

## Pyrrho on the Criterion

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Fresh, innovative interpretations that challenge a standing orthodoxy are always a welcome arrival in scholarship. Over the last decade or so, a group of writings including Bett 1994, Brunschwig 1994, Decleva Caizzi 1981, 224-227, Hankinson 1995, 59-62, and Long and Sedley 1987, i 16-17 and ii 6, have developed just such a new interpretation of Pyrrho, in opposition to a host of others ranging from Annas and Barnes 1985, 11 to Zeller 1909, 501. Unfortunately, this new interpretation seems wrong in every essential point. Because his version of it is the most extensively argued, and by and large the most sensible, I shall focus on the revisionist interpretation as it appears in the work of Bett; but no special censure of his version is intended. My disagreement involves points on which all of the scholars listed above diverge from the orthodoxy. So my task in this article is the unexciting and perhaps unwelcome one of showing why the orthodoxy should stand.

The central issue is the interpretation of two lines of Aristocles' summary of Timon's account of Pyrrho, as that summary was excerpted by Eusebius. Since an emendation is at stake, I shall first translate the textus receptus, and then translate Zeller's emendation, underlining the only phrase that differs:

TR He [Timon] says that he [Pyrrho] declares that the things (πράγματα) are equally indifferent, and unweighable, and unjudgeable; because of this (διὰ τοῦτο), neither our sensations nor our opinions tell the truth or lie.

ZE He [Timon] says that he [Pyrrho] declares that the things (πράγματα) are equally indifferent, and unweighable, and unjudgeable, because of the fact that (διὰ τὸ) neither our sensations nor our opinions tell the truth or lie.

The core of the orthodox view may be summed up as follows:

(1) In the second line διὰ τοῦτο should be emended to διὰ τὸ, because of linguistic irregularities (to be discussed below) and general philosophical coherence.

(2) In the second line, the claim that our sensations and opinions do not tell the truth or lie means that they do not reliably or constantly tell the truth or lie. Each individual sensation or opinion is either true or false, but our senses and our opinions have not the kind of uniform veridicality that criteria must have.

(3) The (emended) second line gives the rationale for the claim made in the first line ('because of the fact that'), so that the claim about the *pragmata* is an inference from the claim about our sensations and opinions; the unjudgeability

(etc.) of the *pragmata* is inferred from our lack of any criterion, whether of an empiricist or rationalist sort.

(4) The first claim, about the *pragmata*, is primarily a claim about our epistemic access to them; they are indifferent only in that *we* cannot reliably differentiate them, unweighable only in that *we* cannot reliably ascertain their weight, unjudgeable only in that *we* are unable to judge them. But no claim about their intrinsic natures is being made.

And thus Pyrrho is seen as a prototype of the later Pyrrhonists, who argue that neither the senses nor reason provide any criterion, thus leaving us unable to make confident declarations about the true nature of things in themselves.

The core of the new revisionist view is as follows (the quotations are from Bett 1994):

(1) The emendation should not be accepted, because the linguistic irregularities do not show 'that the text found in the manuscripts is untenable as Greek' (143), and the emendation 'does not give us a coherent argument' (167).

(2) The orthodox translation of the second line is impossible Greek: '*alêtheuein* does not mean "reliably, or constantly tell the truth"; it means simply tell the truth' (168). So the second claim must mean that each individual episode of sensation or opinion neither tells the truth nor lies, in the sense that each one is neither true nor false.<sup>1</sup>

(3) The *first* line gives the rationale for the claim made in the (unemended) *second* line ('because of this'), so that the claim about our sensations and opinions is an inference from the claim about the *pragmata*; the fact that sensation and opinion are neither true nor false *follows from* reality's lack of definite character.

(4) The first claim, about the *pragmata*, is a claim about the very nature of the objects; they are in themselves undifferentiated, unstable, and indeterminate, so that 'reality has, in itself, no definite character' (153).

Thus on the revisionist view, Pyrrho has a strong and indeed extraordinary metaphysical view, and also a surprising view about sensations and opinions, that each and every one of them fails the law of bivalence. And Pyrrho's view was fundamentally different from that of later Pyrrhonists, whose interests were primarily epistemological. Indeed, Bett often characterizes the orthodox and revisionist readings as respectively 'epistemological' and 'metaphysical'. And taking Pyrrho to have been a metaphysician leads Bett to reconceive the entire history of ancient skepticism, since its originating figure was, in some sense, not a skeptic at all.

Now Bett's argumentative strategy is to set the first two issues about emendation and translation in abeyance, and compare the epistemological and metaphysical readings of his translation of the unemended text. Because the arguments for emendation often presuppose the correctness of the epistemological interpretation, while the emendation, once made, is usually held to support that very inter-

<sup>1</sup> It is not clear, from Bett's comments, whether each one lacks *any* truth-value at all, or has a new truth-value, 'neither-true-nor-false'; he seems to lean towards the first option.

pretation, Bett suggests that we should attempt to decide between these interpretations before contemplating emendation, so as to avoid begging the question.

All parties are agreed that, without the emendation, the second claim (about the truth and falsehood of our sensations and opinions) must be an inference from the first (about the nature of the *pragmata*). Bett argues that, on the epistemological reading, the inference makes no sense at all; there would be no way of inferring the second claim from the first. But on his metaphysical reading, the second can be derived very naturally from the first. Thus his interpretation is clearly to be preferred on grounds of argumentative coherence.

He then argues that if the unemended text, far from supporting the epistemological interpretation, instead shows that the metaphysical reading is unequivocally right, then it would be merely question-begging to emend the text in order to produce a better epistemological argument. Thus no philosophical considerations should be allowed to influence the decision whether to emend, and the linguistic considerations offer no good reason for emendation either. Furthermore, Bett claims that it is the emended text, not the unemended one, which is deeply incoherent; it relies on a translation of ἀληθεύειν which, the revisionist view claims, is not possible Greek.

