (to be blunt) Sextus offers no elucidation whatever of the crucial notion of something's being said *against* a doctrine or belief but not by way of reasons or evidence against it. If the sceptic works through reasoned argument to the point where the reasons on either side balance and reason stultifies itself, if his arguments are (in the now famous phrase) a ladder to be thrown over when you have climbed up (*M* VIII 481), then we must insist that they make their impact through the normal operations of our reason. *Epochē* is not a blind, mechanical effect but, supposedly, the natural and intelligible outcome of following with our human capacity for thought along the paths marked out by the sceptical arguments.

Another suggestion might be that what the sceptic records as the outcome of his arguments is an interrogative rather than an assertive frame of mind: 'Is it the case, then, that contrary claims are equally balanced?' This would fit the sceptic's characterization of himself as *zētētikos*, one who goes on seeking (*PH* I 2–3, 7, II 11), and Sextus does at one point say that some sceptics prefer to take the formula 'No more this than that' as a question, 'Why this rather than that?' (*PH* I 189; cp. *M* I 315). But again we must be careful about *ataraxia*. The sceptic goes on seeking not in the sense that he has an active programme of research but in the sense

[53] Cp. Hume's marvellous description of the despair of sceptical doubt, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk I, Pt IV, § VII, p. 268–9 in Selby-Bigge's edition (Oxford, 1888).

that he continues to regard it as an open question whether *p* or not-*p* is the case, at least for any first-level proposition concerning real existence. But this should not mean he is left in a state of actually *wondering* whether *p* or not-*p* is the case, for that might induce anxiety. Still less should he be wondering whether, in general, contrary claims are equally balanced. For if it is a real possibility for him that they are not, that means it is a real possibility that there are answers to be found; and it will be an immense worry to him, as it was at the very beginning of his sceptical education, that he does not know what these answers are.

In other words, if tranquillity is to be achieved, at some stage the sceptic's questing thoughts must come to a state of rest or equilibrium.[54] There need be no finality to this achievement, the sceptic may hold himself ready to be persuaded that there are after all answers to be had. He is not a negative dogmatist furnished with *a priori* objections that rule out the possiblity of answers as a matter of general principle once and for all (cf. *PH* I 1–3). 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. And my question is: How can Sextus then deny that this is something he believes?

I do not think he can. Both the causes (reasoned arguments) of the state which Sextus calls appearance and its effects (tranquillity and the cessation of emotional disturbance) are such as to justify us in calling it a state of belief. And this objection to Sextus' claim to have described a life without belief leads on to an answer to our original question about the possibility, in human terms, of the life Sextus describes.

The source of the objection we have been urging is that the sceptic wants to treat 'It appears to me that *p* but I do not believe that *p*', where *p* is some philosophical proposition such as 'Contrary claims have equal strength', on a par with perceptual instances of that form such as 'It appears (looks) to me that the stick in the water is bent but I do not believe it is'. The latter is acceptable because its first conjunct describes a genuine experience —in Greek terms, a *pathos*, a *phantasia*, which awaits my assent. And it is important here that assent and impression are logically

[54] *στάσις διανοίας*' *PH* I 10; *ἀρρεψία*, *PH* I 190, *M* VIII 159, 332 a, DL IX 74. Hossenfelder [6], 54 ff., is excellent on this, but I do not think we need go along with him in detecting an ambiguity in the term *epochē*.

independent. For they are not independent in the philosophical case. In the philosophical case, the impression, when all is said and done, simply *is* my assent to the conclusion of an argument, assent to it as true. 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 thought of someone else, someone thinking thoughts within him. He is saying, in effect, 'It is thought within me that *p*, but *I* do not believe it.' In the right circumstances, that could be said. But not all the time, for every appearance/thought one has.[55] Yet that is what it will come to if absolutely every appearance, higher-level as well as lower-level, is construed non-epistemically.

One of the more memorable sayings attributed to Pyrrho is a remark regretting that it is difficult to divest oneself entirely of one's humanity.[56] (As the story goes, this was his reply to a charge of failing to practise what he preached when once he was frightened of a dog.) Sextus makes out that the sceptic ideal preserves all that is worth preserving in human nature. But it seems to me that Hume and the ancient critics were right. When one has seen how radically the sceptic must detach himself from himself, one will agree that the supposed life without belief is not, after all, a possible life for man.[57]

[55] It is instructive in this connection to read through § II x of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, which discusses among other things Moore's paradox '*p* but I do not believe that *p*'.

[56] DL IX 66, Aristocles *apud* Eus. *PE* XIV 18, 26: ὡς χαλεπὸν εἴη ὁλοσχερῶς ἐκδῦναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον. The source is Antigonus of Carystus, which means, as Long [68] has shown, that the remark probably derives from something in Timon.

[57] This paper has benefited greatly, especially in its last two sections, from helpful criticism at the Conference and at various universities where earlier drafts were read (Amsterdam, Berkeley, Essex, Oxford, Pittsburgh, Rutgers, SMU Dallas, and UBC Vancouver). Among the many individuals to whom thanks is due, I should like to mention Jonathan Barnes, David Sedley, Gisela Striker, and, above all, Michael Frede.