



PYRRHO of Elis
(c. 360-270 b.c.)

Selections from Diogenes Laertius

[61] Pyrrho of Elis was the son of Pleistarchus, as Diocles relates. According to Apollodorus in his *Chronology*, he was first a painter ; then he studied under Stilpo's son Bryson¹: thus Alexander in his *Successions of Philosophers*. Afterwards he joined Anaxarchus, whom he accompanied on his travels everywhere so that he even forgathered with the Indian Gymnosophists and with the Magi. This led him to adopt a most noble philosophy, to quote Ascanius of Abdera, taking the form of agnosticism and suspension of judgement. He denied that

anything was honourable or dishonourable, just or unjust.² And so, universally, he held that there is nothing really existent, but custom and convention govern human action ; for no single thing is in itself any more this than that.

[62] He led a life consistent with this doctrine, going out of his way for nothing, taking no precaution, but facing all risks as they came, whether carts, precipices, dogs or what not, and, generally, leaving nothing to the arbitrament of the senses ; but he was kept out of harm's way by his friends who, as Antigonus of Carystus tells us, used to follow close after him. But Aenesidemus says that it was only his philosophy that was based upon suspension of judgement, and that he did not lack foresight in his everyday acts. He lived to be nearly ninety. This is what Antigonus of Carystus says of Pyrrho in his book upon him. At first he was a poor and unknown painter, and there are still some indifferent torch-racers of his in the gymnasium at Elis.

[63] He would withdraw from the world and live in solitude, rarely showing himself to his relatives ; this he did because he had heard an Indian reproach Anaxarchus, telling him that he would never be able to teach others what is good while he himself danced attendance on kings in their courts. He would maintain the same composure at all times, so that, even if you left him when he was in the middle of a speech, he would finish what he had to say with no audience but himself, although in his youth he had been hasty.³ Often, our informant adds, he would leave his home and, telling no one, would go roaming about with whomsoever he chanced to meet. And once, when Anaxarchus fell into a slough, he passed by without giving him any help, and, while others blamed him, Anaxarchus himself praised his indifference and *sang-froid*.

[64] On being discovered once talking to himself, he answered, when asked the reason, that he was training to be good. In debate he was looked down upon by no one, for he could both discourse at length and also sustain a cross-examination, so that even Nausiphanes when a young man was captivated by him : at all events he used to say that we should follow Pyrrho in disposition but himself in doctrine ; and he would often remark that Epicurus, greatly admiring Pyrrho's way of life, regularly asked him for information about Pyrrho ; and that he was so respected by his native city that they made him high priest, and on his account they voted that all philosophers should be exempt from taxation. Moreover, there were many who emulated his abstention from affairs, so that Timon in his *Pytho*⁴ and in his *Silli*⁵ says⁶ :

[65] O Pyrrho, O aged Pyrrho, whence and how
 Found'st thou escape from servitude to sophists,
 Their dreams and vanities ; how didst thou loose
 The bonds of trickery and specious craft ?
 Nor reck'st thou to inquire such things as these,
 What breezes circle Hellas, to what end,
 And from what quarter each may chance to blow.
 And again in the *Conceits*⁷ :
 This, Pyrrho, this my heart is fain to know,
 Whence peace of mind to thee doth freely flow,
 Why among men thou like a god dost show ?
 Athens honoured him with her citizenship, says Diocles, for having slain the Thracian Cotys.

[66] He lived in fraternal piety with his sister, a midwife, so says Eratosthenes in his essay *On Wealth and Poverty*, now and then even taking things for sale to market, poultry perchance or pigs, and he would dust the things in the house, quite indifferent as to what he did. They say he showed his indifference by washing a porker. Once he got enraged in his sister's cause (her name was Philista), and he told the man who blamed him that it was not over a weak woman that one should display indifference. When a cur rushed at him and terrified him, he answered his critic that it was not easy entirely to strip oneself of human weakness ; but one should strive with all one's might against facts, by deeds if possible, and if not, in word.

[67] They say that, when septic salves and surgical and caustic remedies were applied to a wound he had sustained, he did not so much as frown. Timon also portrays his disposition in the full account which he gives of him to Pytho. Philo of Athens, a friend of his, used to say that he was most fond of Democritus, and then of Homer, admiring him and continually repeating the line
 As leaves on trees, such is the life of man. II. vi. 146.