Here is how I shall answer Bett's arguments. First, I shall meet him on his chosen ground, by focussing on the two inferences that he compares: the inferences, given his translation of the unemended text, from the first to the second line, on the metaphysical and epistemological readings. Here is what we shall see: in order for Bett to make his inference work, on the metaphysical reading, he needs to make a crucial metaphysical assumption that he never argues for. Without that assumption, in its metaphysical form, his inference would not go through. Conversely, his refutation of the epistemological inference succeeds only because he does not offer his opponent a parallel, epistemological assumption. If he were to grant to the epistemological view a version of his own assumption, it would succeed just as well as his own inference does.

Thus the argumentative coherence of the unemended text gives us no reason to prefer Bett's reading to the traditional one. Either reading can be made coherent by granting assumptions, or refuted by withholding them; this whole strand of Bett's argument is a dead end.

Then, I turn to Aristocles' treatise, in order to show how a better understanding of its structure supports the epistemological reading; what is at issue, throughout the sections that Eusebius excerpted, is the cognitive reliability of candidate criteria. In a third section, I show that the revisionist view about what ἀληθεύειν can and cannot mean is simply false; several ancient passages show the verb being used to refer to habitual or constant truth-telling. With a better sense of the Eusebian context and the facts of lexicography at hand, I reconsider the cogency of the arguments for emendation. In summation, I conclude that the traditional emendation, the traditional translation of ἀληθεύειν, and the traditional understanding of Pyrrho's skepticism are all clearly superior to the recent revisionist proposals.

### I. Comparing the Inferences

Let us turn to Bett's comparison of the two inferences. In either case, we must move from a claim about the *pragmata*, either that they are epistemologically inaccessible or that they are metaphysically indeterminate, to a claim about our sensations and opinions. I print his comments, which start with the refutation of the epistemological inference.

Now, what understanding of the [claim about *pragmata*] makes this a plausible inference? To say that we are incapable of differentiating between things, measuring them, or determining [=discovering]<sup>2</sup> their character, and that *therefore* our sensations and opinions are neither true nor false, would be nonsense. If we were incapable of determining [=discovering] how things are, we would be equally incapable of determining [=discovering] the truth-value of our sensations and opinions; but, to repeat, the inference is not that *we cannot tell* whether they are true or false, but that *they are neither*.

On the other hand, if things are, in their own nature, 'indifferent and unstable and indeterminate', then it makes very good sense to infer that our sensations and opinions are neither true nor false. For, in order for a sensation or an opinion to be either true or false, there must be some *state of affairs* which the sensation or opinion either correctly or incorrectly represents. But if reality has, in itself, no definite character, there are *no* states of affairs within the world; that is, nothing in the world is determinately either the case or not the case. Hence our sensations and opinions, which exhibit things in the world as having a certain definite character, are neither true nor false. They are not true, since that would require that their objects be determinately the way they present them as being. But a sensation or opinion cannot be false, either, since that too would require that there be some definite state of affairs, a state of affairs which is contrary to the one which the sensation or opinion portrays. (Bett 1994, 153, italics original, paragraph division added)

First I want to examine Bett's own metaphysical inference, to see how it depends on three crucial assumptions. Then, having uncovered its mechanisms, we shall see how his refutation of the epistemological inference depends on his withholding exactly those three assumptions. If they or parallel versions of them are granted, then the epistemological inference works perfectly well; and we can even learn how to coin new interpretations that will satisfy Bett's test.

The first assumption that is crucial to Bett's argument is an exemption-clause

<sup>2</sup> Because the word 'determine' is notoriously ambiguous, I have added the bracketed gloss 'discover' wherever Bett clearly intended it in its epistemological sense.

that saves his view from self-refutation—and he is perfectly cognizant of its role.<sup>3</sup> The claim about *pragmata* says that none of them are definite, the claim about opinions says none of them are true; if that is so, how can Pyrrho have an opinion about sensations and opinions that is both a definite and true opinion, without immediately contradicting both claims? Bett argues that we should distinguish, first, between things ‘within the world’, namely, the *pragmata*, and ‘the world as a whole’. While no *pragma* is determinate, it is ‘determinately the case that reality is indeterminate’. But second of all, Bett claims that ‘opinion’ (*doxa*) should be given a special sense in this passage; it refers only to ‘ordinary, everyday opinions’, not metaphysical pronouncements like Pyrrho’s. Thus the second claim escapes both its own censure (it can be true even though no opinion is) and the scope of the first claim (it makes a second-order claim about *pragmata*, and so is outside of the scope of the first-order claim). This is the first of the three props on which Bett’s argument rests.<sup>4</sup>

The second assumption Bett needs is a claim about how sensations and opinions are falsified; the claim is that falsehood requires the obtaining of the negation (FON), so that ‘P’ is false only if ‘~P’ obtains. This is what allows Bett to bootstrap from the non-truth of sensations and opinions to their non-falsehood; if none is true, and the falsehood of any requires that some true ones obtain, then none is false either.

