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GABRIELE GIANNANTONI



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DIEGO MACHUCA

PYRRHONIAN RELATIVISM

Abstract

This paper argues that Sextus Empiricus's Pyrrhonism is a form of relativism markedly different from the positions typically referred to by this term. The scholars who have explored the relativistic elements found in Sextus's texts have claimed that his outlook is not actually a form of relativism, or that those elements are inconsistent with his account of Pyrrhonism, or that he is confusing skepticism with relativism. The reason for these views is twofold: first, when employing the term "relativism" one hardly has in mind the sort of relativistic stance adopted by the Pyrrhonist; and second, those scholars have misinterpreted Sextus's relativistic remarks. The purpose of this paper is to show that he adopts a *phenomenological* kind of relativism that is compatible with his account of Pyrrhonism.

Keywords

Pyrrhonism, relativism, appearances, absolutism, realism

1. *Introduction*

The aim of the present paper is to show that Sextus Empiricus's Pyrrhonism is a form of relativism markedly different from the positions typically referred to by this term. The distinctiveness of this form of relativism is the result of the agnosticism that characterizes Pyrrhonism and that differentiates it from the familiar types of modern-day skepticism. For the suspension of judgment about non-evident matters that makes the Pyrrhonist restrict his discourse to the realm of his own appearances is the reason why his relativism makes no assertions about matters of objective fact¹.

¹ In this paper, the term "Pyrrhonism" will specifically refer to the Sextan variety of Pyrrhonism. "Skeptic" and "Skepticism" with a capital "S" will be used as syn-

The few scholars who have explored the relativistic elements found in Sextus's texts have claimed that his outlook is not actually a form of relativism, or that those elements are inconsistent with his account of Pyrrhonism, or that he is confusing skepticism with relativism². The reason for these views is twofold: first, when employing the term "relativism" one hardly has in mind the sort of relativistic outlook adopted by the Pyrrhonist; and second, those scholars have, to my mind, misinterpreted Sextus's relativistic remarks. My aim in this essay is to show that he adopts what I call a "phenomenological" type of relativism that is perfectly compatible with his account of Pyrrhonism. I thus hope to dispel an extensive confusion among scholars regarding Sextus's acceptance of a certain kind of relativity.

In Section 2, I will distinguish two common types of moral relativism. This will provide the necessary conceptual framework for determining the kind of relativism adopted by the Pyrrhonist. In Section 3, I will examine the passages from the Πυρρώνειοι Ὑποτυπώσεις (*PH*) that expound the modes of suspension because they present the type of relativism the Pyrrhonist adopts *in propria persona*. The reason for focusing on *PH* is that it is in this work where one finds most of Sextus's references to Pyrrhonian relativism. I will nonetheless also briefly discuss two passages from the fifth extant book of the *Adversus Dogmaticos* (*AD*) in which Sextus seems to adopt a type of relativism different from the one described in *PH*. In the concluding section, I will sum up the defining features of Pyrrhonian relativism and its differences from the two types of relativism distinguished in Section 2, and I will consider two possible objections to my interpretation.

onyms for "Pyrrhonist" and "Pyrrhonism". "Dogmatist" with a capital "D" will be used to refer to anyone who makes assertions about how things are on the basis of what he considers to be objective evidence and sound arguments.

² See J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *The Modes of Scepticism*, Cambridge 1985, p. 97; P. WOODRUFF, *Aporetic Pyrrhonism*, «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy», vi (1988) pp. 139-68, at 140, 158; J. BARNES, *Scepticism and Relativity*, in A. ALBERTI (a cura di), *Realtà e Ragione: Studi di filosofia antica*, Firenze 1994, pp. 51-83, at 54-60; R. BETT, *Sextus' Against the Ethicists: Scepticism, Relativism or Both?*, «Apeiron», xxvii (1994) pp. 123-61, at 149-50; G. STRIKER, *The Ten Modes of Aenesidemus*, in EAD., *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 116-34, at 132-3.