He also admired Homer because he likened men to wasps, flies, and birds, and would quote these verses as well :

Ay, friend, die thou ; why thus thy fate deplore ?
 Patroclus too, thy better, is no more,²

and all the passages which dwell on the unstable purpose, vain pursuits, and childish folly of man.¹⁰

[68] Posidonius, too, relates of him a story of this sort. When his fellow-passengers on board a ship were all unnerved by a storm, he kept calm and confident, pointing to a little pig in the ship that went on eating, and telling them that such was the unperturbed state in which the wise man should keep himself. Numenius alone attributes to him positive tenets. He had pupils of repute, in particular one Eurylochus, who fell short of his professions; for they say that he was once so angry that he seized the spit with the meat on it and chased his cook right into the market-place.

[69] Once in Elis he was so hard pressed by his pupils' questions that he stripped and swam across the Alpheus. Now he was, as Timon too says, most hostile to Sophists.

Philo, again, who had a habit of very often talking to himself, is also referred to in the lines¹¹:

Yea, him that is far away from men, at leisure to himself,

Philo, who recks not of opinion or of wrangling.

Besides these, Pyrrho's pupils included Hecataeus of Abdera, Timon of Phlius, author of the *Silli*, of whom more anon, and also Nausiphanes of Teos, said by some to have been a teacher of Epicurus. All these were called Pyrrhoneans after the name of their master, but Aporetics, Sceptics, Ephectics, and even Zetetics, from their principles, if we may call them such-- [70] Zetetics or seekers because they were ever seeking truth, Sceptics or inquirers because they were always looking for a solution and never finding one, Ephectics or doubters because of the state of mind which followed their inquiry, I mean, suspense of judgement, and finally Aporetics or those in perplexity, for not only they but even the dogmatic philosophers themselves in their turn were often perplexed. Pyrrhoneans, of course, they were called from Pyrrho. Theodosius in his *Sceptic Chapters* denies that Scepticism should be called Pyrrhonism ; for if the movement of the mind in either direction is unattainable by us, we shall never know for certain what Pyrrho really intended, and without knowing that, we cannot be called Pyrrhoneans. Besides this (he says), there is the fact that Pyrrho was not the founder of Scepticism ; nor had he any positive tenet ; but a Pyrrhonean is one who in manners and life resembles Pyrrho.

[71] Some call Homer the founder of this school, for to the same questions he more than anyone else is always giving different answers at different times, and is never definite or dogmatic about the answer. The maxims of the Seven Wise Men, too, they call sceptical; for instance, "Observe the Golden Mean," and "A pledge is a curse at one's elbow," meaning that whoever plights his troth steadfastly and trustfully brings a curse on his own head. Sceptically minded, again, were Archilochus and Euripides, for Archilochus says¹² :

Man's soul, O Glaucus, son of Leptines,
Is but as one short day that Zeus sends down.

And Euripides¹³ :

Great God ! how can they say poor mortal men
Have minds and think? Hang we not on thy will ?
Do we not what it pleaseth thee to wish?

[72] Furthermore, they find Xenophanes, Zeno of Elea, and Democritus to be sceptics :
Xenophanes because he says,¹⁴

Clear truth hath no man seen nor e'er shall know ;
and Zeno because he would destroy motion, saying, "A moving body moves neither where it is
nor where it is not"; Democritus because he rejects qualities, saying, "Opinion says hot or cold,
but the reality is atoms and empty space," and again, "Of a truth we know nothing, for truth is in
a well."¹⁵ Plato, too, leaves the truth to gods and sons of gods, and seeks after the probable
explanation.¹⁶ Euripides says¹⁷ :

[73] Who knoweth if to die be but to live,
And that called life by mortals be but death?
So too Empedocles¹⁸ :

So to these mortal may not list nor look
Nor yet conceive them in his mind;
and before that¹⁹ :

Each believes naught but his experience.

And even Heraclitus : "Let us not conjecture on deepest questions what is likely."²⁰ Then again
Hippocrates showed himself two-sided and but human. And before them all Homer²¹ :

Pliant is the tongue of mortals ; numberless the tales within it;
and Ample is of words the pasture, hither thither widely ranging;

And the saying which thou sayest, back it cometh later on thee,
where he is speaking of the equal value of contradictory sayings.