This assumption, too, Bett is aware of, because he has to explain why the indefiniteness of reality does not simply lead to the falsehood of all sensations or opinions. Strangely, however, Bett speaks of FON as though it were axiomatic:

It might be objected that a sensation or opinion to the effect that  $x$  is  $F$  is false just in case  $\sim(x \text{ is } F)$ , and that, if reality is not definite,  $\sim(x \text{ is } F)$ . But this is not correct. If reality is not definite, we cannot truly assert that  $\sim(x \text{ is } F)$ ; on the contrary, that it is not the case that  $x$  is  $F$  would itself be a determinate state of affairs. If there are no determinate states of affairs, neither the state of affairs denominated by ‘ $\sim(x \text{ is } F)$ ’ nor the state of affairs denominated by ‘ $x \text{ is } F$ ’ either obtains or does not obtain.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Bett 1994, 153n47 and 162n69 for the quotations in this paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> In passing, I question his claim that  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  here can mean ‘ordinary opinion’ to the exclusion of metaphysical pronouncements, and that such a usage is ‘standard in Greek philosophy’. Bett cites Parmenides’ use of  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  as evidence for this, but I should have thought it was completely unclear who the authors of *doxa* in Parmenides are; at any rate, many critics have thought that the *doxa* lambasted in his poem is exactly another philosophical view, whether a Heraclitean one, or his own earlier view, or an elaboration of physical theories current at the time. Timon himself in fr. 60 lumps *doxa* along with the empty wisdom of sophists and meteorological speculations about the winds, so that it probably includes philosophically elaborated speculation. Given this, it is most implausible to suppose, with Bett, that Timon used it in Aristocles’ source with the meaning ‘ordinary opinion—excluding philosophical theories, at the cost of self-refutation!’

<sup>5</sup> Bett 1994, 154n48. Bett is over-zealous in this last clause. To make the first-order *pragma* indeterminate, it is sufficient to claim that neither  $P$  nor  $\sim P$  obtain. If we go further and say that nei-

'But this is not correct'? This is mere arbitrary stipulation, covered with a semi-formal fig-leaf. If there is anything indeterminate in this world, it is whether, in natural languages, a sentence is falsified by a state of affair's not obtaining, or only by the obtaining of its negation.

With artificial languages, of course, it is indeterminate for another reason, in that one is at liberty to choose either way. If you want to make non-obtaining sufficient for falsehood, then in writing up the interpretation you say 'a sentence P is true iff this, this or this; and false otherwise'. Or, if you want to make the obtaining of the negation necessary, then you say 'a sentence P is true iff this, this, or this; and false iff  $\sim$ P obtains'. The first way ensures bivalence, the second way permits truth-value gaps in case neither P nor  $\sim$ P obtains. The choice is completely arbitrary, and neither is 'the correct way'.

In natural languages, on the other hand, who is to say whether P is false in case P does not obtain, or only in case  $\sim$ P *does* obtain? I do not believe that there is any answer to the question in English or Greek, because they evolved in such a way that the question never arose and was never settled. Whatever conception of falseness is native to our mother tongues, it has surely never had to choose between the two options, and I doubt that it has the resources with which to do it now.<sup>6</sup> The most Bett might claim here is that Pyrrho himself must have assumed that P is false only if  $\sim$ P obtains, and how he can prove that independently of the issue at hand I cannot imagine. But let us grant this second assumption to him, provided that he will grant it to others.

The last, and most important assumption, requires some excavation, and is best revealed by challenging Bett's claim about the cogency of his metaphysical inference. Why should it follow, we may ask, that if there are no definite states of affairs in reality itself, then no sensation or opinion is true or false? Since the part about falsehood follows, by the last assumption, from the lack of truth, we may focus just on this claim, which we may put by letting P stand for the content of any sensation or opinion. Bett holds the following thesis about verification:

P is true iff there is some definite, determinate state of affairs  
that it correctly represents.

But we may ask three questions, as follow:

(1) Why is an indefinite state of affairs not sufficient to verify P? Suppose P='the rose is red', when in fact, the rose is only indefinitely or indeterminately red. Why should we not say that P is true? After all, we say 'the table is flat' is true,

ther P nor  $\sim$ P 'either obtains or *does not obtain*', then we have indeterminacy at the second-order, which was denied by the exemption-clause. Now it would no longer be 'determinately the case that reality is indeterminate', as Bett earlier claimed, but only indeterminately the case. Or equivalently, 'if there are no determinate states of affairs', then one thing that is determined is that no determinate state of affairs obtains; take any state of affairs you like, it *does not obtain* (since there are none). I henceforth ignore the last clause.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, Bett's proposal is structurally parallel to the route by which Intuitionist logicians reject the law of the excluded middle as a consequence of understanding 'P' to mean something like 'a proof of P is constructible'. But that Intuitionist rules for negation are the right ones for natural languages seems like a large claim to make in an aside.

when it is only roughly flat; why will not the indefinite state of affairs of the rose's being red verify 'the rose is red'? Without hearing much more about the sort of indeterminacy that plagues the world, it is quite unclear why it should prevent statements from being true.

(2) If the indeterminacy of the state of affairs makes us unwilling to say that P is *true*, should it not also make us hesitate to say that it is *not* true? Will not the real upshot of the indeterminacy in the world be that it becomes simply indeterminate *whether* P is true or not? How can the question of P's truth, 'correctness of representation', correspondence, etc. be more determinate than one member of the correspondence permits? (How can the distance between two points be more definite than the location of one of them?) So we will not be able to infer from metaphysical indeterminacy that sensations and opinions are not true; only that they are indeterminately true, or that it is indeterminate whether they are true or not.

(3) If we suppose that only fully determinate truth is worthy of consideration (contra 2) and only exact matches suffice (contra 1), then why will not the indeterminate state of affairs verify a second assertion P\*, namely, 'the rose is indeterminately red'? If truth merely requires that our assertion accurately represent the state of affairs, then why can we not represent indeterminate states of affairs with indeterminate assertions, and speak the truth? So metaphysical indeterminacy does not rule out true sensations and opinions, if these themselves can represent that very indeterminacy; many sensations and opinions will then be true, even in a metaphysically indeterminate world. Bett has not, after all, showed a valid inference from indeterminacy to lack of truth-value.

Bett's answer to all three of these questions is to be found, I believe, in his claim that 'sensation and opinion exhibit reality as having a certain definite character' (Bett 1994, 153 quoted above). Apparently, it is part of the implicit content of the assertions that sensation and opinion make, that what they tell us about is definitely, determinately the case. Sight, then, never merely says 'the rose is red'; it claims 'the rose is definitely, determinately red'.