2. *Two Types of Relativism*

In this section, I will offer a classification of common types of moral relativism. This will prove useful for two reasons. First, a number of the texts in which Sextus refers to relativity form part of discussions of matters bearing on ethics. Second, given that moral relativism is one of the most studied types of philosophical relativism and concerns issues that make it clear why someone may take a relativistic position, it seems to be the best place to start the exploration of the kind of relativism adopted by the Pyrrhonist. In addition, the views underlying the two types of moral relativism that will be distinguished are essentially the same as those which underlie relativistic positions in areas other than ethics. The taxonomy that follows will make it possible to determine, in the next section, whether Pyrrhonian relativism corresponds to one of the two common forms of relativism or is rather an original form of relativism.

The first form of moral relativism to be considered affirms that nothing is good or bad without qualification, since actions can be judged as good or bad only in relation to particular circumstances: a moral judgment about an action cannot be deemed true or false independently of the circumstances in which the action is performed. This type of relativism rejects, then, moral claims such as “Torturing is morally incorrect” or “Telling the truth is morally right”. The reason is that these claims presuppose that the actions in question are intrinsically good or bad and hence do not take into account the specific situation in which a person may torture someone or tell the truth. Consideration of the circumstances is what makes it possible to resolve, e.g., a disagreement between a person who maintains that abortion is morally incorrect and a person who adopts the opposite view: to have an abortion is not morally right or wrong *simpliciter*, but is one or the other depending on the situation in which such an action is performed. Thus, the form of moral relativism under consideration rejects moral absolutism, i.e., the position according to which actions are good or bad *invariably* or *without qualification*, no matter the circumstances. Such a relativistic view is therefore perfectly compatible with situational ethics. For it accepts that what is objectively right or wrong varies with the circumstances because the differences in

the circumstances are morally relevant. In other words, what is right or wrong for a person to do in a given set of circumstances depends (considerably) on the morally relevant non-moral facts that obtain in those circumstances.

The champion of the relativistic position under consideration is also aware that, even when moral absolutism is set aside, there remain moral disagreements about what actions should be deemed morally correct in specific situations, but he still thinks that these disagreements can be rationally resolved. There may be a dispute about the moral character of an action performed in specific circumstances because the parties to the dispute do not possess the same evidence. Knowledge of all the relevant evidence would show that only one of the positions in conflict is justified, so that if all the parties acquired that knowledge, the dispute among them could be settled. It is of course possible that, even after having access to all the pertinent information, some of the parties continue to embrace rationally unjustified views. But the relativist would explain their unfounded persistence as the result of the influence of factors, such as strong prejudice or ideological blindness, that bias their judgment and prevent them from reasoning correctly. In this respect, it is worth noting that the form of relativism in question does not reject moral universalism, which is the view that there is a single true morality for all societies and all times, that is, that certain actions are right or wrong for all similarly situated people. Indeed, it may be argued that, given certain circumstances, only one action is morally right and everyone reasoning correctly and with all the relevant data will agree on this, regardless of his society or time.

It is crucial to remark that the defender of this type of relativism embraces moral realism, since he accepts the existence of objective moral values or properties and affirms that what is judged to be morally right or wrong in a given circumstance is really so in that circumstance. Indeed, if in a circumstance C_1 an action A is correctly judged as morally right whereas in a circumstance C_2 the same action is correctly judged as morally wrong, then it is really right in C_1 and really wrong in C_2 .

In sum, this first kind of moral relativism does not pose any serious challenge in moral metaphysics or moral epistemology, since it does not

reject moral realism and accepts that moral disagreements can in principle be rationally resolved. This is why I label this position “moderate” relativism³. Taken as a general view, moderate relativism affirms that none of our judgments is objectively true or justified invariably or without qualification but only in relation to the circumstances.

The second form of moral relativism to be considered is that which maintains that moral judgments can be deemed true or false, justified or unjustified, only relative to certain frameworks – such as the social, cultural, religious, or philosophical contexts within which an individual makes a moral judgment. The reason is that it is these frameworks alone that determine the moral norms or principles on the basis of which an individual judges whether a given person or action is morally good or bad. As Richard Bett has remarked, the idea that the correctness of moral judgments is relative to certain frameworks implies two things:

First, it means that the correctness of the statement is a matter of the *consistency* between the statement and the framework; and second, it means that there is no *further* sense, aside from this issue of consistency, in which the statement can be assessed for correctness⁴.