[74] The Sceptics, then, were constantly engaged²² in overthrowing the dogmas of all schools,
but enuniated none themselves ; and though they would go so far as to bring forward and
expound the dogmas of the others, they themselves laid down nothing definitely, not even the
laying down of nothing. So much so that they even refuted their laying down of nothing, saying,
for instance, "We determine nothing," since otherwise they would have been betrayed into
determining²³; but we put forward, say they, all the theories for the purpose of indicating our
unprecipitate attitude, precisely as we might have done if we had actually assented to them. Thus
by the expression "We determine nothing" is indicated their state of even balance; which is
similarly indicated by the other expressions, "Not more (one thing than another)," "Every saying
has its corresponding opposite," and the like.

[75] But "Not more (one thing than another)" can also be taken positively, indicating that two
things are alike ; for example, "The pirate is no more wicked than the liar." But the Sceptics
meant it not positively but negatively, as when, in refuting an argument, one says, "Neither had
more existence, Scylla or the Chimaera." And "More so" itself is sometimes comparative, as
when we say that "Honey is more sweet than grapes" ; sometimes both positive and negative, as
when we say, "Virtue profits more than it harms," for in this phrase we indicate that virtue profits
and does not harm.

[76] But the Sceptics even refute the statement "Not more (one thing than another)." For, as forethought is no more existent than non-existent, so "Not more (one thing than another)" is no more existent than not. Thus, as Timon says in the *Pytho*, the statement means just absence of all determination and withholding of assent. The other statement, "Every saying, etc.,"²⁴ equally compels suspension of judgement; when facts disagree, but the contradictory statements have exactly the same weight, ignorance of the truth is the necessary consequence. But even this statement has its corresponding antithesis, so that after destroying others it turns round and destroys itself, like a purge which drives the substance out and then in its turn is itself eliminated and destroyed.

[77] This the dogmatists answer by saying that they do [not merely] not deny the statement, but even plainly assert it. So they were merely using the words as servants, as it was not possible not to refute one statement by another ; just as we²⁵ are accustomed to say there is no such thing as space, and yet we have no alternative but to speak of space for the purpose of argument, though not of positive doctrine, and just as we say nothing comes about by necessity and yet have to speak of necessity. This was the sort of interpretation they used to give ; though things appear to be such and such, they are not such in reality but only appear such. And they would say that they sought, not thoughts, since thoughts are evidently thought, but the things in which sensation plays a part.

[78] Thus the Pyrrhonian principle, as Aenesidemus says in the introduction to his *Pyrrhonics*, is but a report on phenomena or on any kind of judgement, a report in which all things are brought to bear on one another, and in the comparison are found to present much anomaly and confusion. As to the contradictions in their doubts, they would first show the ways in which things gain credence, and then by the same methods they would destroy belief in them ; for they say those things gain credence which either the senses are agreed upon or which never or at least rarely change, as well as things which become habitual or are determined by law and those which please or excite wonder.

[79] They showed, then, on the basis of that which is contrary to what induces belief, that the probabilities on both sides are equal.

Perplexities arise from the agreements²⁶ between appearances or judgements, and these perplexities they distinguished under ten different modes in which the subjects in question appeared to vary. The following are the ten modes laid down.²⁷

The *first* mode relates to the differences between living creatures in respect of those things which give them pleasure or pain, or are useful or harmful to them. By this it is inferred that they do not receive the same impressions from the same things, with the result that such a conflict necessarily leads to suspension of judgement. For some creatures multiply without intercourse, for example, creatures that live in fire, the Arabian phoenix and worms ; others by union, such as man and the rest.

[80] Some are distinguished in one way, some in another, and for this reason they differ in their senses also, hawks for instance being most keen-sighted, and dogs having a most acute sense of smell. It is natural that if the senses, *e.g.* eyes, of animals differ, so also will the impressions produced upon them; so to the goat vine-shoots are good to eat, to man they are bitter ; the quail thrives on hemlock, which is fatal to man ; the pig will eat ordure, the horse will not. The *second* mode has reference to the natures and idiosyncrasies of men; for instance, Demophon, Alexander's butler, used to get warm in the shade and shiver in the sun.