And that means that, so far as (3) goes, no sensation or opinion really *could* have the content 'the rose is indeterminately red'; they never speak but with complete confidence. And so far as (1) and (2) go, we can now see why P is *not* true, and *determinately* not true, since P actively *misrepresents* a key feature of the state of affairs, by labeling it a definite or determinate one. P says that the rose is definitely, determinately red, and so far as the claim of redness goes, P might be pretty close, or true, or of indeterminate truth value. But so far as the claim of definiteness or determinacy goes, P is simply and flatly *not* true. No state of affairs is determinate, but every sensation and opinion says it is determinate; so none of them can be true.

Thus we see that to make his metaphysical inference work, Bett needs what we might call an Assumption of Metaphysical Content (AMC); every sensation and opinion makes an implicit metaphysical claim about the definiteness of the state of affairs it represents. Otherwise, Bett's inference from indeterminacy to lack of

truth simply will not go through.

Now, here again, I am willing to grant Bett's assumption; I say nothing about its plausibility per se, or as a view about sensation and impression that Pyrrho might have held. But it is important to point out not only that it is an assumption, but that it is a *metaphysical* assumption. Bett's metaphysical inference works, only because Bett has packed some metaphysical content into sensations and opinions. If these did not make the implicit metaphysical claim about the definiteness of reality, then they would not need definite states of affairs for their verification, and then metaphysical indeterminacy would be equally compatible with true sensations and opinions. Bett's interpretation is thus valid, but question-begging.

This should become even clearer if we consider his refutation of the epistemological inference. We shall see that, by making an assumption parallel to Bett's, which we shall call the Assumption of Epistemological Content, we can render the epistemological inference a good one, and defeat Bett's refutation. The core of which I repeat here:

[The epistemological inference] would be nonsense. If we were incapable of determining [=discovering] how things are, we would be equally incapable of determining [=discovering] the truth-value of our sensations and opinions.

Now part of Bett's refutation seems to be an argument that the second claim about sensations and opinions *contradicts* the first claim about undiscoverability. Another part seems to be an argument that the second claim merely *fails to follow* from the first claim.<sup>7</sup>

The argument about *contradiction* is suggested by the word 'equally'; if all things are undiscoverable (as the first claim says), and the sensations and opinions are part of all things, then they too ('equally') should be undiscoverable (as an instance of the universal claim), and so their being neither true nor false should be undiscoverable, since that is an aspect of them.

But here, Bett has already shown us the way out; merely claim some sort of ad hoc exemption for the statement about sensations and opinions (see his claims about sensations and opinions not being 'within the world', and '*doxa*' having a special meaning here). Everything else is undiscoverable, except this queer fact about sensations and opinions.<sup>8</sup> This is merely the parallel version of what Bett

<sup>7</sup> Note here how we may rewrite Bett's refutation of the rival epistemological view, to apply to the metaphysical view: Bett's derivation 'would be nonsense, for if there is no determinateness to how things are, then there is no determinateness to whether sensation are true or false or not; but, to repeat, the inference is not that *it is indeterminate* whether they are true or false, but that *they are neither*'.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, to say that it is discoverable does not illuminate how it might be discovered. A parallel problem arises for Bett, for whom Pyrrho's view that the world is indeterminate has to have arisen without any reliance on the contents of sensation and opinion (since they are never true or false), and without even relying on this general fact about their non-bivalence (since that has to be inferred from indeterminacy, and so cannot precede it). Why did it ever occur to Pyrrho to suppose the world is indeterminate to begin with, if not because of some features of our experience of it? Here



does in order to say that the statement about sensations can be determinate, after the first has said, on his reading, that everything is indeterminate.

Now consider the implicit charge that the second statement *fails to follow* from the first. The idea seems to be that we could never infer the second, i.e., the non-bivalence of sensations and opinions, from the first, i.e. the undiscoverability of all things, because we would need to *discover* the truth about things before we could convict sensations and opinions of being neither true nor false. But Bett has already shown us how to surmount this obstacle, too.

Suppose that we thought that every deliverance of the senses, and every opinion, made an implicit claim about its own success in discovering its contents. E.g., the sight of a red rose would have the content, not only that the rose is red, but that *sight has discovered* that the rose is red. My opinion that red wines are better than white ones would have the implicit content that *I have discovered* that red wines are better than white ones. So every sensation, and every opinion, would contain a virtual claim to discovery, and therefore a claim that its contents was discoverable. Our sensations and opinions, in other words, would exhibit reality as having a certain *discoverable* character.<sup>9</sup>

Now if every sensation and opinion makes an implicit claim about discoverability, then the second statement will, after all, follow from the first, just as much on this 'epistemological' reading as on Bett's metaphysical reading. Since every sensation or opinion contains not only its explicit content (e.g., that the rose is red), but also a claim about discoverability, then since (by the first statement) nothing actually is discoverable, it follows that the sensation or opinion cannot be true. But then neither can it be false, either, by Bett's rule for falsehood, FON. In order for the sensation or opinion that  $x$  is  $F$  to be false,  $\sim(x \text{ is } F)$  must obtain. And that is equivalent to the claim that it is *discoverable* that  $x$  is not  $F$ . But that can never be true, either, since by the first statement nothing is discoverable, neither that  $x$  is  $F$ , nor that it is not. So since ' $\sim(x \text{ is } F)$ ' does not obtain, the original sensation or opinion is not false, either.

And this argument, like Bett's, is perfectly valid, and begs the question. If we pack epistemological content into sensations and opinions, then an epistemological thesis about *pragmata* will bring it about that none of them are true. In both cases, we read the first premiss as denying some meta-feature—definiteness, or discoverability—to the *pragmata*, and then say that every sensation and opinion ascribes exactly that meta-feature to the *pragmata*, and so cannot be true.