Thus, the truth or the justification of a moral judgment are entirely relative to the belief system of the person or group that makes it, so that a moral judgment can at the same time be true/justified and false/unjustified relative to different belief systems. In consequence, this kind of relativism is more extreme than the previous one, since it rejects not merely moral absolutism but also moral realism: there are no objective moral values or properties that would make it possible to determine which moral judgments are true or justified and which are false or unjustified, not even in specific circumstances. In addition, given that the different moral frameworks are equally valid insofar as there are no moral facts by virtue of which one of those frameworks is more correct than any of the others, moral universalism is also rejected. In sum, for

³ This view is sometimes called “situational” or “circumstantial” relativism.

⁴ R. BETT, *The Sophists and Relativism*, «Phronesis», xxxiv (1989) pp. 139-69, at 143.

this relativistic position nothing is really good or bad either absolutely or in relation to specific circumstances. I therefore call this position “radical” relativism. Such a radical stance may be adopted in other domains or even across the board. In this latter case, radical relativism maintains that none of our judgments can be deemed to be objectively true or false, justified or unjustified, either invariably or in relation to particular circumstances. Rather, the truth or falsity, or the justification or lack thereof, of any one of our judgments is completely relative to a given framework.

On the basis of the previous analyses, we can formulate the following two types of relativism, which can be adopted in ethics, in domains other than ethics, or across the board:

Moderate Relativism: x is neither F nor G invariably, but is F or G relative to particular circumstances.

Radical Relativism: x is not F or G either invariably or in particular circumstances, but is regarded as F or G in relation to different frameworks.

Despite their differences, these two forms of relativism agree that our judgments (in one or more areas) are not true or justified *simpliciter*, but only in relation to particular circumstances or frameworks. My task in the next section will be to determine whether the Pyrrhonist is a moderate or a radical relativist, or rather a different kind of relativist.

3. *Pyrrhonian Relativism*

I will now explore a number of passages from Sextus’s extant writings that will allow us to determine what kind of relativism is adopted by the Pyrrhonist. As Jonathan Barnes has pointed out⁵, the Sextan texts that refer to the notion of τὸ πρὸς τι can be divided into (i) those which expound the Pyrrhonian perspective and (ii) those which present the Pyrrhonian attack on the Dogmatic doctrines. The arguments em-

⁵ J. BARNES, *Scepticism and Relativity*, cit., p. 52.

ployed in this attack are *ad hominem*, since they work from the conception of relativity endorsed by the Dogmatists. Given that the purpose of this paper is to examine the kind of relativism adopted by the Pyrrhonist himself, my analysis will be limited to the texts that belong to group (i)⁶.

The natural place to begin the examination of Pyrrhonian relativism is Sextus's exposition of the relativity modes, that is, the Eighth Mode of Aenesidemus and the Third Mode of Agrippa. I will quote the text of the former mode in full and will organize my discussion of the other relevant passages around my analysis of this text. But before doing that, it should be noted that Sextus's remark, at *PH* I 39, that the relativity mode is the most generic of all the Ten Modes – being the one under which all the others can be subsumed – not only indicates that the notion of relativity plays a key role in the Pyrrhonist's argumentation, but also helps us understand, as we will see later on, why it appears to the Pyrrhonist himself that all appearances are relative to a number of factors⁷.

The text of the Eighth Mode is the following:

[135] The eighth mode is that which derives from relativity (ὁ ἀπὸ τοῦ πρὸς τι), by which we infer that, since all things are relative (πάντα ἐστὶ πρὸς τι), we will suspend judgment about what they are absolutely, that is, in relation to nature (ἀπολύτως καὶ ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν). But it is necessary to realize that here, as well as elsewhere, we use loosely “are” in place of “appear”, implicitly saying this: “All things appear relative” (πρὸς τι πάντα φαίνεται). And this is said in two senses: first, in relation to that which does the judging – since the external underlying object that is judged appears in relation to that which does the judging – and in the other sense, in relation to the things observed together with it – as right is relative to left. [136] We also concluded earlier that all things are relative, as for example with respect to that which does the judging – since each

⁶ For an analysis of the texts belonging to group (ii), see *ibid.*, pp. 71-83.