[81] Andron of Argos is reported by Aristotle²⁸ to have travelled across the waterless deserts of Libya without drinking. Moreover, one man fancies the profession of medicine, another farming, and another commerce; and the same ways of life are injurious to one man but beneficial to another; from which it follows that judgement must be suspended. The *third* mode depends on the differences between the sense-channels in different cases, for an apple gives the impression of being pale yellow in colour to the sight, sweet in taste and fragrant in smell. An object of the same shape is made to appear different by differences in the mirrors reflecting it. Thus it follows that what appears is no more such and such a thing than something different.

[82] The *fourth* mode is that due to differences of condition and to changes in general; for instance, health, illness, sleep, waking, joy, sorrow, youth, old age, courage, fear, want, fullness, hate, love, heat, cold, to say nothing of breathing freely and having the passages obstructed. The impressions received thus appear to vary according to the nature of the conditions. Nay, even the state of madmen is not contrary to nature; for why should their state be so more than ours? Even to our view the sun has the appearance of standing still. And Theon of Tithorea used to go to bed and walk in his sleep, while Pericles' slave did the same on the housetop.

[83] The *fifth* mode is derived from customs, laws, belief in myths, compacts between nations and dogmatic assumptions. This class includes considerations with regard to things beautiful and ugly, true and false, good and bad, with regard to the gods, and with regard to the coming into being and the passing away of the world of phenomena. Obviously the same thing is regarded by some as just and by others as unjust, or as good by some and bad by others. Persians think it not unnatural for a man to marry his daughter; to Greeks it is unlawful. The Massagetae, according to Eudoxus in the first book of his *Voyage round the World*, have their wives in common ; the Greeks have not. The Cilicians used to delight in piracy ; not so the Greeks.

[84] Different people believe in different gods; some in providence, others not. In burying their dead, the Egyptians embalm them; the Romans burn them the Paeonians throw them into lakes. As to what is true, then, let suspension of judgement be our practice.

The *sixth* mode relates to mixtures and participations, by virtue of which nothing appears pure in and by itself, but only in combination with air, light, moisture, solidity, heat, cold, movement, exhalations and other forces. For purple shows different tints in sunlight, moonlight, and lamplight; and our own complexion does not appear the same at noon and when the sun is low.

[85] Again, a rock which in air takes two men to lift is easily moved about in water, either because, being in reality heavy, it is lifted by the water or because, being light, it is made heavy by the air. Of its own inherent property we know nothing, any more than of the constituent oils in an ointment.

The *seventh* mode has reference to distances, positions, places and the occupants of the places. In this mode things which are thought to be large appear small, square things round; flat things appear to have projections, straight things to be bent, and colourless coloured. So the sun, on account of its distance, appears small, mountains when far away appear misty and smooth, but when near at hand rugged.

[86] Furthermore, the sun at its rising has a certain appearance, but has a dissimilar appearance when in mid-heaven, and the same body one appearance in a wood and another in open country. The image again varies according to the position of the object, and a dove's neck according to the way it is turned. Since, then, it is not possible to observe these things apart from places and positions, their real nature is unknowable.

The *eighth* mode is concerned with quantities and qualities of things, say heat or cold, swiftness or slowness, colourlessness or variety of colours. Thus wine taken in moderation strengthens the body, but too much of it is weakening ; and so with food and other things.

[87] The *ninth* mode has to do with perpetuity, strangeness, or rarity. Thus earthquakes are no surprise to those among whom they constantly take place ; nor is the sun, for it is seen every day.²⁹ This ninth mode is put eighth by Favorinus and tenth by Sextus and Aenesidemus; moreover the tenth is put eighth by Sextus and ninth by Favorinus.

The *tenth* mode rests on inter-relation, *e.g.* between light and heavy, strong and weak, greater and less, up and down. Thus that which is on the right is not so by nature, but is so understood in virtue of its position with respect to something else ; for, if that change its position, the thing is no longer on the right.

[88] Similarly father and brother are relative terms, day is relative to the sun, and all things relative to our mind. Thus relative terms are in and by themselves unknowable. These, then, are the ten modes of perplexity.