Furthermore, notice how we could coin other interpretations from the same mold, just by varying the meta-feature. For instance, we might suppose that ἀστάθμητα means 'temporally unstable', in the Heraclitean sense; everything is in flux, and though each thing is fully fitted out with properties at every instant, at the next instant it has a different lot. (And although this fact about 'the world

Pyrrho is saddled with another dogma.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Bett 1994, 153 'our sensations and opinions exhibit reality as having a certain definite character'.

as a whole' is a static one, we escape any danger of self-refutation by exempting it from the fluidity swirling around the first-order statements.) And then we introduce the Assumption of Durational Content: sensation and opinion (we say) 'exhibit the world as having' a certain static, durational character (perhaps because the psychological present is always longer than the actual, durationless instant). Even when sight says the rose is red *now*, its 'now' is longer than, in fluid reality, the rose was really red. Therefore, sight and opinion are never true. But then they are never false, either, since that would require that the negation obtain, etc. So we can derive the non-bivalence of sensation and opinion from the temporal instability of the *pragmata*, making Pyrrho a kind of Cratylean.

Of course, that these three derivations are exactly parallel does not mean that they are all equally plausible; that will depend upon the relative plausibility of the various versions of the Assumption of Implicit Content. And I find, naturally, little plausibility in the view that Pyrrho will have been a Cratylean. But I do not see that Bett's Assumption of Metaphysical Content is one wit more plausible than its Epistemological counterpart. It may be that every sensation and opinion 'exhibits reality as having a certain definite character', and it may be that Pyrrho thought it; but I find it just as plausible that every sensation and opinion makes a claim to have *discovered* something.

The point of this extended exercise in *parabolê* should be repeated; Bett helps himself to assumptions, but never offers any to his opponents. If he were to grant to his epistemological opponent those three moves—the ad hoc exemption of sensations and opinions from *pragmata* and *doxai*, the claim that they 'exhibit reality as having a certain character', and the FON rule for falsehood—then the view he claims to refute would look just as plausible as his own. Conversely, if we deny them to him, a version of his refutation applies equally well to his own metaphysical reading. Thus we should reject Bett's claim that '[f]or the argument to be coherent, therefore, Pyrrho must be making a claim about the real nature of things, not saying that we cannot know their nature'. The argumentative coherence of the unemended text tells us nothing about which interpretation to choose; to advance the dispute we must look elsewhere.

## II. The Structure of Aristocles' Treatise

Eusebius transcribes five sections from Aristocles: sections 17-22 of his fourteenth book.<sup>10</sup> Moraux has shown how there are, scattered throughout the five sections, various incidental comments, original to Aristocles' treatment, that strongly suggest that Eusebius has altered the order of the original sections, and also suggest how the original order may be reconstructed (Moraux 1984, ii 83-92).

In Eusebius, the sections are titled as follows:

§17 'Against the followers of Xenophanes and Parmenides, who reject sensations; from the Eighth Book of Aristocles' on Philosophy'

<sup>10</sup> I disregard his quotations of Aristocles in the eleventh and fifteenth books.

§18 ‘Against the Skeptics or So-called Ephectics, who declare that nothing is kataleptic’

§19 ‘Against the philosophers who follow Aristippus, who say that only the *Pathe* are *katalepta*, but the rest are not *katalepta*’

§20 ‘Against the followers of Metrodorus and Protagoras, who say that one should put one’s trust only in sensations’

§21 ‘Against the followers of Epicurus, who define pleasure as the *telos*’

The first of Eusebius’ sections, §17 against Xenophanes and Parmenides, begins with the lines ‘But there were others who gave out an utterance opposite to these ones. For they suppose that we ought to reject sensations and impressions.’ Now this seems a very abrupt way to begin a new discussion; who are Xenophanes and Parmenides other *than*, and what is their utterance opposite *to*? Both questions are answered if we take it that in Aristocles’ original treatment, §17 followed on Eusebius’ §20 (concerning Metrodorus and Protagoras), which begins ‘But there have been some who judged that we ought to put our trust only in sensations and impressions.’ Now we have sense: §20 tells us that there are some who say we should only trust impressions and sensations, and this was originally followed by §17, beginning ‘but others said the opposite, that we should reject sensations and impressions’.

Now §18, against the Pyrrhonians, begins ‘First of all, it is necessary to inquire concerning our own knowledge. For if again we are of such a nature as to know nothing, then there is no longer any need to investigate the other things.’ This has the sound of a proemium; and so we may provisionally suggest that §18 was the first in Aristocles’ treatment.

The next section, §19 against the Aristippans, begins, ‘Next in order, there would be those who say that only the *pathê* are *katalepta*.’ This clearly is not a proemium, or the way to begin a major division of the discussion. But it would be a very natural way to follow on the section that, in Eusebius, it actually does follow on, namely, §18 on the Pyrrhonians. The Pyrrhonians say that nothing at all is kataleptic; the Cyrenaics say that nothing is, except the *pathê*. They are a variation on the Pyrrhonians,<sup>11</sup> and so come ‘next in order’. So we may provisionally suppose that §19 came after §18 in Aristocles as well.

Section 21 is clearly differentiated by its topic; we are no longer concerned with epistemology in general, but rather with the special case of how we know what is to be pursued and avoided, and in particular how we know the *telos*. And this difference is marked by Aristocles in the opening line: ‘Now since knowledge is of two kinds, the one of external objects (τῶν ἔξω πραγμάτων), and the other of things to be pursued and avoided by us, certain people say that we have pleasure and pain as the origin and criterion of choice and avoidance—indeed still even to this day the followers of Epicurus say such things. So, then, it is necessary that we should enquire concerning this matter, too.’

<sup>11</sup> Aristocles says that his objections to the Aristippans will closely related to his objections to the Pyrrhonians (συγγενῆ αὐτοῖς, 14.18.31).