⁷ A difficulty raised by *PH* I 38-39 is that Sextus assigns a twofold function to the relativity mode: it is simultaneously one of the Ten Modes and the one under which all the others are subsumed. In addition, the taxonomy of types of relativity offered at *PH* I 135-136 and 167 differs from the taxonomy found at *PH* I 38-39. For discussion of these two issues, see J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *The Modes of Scepticism*, cit., pp. 141-4; J. BARNES, *Scepticism and Relativity*, cit., pp. 62-8; and G. STRIKER, *The Ten Modes of Aenesidemus*, cit., pp. 126-7.

thing appears in relation to a given animal, a given man, a given sense, and a given circumstance⁸ – and with respect to the things observed together with it – since each thing appears in relation to a given admixture, a given place⁹, a given composition, a given quantity, and a given position¹⁰.

[137] But it is also possible to infer separately that all things are relative, in this way: do things that are in virtue of a difference (τὰ κατὰ διαφοράν) differ or not from relative things? If they do not differ, they too are relative; but if they differ, given that everything that differs is relative to something (since it is said relative to that from which it differs), the things that are in virtue of a difference are relative. [138] Again, according to the Dogmatists, among existing things, some are highest genera, others lowest species, and others both genera and species. But all these things are relative; all things, therefore, are relative. Further, among existing things, some are evident, others non-evident, as they themselves declare, and apparent things are significant, whereas non-evident things are signified by apparent things – since according to them apparent things are the vision of non-evident things. But the signifier and the significant are relative; all things, therefore, are relative. [139] Besides this, among existing things some are similar and others dissimilar, some equal and others unequal. But these things are relative; all things, therefore, are relative. And even he who says that not all things are relative confirms that all things are relative, since he too, by opposing us, shows that the very [proposition] “All things are relative” is relative to us and not universal (καὶ αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ πάντα εἶναι πρὸς τι πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι δείκνυσι, καὶ οὐ καθόλου, δι’ ὧν ἡμῖν ἐναντιοῦται).

[140] Moreover, since we have established in this way that all things are relative, it is evident that we will not be able to say what each one of the underlying objects is like in its own nature, that is, purely (κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν καὶ εἰλικρινῶς), but how it appears in relation to something (φαίνεται ἐν τῷ πρὸς τι). It follows that it is necessary that we suspend judgment about the nature of things¹¹.

⁸ These references correspond, respectively, to the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Aenesideman modes.

⁹ I follow Pappenheim in reading τόνδε τὸν τόπον instead of τόνδε τὸν τρόπον. Pellegrin rejects this reading because «cela fait double emploi avec la “position” évoquée plus bas» (P. PELLEGRIN, *Sextus Empiricus: Esquisses pyrrhoniennes*, Paris 1997, p. 129 n. 2). However, Sextus says that the Fifth Mode is that depending on positions, distances, and places.

¹⁰ Here Sextus refers to the Fifth (place, position), Sixth (admixture), and Seventh (quantity, composition) Aenesideman modes.

¹¹ In translating Sextus’s texts, I have consulted J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Scepticism*, Cambridge 2000²; R. BETT, *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, Oxford 1997; R.G. BURY, *Sextus Empiricus*, 4 vols., Cambridge (MA)

The first thing to note about this passage is that, at *PH* I 135 and 140, Sextus claims that the Eighth Mode leads to ἐποχή. What he seems to mean is that, if everything we believe about an object appears to be relative to both those who judge it and the things observed together with it, then we are in fact unable to determine what that object is like independently of the factors that seem to shape our beliefs or judgments about it. Sextus thus explicitly links relativism (of some sort) to Pyrrhonism, and the question is whether this connection is legitimate or he is confusing two incompatible outlooks.