But Agrippa and his school add to them³⁰ five other modes, resulting respectively from disagreement, extension *ad infinitum*, relativity, hypothesis and reciprocal inference. The mode arising from disagreement proves, with regard to any inquiry whether in philosophy or in everyday life, that it is full of the utmost contentiousness and confusion. The mode which involves extension *ad infinitum* refuses to admit that what is sought to be proved is firmly established, because one thing furnishes the ground for belief in another, and so on *ad infinitum*.

[89] The mode derived from relativity declares that a thing can never be apprehended in and by itself, but only in connexion with something else. Hence all things are unknowable. The mode resulting from hypothesis arises when people suppose that you must take the most elementary of things as of themselves entitled to credence, instead of postulating them : which is useless, because some one else will adopt the contrary hypothesis. The mode arising from reciprocal inference is found whenever that which should be confirmatory of the thing requiring to be proved itself has to borrow credit from the latter, as, for example, if anyone seeking to establish the existence of pores on the ground that emanations take place should take this (the existence of pores) as proof that there are emanations.³¹

[90] They would deny all demonstration, criterion, sign, cause, motion, the process of learning, coming into being, or that there is anything good or bad by nature. For all demonstration, say they, is constructed out of things either already proved or indemonstrable. If out of things already proved, those things too will require some demonstration, and so on *ad infinitum* ; if out of things indemonstrable, then, whether all or some or only a single one of the steps are the subject of doubt, the whole is indemonstrable.³² If you think, they add, that there are some things which need no demonstration, yours must be a rare intellect, not to see that you must first have demonstration of the very fact that the things you refer to carry conviction in themselves.

[91] Nor must we prove that the elements are four from the fact that the elements are four. Besides, if we discredit particular demonstrations, we cannot accept the generalization from them. And in order that we may know that an argument constitutes a demonstration, we require a criterion ; but again, in order that we may know that it is a criterion we require a demonstration ; hence both the one and the other are incomprehensible, since each is referred to the other. How then are we to grasp the things which are uncertain, seeing that we know no demonstration ? For what we wish to ascertain is not whether things appear to be such and such, but whether they are so in their essence.

They declared the dogmatic philosophers to be fools, observing that what is concluded *ex hypothesi* is properly described not as inquiry but assumption, and by reasoning of this kind one may even argue for impossibilities.

[92] As for those who think that we should not judge of truth from surrounding circumstances or legislate on the basis of what is found in nature, these men, they used to say, made themselves the measure of all things, and did not see that every phenomenon appears in a certain disposition and in a certain reciprocal relation to surrounding circumstances. Therefore we must affirm either that all things are true or that all things are false. For if certain things only are true [and others are false], how are we to distinguish them ? Not by the senses, where things in the field of sense are in question, since all these things appear to sense to be on an equal footing; nor by the mind, for the same reason. Yet apart from these faculties there is no other, so far as we can see, to help us to a judgement. Whoever therefore, they say, would be firmly assured about anything sensible or intelligible must first establish the received opinions about it ; for some have refuted

one doctrine, others another. But things must be judged either by the sensible or by the intelligible, and both are disputed.

[93] Therefore it is impossible to pronounce judgement on opinions about sensibles or intelligibles ; and if the conflict in our thoughts compels us to disbelieve every one, the standard or measure, by which it is held that all things are exactly determined, will be destroyed, and we must deem every statement of equal value. Further, say they, our partner in an inquiry into a phenomenon is either to be trusted or not. If he is, he will have nothing to reply to the man to whom it appears to be the opposite³³ ; for just as our friend who describes what appears to him is to be trusted, so is his opponent. If he is not to be trusted, he will actually be disbelieved when he describes what appears to him.

[94] We must not assume that what convinces us is actually true. For the same thing does not convince every one, nor even the same people always. Persuasiveness 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.

Again, they would destroy the criterion by reasoning of this kind. Even the criterion has either been critically determined or not. If it has not, it is definitely untrustworthy, and in its purpose of distinguishing is no more true than false. If it has, it will belong to the class of particular judgements, so that one and the same thing determines and is determined, and the criterion which has determined will have to be determined by another, that other by another, and so on *ad infinitum*.