Two things mark this section as a new beginning, to be placed after all of the first four. First, there is a strong echo in its opening line of the opening lines of §18, which we have conjectured was the first of the four earlier ones. That one began: ‘First of all, it is necessary (ἀναγκαιῶς δ’ ἔχει) to inquire concerning our own knowledge (γνώσεως).’ Now §21 begins ‘since knowledge (γνώσις) is of two kinds, ...so, then, it is necessary (ἀναγκαιῶς οὖν ἔχει) to enquire about this matter, too (καὶ περὶ τούτου)’. So the beginning of §21 parallels and repeats the beginning of §18, taking up the second kind of *gnōsis*.

The second point that shows that §21 should come after §18-§19-§20-§17 is the fact that §17 ends with a sort of coda, to which the beginning of §21 clearly alludes. The coda to §17 says ‘However, we are confident in saying that the ones who philosophize correctly are those who accept both sensations and reason into their knowledge—that is, their knowledge of objects (τὴν γνῶσιν τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων)’. The careful distinction, that the *gnōsis* referred to here is the *gnōsis of pragmata*, then finds its immediate resumption in the beginning of §21, where we are told that *gnōsis* is of two kinds, the first of which is knowledge of external objects (τῶν ἔξω πραγμάτων), and the second is of objects of choice and avoidance.

Now let us put together the passages quoted, in the order in which we are conjecturing they originally appeared in Aristocles:

§18 ‘First of all, it is necessary to inquire concerning our own knowledge. For if again we are of such a nature as to know nothing, then there is no longer any need to investigate the other things.’ Thus begins the discussion of Pyrrhonists, who ‘declare that nothing is katalepton’.

§19 ‘Next in order, there would be those who say that only the *pathê* are *katalepta*’ (Aristippans).

§20 ‘But there have been some who judged that we ought to put our trust *only* in sensations and impressions’ (Metrodorus and Protagoras).

§17 ‘But there were others who gave out an utterance opposite to these ones. For they suppose that we ought to *reject* sensations and impressions’ (Xenophanes and Parmenides). ‘However, we are confident in saying that the ones who philosophize correctly are those who accept both sensations and reason into their knowledge—that is, their knowledge of objects.’

§21 ‘Now since knowledge is of two kinds, the one of external objects, and the other of things to be pursued and avoided by us... So, then it is necessary that we should enquire concerning this matter (sc. choice and avoidance), too.’

It looks, then, as though §18-§19-§20-§17 form a complete block, concerned with the epistemology of external objects (πράγματα or ἔξω πράγματα), and then §21 takes up another matter altogether, the *gnōsis* of choice and avoidance, i.e., the practical criterion.

Now it also seems clear that Aristocles’ treatment is structured around the familiar distinction between sensation and reason as bases for our knowledge. In the coda of §17, we learn that Aristocles in propria persona gives to each of the two a necessary role in epistemology; the last two sections (§20 and §17) each

consider a view that accepts only one, and rejects the other. That is how Aristocles structures his presentation; §20 considers the Protagoreans, who accept all sensation, but ‘think that they have no mind or reason’ (14.20.8.5), and §17 considers the Eleatics who ‘say the opposite’, i.e., reject sensation completely, while relying only on reason.<sup>12</sup>

Counting the Protagoreans, the Eleatics, and Aristocles, we now have three views:

Reject reason, accept sensation	Protagoreans
Accept reason, reject sensation	Eleatics
Accept reason, accept sensation	Aristocles

We should be surprised not to hear some consideration of the fourth alternative, namely, that in which both reason and sensation are rejected. And that is exactly what we have in §18-§19; the Pyrrhonists who say that neither reason nor sensation can be relied on, so that nothing is *katalepton*, and as a variation on them, the Aristippans who claim that almost nothing is *katalepton*, except the *pathê*, but in discussion are (Aristocles argues) driven to complete suspension on every matter.

So Aristocles has clearly brought in the Pyrrhonians as exemplars of the view that we should reject both sensation and reason. And this is also how Eusebius introduces them, as ‘those who determine that nothing is *katalepton*, either in sensation or in reason’ (μηδεν μητ’ ἐν αἰσθήσει μητ’ ἐν λόγῳ καταλήπτον, 14.17.10.7). And this is further evidence that Aristocles’ entire discussion centers, not on the truth or falsehood of individual incidents of perception, but on the overall reliability of perception and reason. The view that Aristocles ascribes to the Eleatics is that they ‘put their trust only in reason itself’ (αὐτῶ δὲ μόνον τῷ λόγῳ πιστεύειν); the Protagoreans on the other hand say that ‘one should put one’s trust only in sensations’ (τῇ αἰσθήσει καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις μόναις δεῖν πιστεύειν). The issue throughout is trustworthiness; what may we rely on as a criterion?

Accordingly, we should suppose that in the discussion of the Pyrrhonians, too, the issue will not be the truth or falsehood of individual perceptions or opinions, but the question of whether perception or opinion is generally reliable. And here we come to the heart of things: Aristocles’ words, in explicating Timon, that neither sensation nor opinion ἀληθεύει. If we take context and philosophical relevance as our guide, we should most naturally suppose that Aristocles is making a claim about the general reliability and trustworthiness—what Barnes 1983, 293 called the ‘epistemic constancy’—of sensation and opinion, not making the claim—of dubious relevance to Aristocles’ epistemological schema—that no sensations or opinions have any truth-values at all.

This, however, Bett and all of the other proponents of the revisionist reading forbid us to do: ‘*alêtheuein* does not mean “reliably, or constantly tell the truth”; it means simply “tell the truth”’ (Bett 1994, 168). And so, Bett argues, we must

<sup>12</sup> This is also how Eusebius introduces the entire passage from Aristocles, at the end of 14.16.13.4-8.

assume that each sensation, and each opinion, neither lies nor tells the truth, is neither true nor false; and then we must try to make sense of the metaphysical gibberish that ensues.