At *PH* I 135, Sextus also makes one of the two remarks (the other is found, as we will see later on, at *PH* I 139) that make it clear what kind of relativism is at issue in the Eighth Mode: when the Skeptic says that things “are” relative, he does not intend to make an assertion about what external objects are like in their real nature, but merely to report the way in which they appear to him. Thus, the Skeptic refrains from affirming that what a given object is like is relative, limiting himself instead to saying that the manner in which the object appears is relative. He does not deny, therefore, that the object is a certain way absolutely, purely, or in its nature – that is, independently of both its relation to the subject who judges it and its relation to the other objects that are observed together with it. In other words, the Skeptic does not assert that an object is nothing beyond what appears of it in virtue of certain factors¹², but only notices that the different ways in which the object appears vary in parallel with the variation of those factors. If he maintained that things *are* relative, he would not suspend his judgment about what they are really like, precisely because there would be nothing they are really like. In this regard, at *PH* I 140 Sextus points out that the Skeptic suspends judgment

1933-1949; B. MATES, *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, New York-Oxford 1996; and P. PELLEGRIN, *Sextus Empiricus*, cit.

¹² Neither is the Skeptic implicitly or explicitly committed to the view that there is something beyond the appearances, for I take him to suspend judgment on the existence of the external world. For a defense of this interpretation, rejected by most specialists, see G. FINE, *Sextus and External World Scepticism*, «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy», xxiv (2003) pp. 341-85; and D. MACHUCA, *La critique du critère de vérité épicurien chez Sextus Empiricus: un scepticisme sur le monde extérieur?*, in S. MARCHAND-F. VERDE (éds.), *Épicurisme et scepticisme*, Roma 2013, pp. 105-27.

about the nature of things, restricting himself instead to reporting how each thing appears in relation to something. The same remark is found in the exposition of the Third Mode of Agrippa:

The mode deriving from relativity, as we have said before, is that in which the underlying object appears thus and so in relation to that which does the judging and to what is observed together with it, but we suspend judgment about what it is like in relation to nature (*PH* I 167).

Now, Sextus's warning about how to interpret the Pyrrhonist's claim that everything is relative makes it clear that he does not espouse a radical relativism, since he does deny that there is a way things really are either invariably or in particular circumstances. Nor does he espouse a moderate relativism, since he does not assert that what an object is like at a given time is relative to the circumstances. He refrains from affirming anything whatsoever about how things are either invariably or in specific circumstances, since he refers, not to the relativity of things, but to the relativity of appearances, which vary in relation to certain factors. The Pyrrhonist would regard both the moderate and the radical types of relativism as Dogmatic, for they make assertions about how things objectively are.

As Annas and Barnes have noticed¹³, the Eighth Mode differs from the other Modes of Aenesidemus in that it does not provide instances of conflicts of appearances. Sextus could very easily offer examples of appearances that seem to conflict on account of their relation to different variables. The reason he does not do so is that such examples have already been given in the previous seven modes, which show the different ways in which things appear in relation to various factors. In fact, these examples are implicitly present in the reference to those modes at *PH* I 136: each thing presents conflicting appearances in relation to different animals, persons, quantities, positions, etc. There is therefore no need to mention again specific conflicts of appearances in order to illustrate

¹³ J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *The Modes of Scepticism*, cit., p. 140; J. BARNES, *Scepticism and Relativity*, cit., pp. 62-3.

the point of the Eighth Mode. Now, if we look at the first seven modes, in some of them Sextus makes implicit or explicit reference to the relativity of appearances.

To begin with, at the end of the First Mode, Sextus points out that, if our own appearances (*φαντασίαι*) and those of the irrational animals are equally credible and if appearances differ depending on the variation of animals, then «I will be able to say how each of the underlying objects appears to me (*ἐμοὶ φαίνεται*), but for the reasons stated I will be compelled to suspend judgment about how it is by nature» (*PH* I 78). Even though Sextus does not employ the expression *πρὸς ἐμὲ φαίνεται*, it is clear that with the phrase *ἐμοὶ φαίνεται* he is indicating that he can only report the way in which the object appears relative to him. In fact, he takes those expressions as equivalent, for in the course of his explanation of the Pyrrhonian *φωνή* “All things are undetermined”, he says that the person who utters this phrase implicitly signifies *ὡς πρὸς ἐμέ* or *ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνεται* (*PH* I 199). We find a similar implicit reference to the relativity of appearances in the Fourth Mode, where Sextus observes that, given that there are anomalies depending on the conditions in which people come to be, «it is probably easy to say how each of the underlying objects appears to each person (*ἐκάστῳ φαίνεται*), but not how it is, since the anomaly is undecidable» (*PH* I 112).