[95] In addition to this there is disagreement as to the criterion, some holding that man is the criterion, while for some it is the senses, for others reason, for others the apprehensive presentation. Now man disagrees with man and with himself, as is shown by differences of laws and customs. The senses deceive, and reason says different things. Finally, the apprehensive presentation is judged by the mind, and the mind itself changes in various ways. Hence the criterion is unknowable, and consequently truth also.

[96] They deny, too, that there is such a thing as a sign. If there is, they say, it must either be sensible or intelligible. Now it is not sensible, because what is sensible is a common attribute, whereas a sign is a particular thing. Again, the sensible is one of the things which exist by way of difference, while the sign belongs to the category of relative. Nor is a sign an object of thought, for objects of thought are of four kinds, apparent judgements on things apparent, non-apparent judgements on things nonapparent, non-apparent on apparent, or apparent on non-apparent ; and a sign is none of these, so that there is no such thing as a sign. A sign is not "apparent on apparent," for what is apparent needs no sign ; nor is it non-apparent on non-apparent, for what is revealed by something must needs appear ; nor is it non-apparent on apparent, for that which is to afford the means of apprehending something else must itself be apparent ;

[97] nor, lastly, is it apparent on non-apparent, because the sign, being relative, must be apprehended along with that of which it is the sign, which is not here the case. It follows that

nothing uncertain can be apprehended ; for it is through signs that uncertain things are said to be apprehended.³⁴

Causes, too, they destroy in this way. A cause is something relative ; for it is relative to what can be caused, namely, the effect. But things which are relative are merely objects of thought and have no substantial existence.

[98] Therefore a cause can only be an object of thought ; inasmuch as, if it be a cause, it must bring with it that of which it is said to be the cause, otherwise it will not be a cause. Just as a father, in the absence of that in relation to which he is called father, will not be a father, so too with a cause. But that in relation to which the cause is thought of, namely the effect, is not present ; for there is no coming into being or passing away or any other process : therefore there is no such thing as cause. Furthermore, if there is a cause, either bodies are the cause of bodies, or things incorporeal of things incorporeal ; but neither is the case ; therefore there is no such thing as cause. Body in fact could not be the cause of body, inasmuch as both have the same nature. And if either is called a cause in so far as it is a body, the other, being a body, will become a cause.

[99] But if both be alike causes, there will be nothing to be acted upon Nor can an incorporeal thing be the cause of an incorporeal thing, for the same reason. And a thing incorporeal cannot be the cause of a body, since nothing incorporeal creates anything corporeal. And, lastly, a body cannot be the cause of anything incorporeal, because what is produced must be of the material operated upon ; but if it is not operated upon because it is incorporeal, it cannot be produced by anything whatever. Therefore there is no such thing as a cause. A corollary to this is their statement that the first principles of the universe have no real existence ; for in that case something must have been there to create and act.

Furthermore there is no motion ; for that which moves moves either in the place where it is or in a place where it is not. But it cannot move in the place where it is, still less in any place where it is not. Therefore there is no such thing as motion.

[100] They used also to deny the possibility of learning. If anything is taught, they say, either the existent is taught through its existence or the non-existent through its non-existence. But the existent is not taught through its existence, for the nature of existing things is apparent to and recognized by all ; nor is the non-existent taught through the nonexistent, for with the non-existent nothing is ever done, so that it cannot be taught to anyone.

Nor, say they, is there any coming into being. For that which is does not come into being, since it *is* ; nor yet that which is not, for it has no substantial existence, and that which is neither substantial nor existent cannot have had the chance of coming into being either.

[101] There is nothing good or bad by nature, for if there is anything good or bad by nature, it must be good or bad for all persons alike, just as snow is cold to all. But there is no good or bad which is such to all persons in common; therefore there is no such thing as good or bad by nature. For either all that is thought good by anyone whatever must be called good, or not all. Certainly all cannot be so called ; since one and the same thing is thought good by one person

and bad by another ; for instance, Epicurus thought pleasure good and Antisthenes thought it bad ; thus on our supposition it will follow that the same thing is both good and bad. But if we say that not all that anyone thinks good is good, we shall have to judge the different opinions ; and this is impossible because of the equal validity of opposing arguments. Therefore the good by nature is unknowable.