But is the revisionist reading right about this lexical claim? Can ἀληθεύειν never mean ‘to tell the truth reliably or habitually’? In fact, the lexical claim is wrong.

### III. The Meaning of Ἀληθεύειν

Consider, first of all, the claim in Hippocrates’ *Prognosticon* 25.14 that certain prognostic signs are ἀληθεύοντα σημεῖα. This phrase cannot mean merely ‘signs that (sometimes) tell the truth’; it must mean ‘reliably truthful signs’, signs that act like criteria. Then Xenophon, in a clear reminiscence of Herodotus’ famous remark, has a Persian say that they teach their children to tell the truth: διδάσκειν...ἀληθεύειν.<sup>13</sup>

Aristotle (*NE* 1139b15) contrasts the things with which the soul ἀληθεύει—namely, τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, and νοῦς—with the things (ὑπόληψις and δόξα) with which it is possible for the soul to be deceived (ἐνδέχεται διαψεύδασθαι). But both ὑπόληψις and δόξα do ‘have the truth’ in the sense of ‘being true on individual occasions’, at least sometimes, and indeed quite often. To get the right contrast with the possibility of deception, ἀληθεύει here must mean ‘constantly have the truth’—indeed, it must mean something like ‘unfailingly tell the truth’.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, two examples from Aristocles’ own exposition. When Aristocles (14.17.2.4) is defending the place of sensation in epistemology against the rationalist onslaught of the Eleatics, he makes the very Aristotelian point that while reason is surely the more divine thing, ‘sensation, too, is of such a nature as to ἀληθεύειν’. Sensation has a criterial role because it ἀληθεύει—if this is interpreted as a reference to the truth-value of an individual sensation, it makes no sense.

And later (14.20.10.1-4), Aristocles argues that the Epicureans are wrong to suppose that any and every deliverance of the senses is true, but wrong, too, to suppose that the possibility of error would preclude the senses from being crite-

<sup>13</sup> Cyr. 1.6.33.3. Note that the statement is not that they teach them αἰεὶ ἀληθεύειν or the like; just that they teach them ἀληθεύειν. So too when Herodotus says παιδεύουσι...ἀληθίζεσθαι at 1.136. K. Latte, the editor of Hesychius, takes the lexicographer to be glossing Herodotus at alpha 2926 (as often elsewhere) when he writes ‘*alēthizesthai: alētheuein*’. Thus Hesychius must have thought that ‘*alētheuein*’ could mean what ‘*alēthizesthai*’ must mean in Herodotus, namely ‘to tell the truth reliably, constantly, etc.’

<sup>14</sup> For more texts from Aristotle see *NE* 1139b15: the ἀληθευτικὸς, i.e., the habitually truthful person, is the one who both in words and in his life ἀληθεύει, because of being that sort of person in his *hexis*. In *Rhet.* 1384a31, Aristotle tells us that people have a regard for the wise because they tell the truth: φροντίζουσι δ’ ὡς ἀληθευόντων τῶν φρονιμῶν. Also in the corpus at *Virtues and Vices* 1250b18, see how ‘truth-telling’ (τὸ ἀληθεύειν) is said to be part of the virtue of δικαιοσύνη. It is put in parallel with a series of other infinitives, all of which are used to characterize the habitual actions of the people who possess the virtues in question.

ria. For after all, there are other criteria, e.g., scales and compasses, which really are criteria, even though they are not reliable if used incorrectly:

None of the other criteria are always and in every case free of falsehood (ἄψευδές)—I mean the scale or compass or that sort of thing—but rather each of them when in *this* condition is sound (ὕγιέξ), and when in *that* condition is fallacious (μοχθέρων), and when used in *this* sort of way it ἀληθεύει, but when used in *that* sort of way it ψεύδεται.

The question here is not ‘under which conditions does the scale give the right weight?’, but rather ‘under which conditions is the scale a sound criterion?’, i.e., under which conditions does it *reliably* give the right weight? When it is in the right condition, and used correctly, it ἀληθεύει—not ‘tells the truth once’, or ‘tells the truth sometimes’ but ‘reliably, and constantly, tells the truth’. It is a criterion. That point is also brought out by the words ‘sound’ and ‘fallacious’; what is at issue is not the truth of a particular conclusion or measurement, but the soundness of the method of attaining it, i.e., its reliability as a criterion.

The evidence of usage from Xenophon to Hesychius, and from Aristocles’ own words, is that ἀληθεύειν should indeed be translated, in certain contexts, as ‘reliably and constantly to tell the truth’. Accordingly, there are no grounds for denying that ἀληθεύειν can have here the sense that the orthodox reading gave to them. To say ‘the senses do not tell the truth’, in this case, is to say something about their overall reliability, not about the truth-value of each individual sensation. And in fact we have seen that from the structure of Aristocles’ original exposition, this is exactly the sense they should have: the issue is the relative trustworthiness of sensation and reason. Should we trust the senses? Protagoras says δεῖ πιστεύειν; the Eleatics disagree and say that we should πιστεύειν reason alone. Aristocles says we should trust sensation. And why? Because, in its natural condition, it ἀληθεύει; it reliably and constantly tells the truth.

And this is what the Pyrrhonians deny; they claim that the senses do not ἀληθεύειν. By now, there should be no doubt as to what this means. And there should be no lingering temptation to follow Bett in supposing that it means that the senses never take the truth-value ‘true’. That extraordinary view, with all of the strained interpretations it has produced, arose from an unfounded lexical claim, combined with inattention to the structure of Aristocles’ exposition.