An explicit reference to relativity is found in the Second Mode, where Sextus remarks that, if things affect men differently depending on their differences, then we will likely suspend judgment. The reason is that «we can probably say how each of the underlying objects appears in relation to each difference (*πρὸς ἐκάστην διαφορὰν*)», but not what it is in its nature (*PH* I 87). Once again, Sextus presents our *φαντασίαι* or *φαινόμενα* as being relative to various factors that seem to determine their content.

The Fourth Mode refers to the various ways in which things strike us depending on our being in a natural or an unnatural state (*PH* I 101). To those who argue that the person who is in an unnatural state has inappropriate appearances on account of a given mixing of humors, Sextus responds that the person who is in a natural state also has a certain mixing of humors, and that it is possible that in this latter case humors make

the object appear different from the way it is, while in the former case they make it appear such as it really is (*PH* I 102). The reason is that

to attribute the power of changing the underlying objects to some humors but not to others is fanciful, since just as the healthy are in a state natural for the healthy but unnatural for the sick, so too the sick are in a state unnatural for the healthy but natural for the sick, so that it is necessary to believe also in these last who are in a relatively natural state (ὥστε κάκεινοις πρὸς τι κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσι πιστευτέον) (*PH* I 103).

Thus, what is deemed to be natural or unnatural is actually relative to the different states in which a person may find himself, not something exclusive to a particular state. If this is so, then one cannot affirm that certain appearances, because of being produced in a supposedly natural state, correspond to what the object is like. Rather, one can only say that objects appear one way or another in relation to various states. In this regard, Sextus also remarks in the same mode that the appearances we have in sleep are different from those we have when awake, «so that for them being or not being is not absolute but relative (εἶναι αὐταῖς¹⁴ ἢ μὴ εἶναι γίνεται οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἀλλὰ πρὸς τι) – relative to being asleep or relative to being awake» (*PH* I 104). This passage expresses more clearly than those that have been examined so far the idea that appearances are relative, since it says that the existence or non-existence of an appearance is relative to a given state. It has already been noted that Pyrrhonian relativism is concerned, not with the relativity of things, but with the relativity of appearances. However, what has not yet been said is that the claim that appearances are relative to various factors can be regarded as Dogmatic. The reason is that it is an assertion that intends to give an account of the origin and objective validity of our appearances: they are

¹⁴ I here follow Apelt – as do Bury (*Sextus Empiricus*, cit.) and Mates (*The Skeptic Way*, cit.) – who suggests to read αὐταῖς instead of the αὐτοῖς found in the MSS. Annas and Barnes (*Sextus Empiricus*, cit.) and Pellegrin (*Sextus Empiricus*, cit.) prefer to retain αὐτοῖς, in which case Sextus would be talking of “the objects”. This antecedent, however, is not found in the passage, whereas αὐταῖς refers back to φαντασίαι. In addition, this reading fits well with the idea that Pyrrhonian relativism speaks of the relativity, not of things, but of appearances.

the product of the influence of factors such as the state of the person who judges the object or the condition of the sense that perceives it or the distance between the object and the subject, and they do not reveal to us the real nature of the object because they are altered by those factors. One could claim, however, that in the Fourth Mode as well as in the others, Sextus is actually arguing dialectically, so that he is not committed to the assertion in question. An indication that this is the case is found in his reference to the Greek medical theory of the four humors – namely, blood, phlegm, bile, and black bile – whose combination determines our physical and psychological states. In this case, what he seems to be saying is that, if one adopts this theory, one must recognize that appearances do not reveal what the object is like, but are rather the result of the various combinations of bodily humors that affect our perception of it. If we reject this interpretation, a solution still remains, which consists in arguing that, in saying that appearances are relative, Sextus is merely describing an appearance, that is, the appearance that appearances are relative to certain states. I will come back to this interpretation, which I favor, in my analysis of *PH* I 139.