[102] The whole of their mode of inference can be gathered from their extant treatises. Pyrrho himself, indeed, left no writings, but his associates Timon, Aenesidemus, Numenius and Nausiphanes did ; and others as well.

The dogmatists answer them by declaring that the Sceptics themselves do apprehend and dogmatize; for when they are thought to be refuting their hardest they do apprehend, for at the very same time they are asseverating and dogmatizing. Thus even when they declare that they determine nothing, and that to every argument there is an opposite argument, they are actually determining these very points and dogmatizing.

[103] ³⁵The others reply, "We confess to human weaknesses ; for we recognize that it is day and that we are alive, and many other apparent facts in life ; but with regard to the things about which our opponents argue so positively, claiming to have definitely apprehended them, we suspend our judgement because they are not certain, and confine knowledge to our impressions.³⁶ For we admit that we see, and we recognize that we think this or that, but how we see or how we think we know not. And we say in conversation that a certain thing appears white, but we are not positive that it really is white. As to our 'We determine nothing' and the like,³⁷ we use the expressions in an undogmatic sense,

[104] for they are not like the assertion that the world is spherical. Indeed the latter statement is not certain, but the others are mere admissions. Thus in saying 'We determine nothing,' we are *not* determining even that."

Again, the dogmatic philosophers maintain that the Sceptics do away with life itself, in that they reject all that life consists in. The others say this is false, for they do not deny that we see ; they only say that they do not know how we see. "We admit the apparent fact," say they, "without admitting that it really is what it appears to be." We also perceive that fire burns ; as to whether it is its nature to burn, we suspend our judgement.

[105] We see that a man moves, and that he perishes ; how it happens we do not know. We merely object to accepting the unknown substance behind phenomena. When we say a picture has projections, we are describing what is apparent ; but if we say that it has no projections, we are then speaking, not of what is apparent, but of something else. This is what makes Timon say in his *Python* that he has not gone outside what is customary. And again in the *Conceits* he says³⁸

:
But the apparent is omnipotent wherever it goes ;
and in his work *On the Senses*, "I do not lay it down that honey is sweet, but I admit that it appears to be so."

[106] Aenesidemus too in the first book of his *Pyrrhonean Discourses* says that Pyrrho determines nothing dogmatically, because of the possibility of contradiction, but guides himself by apparent facts. Aenesidemus says the same in his works *Against Wisdom* and *On Inquiry*. Furthermore Zeuxis, the friend of Aenesidemus, in his work *On Two-sided Arguments*, Antiochus of Laodicea, and Apellas in his *Agrippa* all hold to phenomena alone. Therefore the apparent is the Sceptic's criterion, as indeed Aenesidemus says ; and so does Epicurus. Democritus, however, denied that any apparent fact could be a criterion, indeed he denied the very existence of the apparent.

[107] Against this criterion of appearances the dogmatic philosophers urge that, when the same appearances produce in us different impressions, e.g. a round or square tower, the Sceptic, unless he gives the preference to one or other, will be unable to take any course ; if on the other hand, say they, he follows either view, he is then no longer allowing equal value to all apparent facts. The Sceptics reply that, when different impressions are produced, they must both be said to appear³⁹ ; for things which are apparent are so called because they appear. The end to be realized they hold to be suspension of judgement, which brings with it tranquillity like its shadow : so Timon and Aenesidemus declare.

[108] For in matters which are for us to decide we shall neither choose this nor shrink from that ; and things which are not for us to decide but happen of necessity, such as hunger, thirst and pain, we cannot escape,⁴⁰ for they are not to be removed by force of reason. And when the dogmatists argue that he may thus live in such a frame of mind that he would not shrink from killing and eating his own father if ordered to do so, the Sceptic replies that he will be able so to live as to suspend his judgement in cases where it is a question of arriving at the truth, but not in matters of life and the taking of precautions. Accordingly we may choose a thing or shrink from a thing by habit and may observe rules and customs. According to some authorities the end proposed by the Sceptics is insensibility ; according to others, gentleness.⁴¹

Notes

¹ For "Stilpo's son Bryson" Roeser's conjecture βρύσων ος ἢ Στίλπων ος (*Philolog.* xxx. 462) would substitute "under Bryson or Stilpo." In any case chronology seems to forbid the supposition that Pyrrho was a pupil of either Stilpo or Bryson.