It should also be clear that I am unimpressed by claims that this passage preserves a nugget of Timon uncontaminated by later influences. Of course, the rare words are each their own guarantor; doubtless ἀκράδαντους is something Aristocles read, and did not make up. But the paraphrase as a whole seems to me thoroughly saturated by its place in Aristocles’ schema. I would draw attention, in particular, to ‘we should not put our trust in them’ (πιστεύειν) in 14.18.3.4, forms of which verb occur 18 times in Aristocles’ discussions of epistemology, and which we have seen in the chapter title of the section on the Protagoreans.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bett 1994, 172 notes the frequency of πιστεύειν and ἀληθεύειν throughout Aristocles’

There is no reason to think that Timonic rather than Aristoclean. The same, I think, goes for the references to *πράγματα* in our two lines. Aristocles has in mind a master division between *γνώσις τῶν πραγμάτων* and *γνώσις* of ethical matters, i.e., choice and avoidance (see 14.17.9.4 and 14.21.1.1). So when we meet an emphasis on *pragmata* in the beginning of the first division—which is what we have seen the section on Pyrrho originally was—then I am inclined to think the presence of the word is more indicative of Aristocles' schema than of Timon's own words.

#### IV. To Emend or Not to Emend?

Now we should review the question of the emendation. Zeller wanted to change *διὰ τοῦτο* to *διὰ τὸ*. All sides agree that such an error could have arisen easily, given the similarity of the two words, and furthermore the presence of a second *διὰ τοῦτο* in the line directly below. Barnes 1983, 293 argued that original reading 'leaves a strange asyndeton in the text'; there ought to be a particle with *διὰ τοῦτο*, and there is not. Furley pointed out that *μῆτε* is not the correct negative for an infinitive in indirect discourse, but would be correct for the articular infinitive which the emendation produces.<sup>16</sup> There are thus two excellent linguistic reasons for changing the text; the clumsy asyndeton, and the incorrect negative.

Barnes and others have also given a philosophical argument for the emended text: it produces the best argument. Instead of having to derive, from the status of the *pragmata*, the fact that our sensations and opinions 'neither tell the truth nor lie', we may instead find the familiar Skeptical argument that, because neither our senses nor reason provides a criterion, things are unknowable in themselves. We need no Assumptions of Implicit Content, either in the metaphysical or epistemological version; we are left with no absurdities about an indeterminate reality and opinions that have no truth-values. Pyrrho ceases to be an exotic metaphysician, and becomes once again the father of Pyrrhonism.

Bett claims that the emendation is linguistically unnecessary, and philosophically ruled out. But his response to the philosophical argument unfortunately turns on his mistake about *ἀληθεύειν*. So the issue about emendation turns to linguistics.

Now, what I find unsatisfactory about Bett's response to the linguistic issue is that he seems to confuse the question of whether the *textus receptus* is possible, with the question whether it is right. Bett refers us to Denniston to argue that such clumsy asyndeta are not *impossible*, but to judge by Caizzi's evidence from actual texts (six bits from all of Plutarch, Plotinus, Simplicius, and Philoponus?!) they are extremely rare.<sup>17</sup> The same goes for the incorrect negative; Bett has shown that it is not *impossible* to use *μῆτε* here.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, he writes '[n]o

report, but without analyzing the later uses of *ἀληθεύειν*.

<sup>16</sup> Bett 1994, 142n16 credits David Furley with this point, presumably via oral communication.

<sup>17</sup> Bett 1994, 142n15; Brunschwig 1994, 201n19 quotes Caizzi in private correspondence.

<sup>18</sup> An anonymous referee for this journal informs me that in indirect discourse 'the negative *μῆτε*



adequate reason has been given, then for supposing that the text found in the manuscripts is untenable as Greek' (Bett 1994, 143).

But to show that the reading is 'not untenable' does not show it is at all *likely to be right*. The rules of natural languages are seldom exceptionless, but if they hold good ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πῶλον then they still provide solid linguistic reasons for flagging their exceptions. The anomalies in the present text are apparently rare; how rare it would take some labour to ascertain. But even supposing that one in a hundred instances of διὰ τοῦτο can be asyndetic, and one in a hundred infinitives in indirect discourse can use μῆτε instead of οὔτε, what are the chances of both of these rarities occurring together (i.e., something like 1 in 10,000),<sup>19</sup> as opposed to the chances that they were both created by the same paleographically trivial slip? We may grant Bett that there are no definitive, insurmountable obstacle to *keeping* the textus receptus, but there are very good reasons, at the level of linguistics, for *changing* it. And his arguments *against* the change do not work, because they are based on a false lexical claim.

### Summary

We have examined arguments that the metaphysical reading is uniquely able to make the original text cohere; we have seen that they fail. We have seen how both the general structure of Aristocles' treatise and the specific context should convince us to translate ἀληθεύειν by 'to reliably and constantly tell the truth', and how manifold parallels permit exactly that rendering. We have also seen why the linguistic arguments against the emendation are nothing like definitive. I conclude that the preponderance of plausibility—historical, linguistic, and philosophical—still rests with the orthodox view.<sup>20</sup>

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is chosen over οὔτε when the speaker or writer is contradicting a point of view' (I assume 'contradict' here means, not merely to express one of a pair of contradictory assertions, but rather to speak in conscious opposition to a point of view just stated). If this is right, it further reduces the likelihood that the received text is correct, since Pyrrho is not contradicting anyone in this sense.

<sup>19</sup> I do not pretend that the data permit of such strict combinatorial calculations, but I should point out that the two anomalies are completely independent; there is nothing about the asyndeton that would make the non-standard negation any more likely, and nothing about the non-standard negation that would increase the chances of asyndeton. So we really may say that the chance of both of their occurring is higher than, perhaps as high as the product of, either of their separate occurrences.

<sup>20</sup> I am grateful to three anonymous referees for encouraging me to condense and mute a longer and more emphatic original. Jonathan Barnes gave good advice on an early draft. And as always, my deepest thanks go to Liz Karns.

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