We also find an explicit reference to relativity in the Seventh Mode, which is the one depending on quantities and compositions:

Therefore, here too we will be able to say what the fine piece of horn is like and what the compound of many fine pieces is like, what the small piece of silver is like and what the compound of many small pieces is like, what the tiny piece of Taenarian marble is like and what the compound of many small pieces is like, and with respect to the grains of sand, the hellebore, the wine, and the food, we will be able to say what is relative, but not the nature of the objects in itself because of the anomaly of appearances that depends on the compositions (*PH* I 132).

The conflicts of appearances dealt with in the Seventh Mode do not depend on the adoption of certain philosophical or scientific theories, but can be easily observed in everyday life. This is true even in the case of the medical example given at *PH* I 133: drugs have different effects depending on the quantities and preparations. Hence, the relativity referred to in the passage can be noticed by anyone. Now, Annas and Barnes contend that in the Seventh Mode Sextus does not suspend judg-

ment but makes affirmations that go beyond a mere description of appearances: he does not say, e.g., that silver *appears* white in a large lump but black in small shavings, but says instead that it *is* so. In their view, «Sextus is not merely being careless», since many «of his examples actually demand such a conclusion, if only because they are ill conceived»¹⁵. They propose three possible explanations for the peculiar character of the Seventh Mode, the third of which they regard as the most interesting. First, Sextus may be using “is” in lieu of “appears”. Second, what he says may be provisional: even if according to the argumentation of the Seventh Mode it is possible to affirm what the object is like in certain quantities, the other modes show that this is not in fact possible. The third explanation is that the target of the mode is only universal propositions that purport to describe the nature of things. That is to say, the aim of the mode would be to undermine only beliefs based on scientific theories, not commonsense or everyday beliefs. Thus, whereas in general the Ten Modes intend to induce a radical skepticism, the Seventh Mode is perhaps designed to reach «a more modest suspension of judgement»¹⁶. If this third explanation is correct, then that mode preserves a form of skepticism that corresponds to a moderate relativism¹⁷. Although in Sextus’s corpus different varieties of skepticism seem to coexist¹⁸, in the specific case of the mode under consideration the first explanation seems to be the right one, for two reasons. First, in order to describe several of the conflicts referred to at *PH* I 129-130, Sextus four times uses the verb φαίνεσθαι. And at *PH* I 129-131 he also

¹⁵ J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *The Modes of Scepticism*, cit., p. 123. Cfr. P. WOODRUFF, *Aporetic Pyrrhonism*, cit., pp. 155-6.

¹⁶ J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁷ Moderate relativism is what Annas and Barnes have in mind when they talk about relativism: see *ibid.*, pp. 96-8, 126-7, 144, 148-9; J. ANNAS, *Doing Without Objective Values: Ancient and Modern Strategies*, in S. EVERSON (ed.), *Companions to Ancient Thought*, 4: *Ethics*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 193-220, at 199-200; and J. BARNES, *Scepticism and Relativity*, cit., pp. 55, 65-6. See also T. BÉNATOUIL, *Le scepticisme*, Paris 1997, pp. 232-3; and P. PELLEGRIN, *Sextus Empiricus*, cit., pp. 552-3.

¹⁸ On this issue, see D. MACHUCA, *Sextus Empiricus: His Outlook, Works, and Legacy*, «Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie», LV (2008) pp. 28-63, at 51-7.

employs other verbs and expressions (θεωρεῖται, ὑποπίπτει, ὁρᾶται, κινουῦσι τὴν αἴσθησιν, ἐπιδείκνυται) that imply no belief about how things objectively are. If Sextus (or his source) had seen a problem in using, at *PH* I 132, the verb φαίνεσθαι in place of εἶναι, he would not have used it in the immediately previous sections. Second, at the end of the passage quoted above, Sextus tells us that the reason why it is not possible to determine the nature of things is the anomaly of *appearances*. What he seems to be saying is that, in the examples mentioned at *PH* I 132, the appearances of the objects are relative to the quantities and compositions. If this is correct, the passage conveys the same idea present in the other texts of *PH* I that were examined. Note, in addition, that at *PH* I 129 we are told that the Seventh Mode forces us to suspend judgment, and there is no indication that here ἐποχή means anything different from its usual sense and hence no reason to suppose that it refers to “a more modest suspension of judgment”.