² i.e. a particular act is no more just than unjust.

³ Here Diels would insert in the text words which would make the meaning "easily moved by the applause of the crowd and ambitious of fame."

⁴ The citation from the *Pytho* is lost.

⁵ Fr. 48 D.

⁶ *Il.* ii. 796 ; *Od.* xvi. 465.

⁷ Fr. 67 D.

⁸ *Il.* vi. 146.

⁹ *Il.* xxi. 106 f.

¹⁰ Here, it would seem, the materials which can be traced to Antigonus of Carystus come to an end. The source of the long passage §§ 69-108, with which must go the Sceptical Succession, §§ 115-116, is not obvious. It may be supposed that D. L. with his seeming partiality for the school (*cf.* § 109) has here taken pains to collect as much new material as possible. It is hardly likely that, without personal bias, a biographer would draw upon "the commentary

of Apollonides on the *Silli* of Timon which he dedicated to Tiberius Caesar," and the like. It has indeed been said that D. L. had access to a sceptical monograph which he either had or wished to have copied for himself. If so, it must have been by a contemporary, or at any rate a writer not earlier than Antiochus of Laodicea (§ 106) and Sextus Empiricus (§ 87).

11 Cf. *Od.* xxi. 364.

12 Fr. 70 B.

13 *Supplices*, 735-737.

14 Fr. 34 D.

15 This proverbial expression is inadequate ; a more literal rendering of ἐν βύθῳ would be "in an abyss."

16 *Tim.* 40 d.

17 Nauck, *T.G.F.*², *Eur.* 638 ; *Polyid.* Fr. 7.

18 Fr. 2, l. 7.

19 *Ib.* l. 5.

20 Fr. 47 D., 48 B.

21 *Il.* xx. 248-250.

22 διετέλλουν, imperfect.

23 *Inf.* § 104.

24 *i.e.* "Every saying has its corresponding opposite" (*supra*, § 74).

25 Here (as in § 104) the writer, whether D. L or his source, seems to pose as a Sceptic himself ; *cf.* *Introd.* p. xiii.

26 If, however, with Reiske we here read της for τας, the meaning is: "The objections urged *against* the (supposed) consistency of our percepts or our concepts, were arranged by them under ten modes."

27 Cf. Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* i. §§ 36-163.

28 Fr. 103 Rose.

29 As contrasted, *e.g.*, with a comet; *cf.* Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* i. 141.

30 Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* i. 37 ὄγδοος ὁ ἀπὸ τοῦ πρὸς τι. The intention of Agrippa was to *replace* the ten modes by his five.

31 This is what is commonly called arguing in a circle.

32 Compare Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* ii. 185. "The dogmatists assert that the sceptical arguments against demonstration are either demonstrative or non-demonstrative. If the latter, they fail to establish their point [namely, that there is no such thing as demonstration] ; if the former, the Sceptics by assuming demonstration confute themselves."

33 *e.g.* to be not a serpent, but a coil of rope.

34 This conclusion would debar us from all extension of knowledge beyond what is apparent here and now ; whereas the dogmatists permit us from such facts to advance to what is not immediately evident, the realm of the unknown or as yet unascertained ἄδηλον.

35 § 77.

36 *i.e.* all we know is that we feel. Cf. *supra*, ii. § 92.

37 § 74.

38 Fr. 69 D.

39 *i.e.* the one has as much right to be called an appearance as the other.

40 Τὰ δ' ὅσα περὶ ἡμᾶς οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ κατ' ἀνάγκη γ, οὐ δυνάμεθα φεύγει γ. This is explained by Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* i. 29 ὀχλεῖς θαί φамεν (sc. τὸν σκεπτικὸν ὄν ὑπὸ τῶν κατ- ηναγκα σμένων: "For we admit that we feel cold, that we are thirsty," etc.

41 *i.e.* a calm, the opposite of an excitable, temperament : *cf.* Plato, *Lys* 211 e πράως ἔγω.

Lives of Eminent Philosophers. Diogenes Laertius. R.D. Hicks. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1972 (First published 1925).

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