Thus, in several of the modes that precede the Eighth Mode, we find both implicit and explicit references to the relativity of appearances, in line with Sextus’s remark that the relativity mode is the most generic of all the Ten Modes. In this connection, an explicit reference to relativity is also found at the end of the Tenth Mode, which especially bears on ethics:

Given that by means of this mode too so such anomaly among things is shown, we will not be able to say what the underlying object is like with respect to its nature, but how it appears in relation to this way of life or in relation to this law or in relation to this custom and each of the other [factors]. In consequence, because of this mode too it is necessary for us to suspend judgment about the nature of the external underlying objects (*PH* I 163).

The Skeptic notices that there is a plurality of value judgments and that these vary in relation to a series of factors, such as the customs, laws, and ways of life that influence the person who makes those judgments. For instance, he notices that for Crates and Hipparchia to have sex in public is a way of life, whereas for most men the custom is to do it in private (*PH* I 153); or he notices that, whereas Chrysippus, in accordance with a Dogmatic supposition, views incest as something indifferent, there

is a law that forbids it (*PH* I 160). Now, the Skeptic's stance is not a radical relativism insofar as he does not affirm that what the object is like is relative, but only that it appears differently by virtue of factors that are circumstantial. Thus, he does not deny that the object has a nature that is independent of the factors that seem to affect the way in which it appears. Rather, he suspends judgment on what the object is supposed to be like in its nature because he has been unable to find a satisfactory way to resolve the conflict among value judgments. But, as already noted, it is my contention that Sextus does not espouse a position that affirms that value appearances *are* relative and that claims to explain how certain factors determine the way in which things appear to different persons or groups. Rather, he simply describes the variations he has observed in value judgments and reports that these variations have occurred in parallel with the variations in the laws, customs, ways of life, Dogmatic suppositions, and mythical beliefs of those who make those judgments.

In connection with the Tenth Mode, it is worth noting that, in the section of *PH* III devoted to the ethical part of philosophy, Sextus refers to various value disagreements, the last of which concerns whether death and life are good or bad. After presenting this disagreement, he observes:

Therefore, death could not be deemed one of the things by nature terrible, just as life could not be deemed one of the things by nature good. None of the aforementioned things is by nature thus and so, but all are conventional and relative (νομιστὰ δὲ πάντα καὶ πρὸς τι) (*PH* III 232).

The last part of the passage does not refer merely to death and life but to all the things that were mentioned when reviewing the value disagreements presented in the ethical section of *PH* III. At first glance, Sextus seems to be adopting a radical relativistic position, which is at odds with the strictly Pyrrhonian outlook of the Tenth Mode. But one could argue that the passage is to be read, not as an assertion about the non-evident, but as a mere description of the way things appear to Sextus at the moment. Hence, the proposition "All the things deemed to be good or bad are conventional and relative" should be understood in the phenomenological sense in which Sextus tells us that the proposition "All things are relative" must be understood.

There is an alternative way of interpreting the above passage that also renders it compatible with the Pyrrhonian outlook. At the end of the chapter of *PH* III in which he examines the Dogmatic conceptions of the good, the bad, and the indifferent and the problems they face, Sextus says that these things do not perhaps exist and that «some infer as follows that nothing is by nature good, bad, or indifferent» (*PH* III 178). He then offers a series of arguments to that effect in the next chapter, of which the quoted passage forms part. That remark seems to make it clear that Sextus does not advance *in propria persona* the negative arguments expounded in that chapter, but that he is instead reporting the arguments put forth by those who assert that nothing is by nature good, bad, or indifferent. In consequence, these negative arguments are dialectical and are therefore used to counterbalance the common belief that things are objectively good, bad, or indifferent. If this is so, then at *PH* III 232 Sextus is presenting, but not endorsing, a radical relativism that denies that anything is objectively good or bad.

Going back to the text of the Eighth Mode, of the five arguments expounded at *PH* I 137-139, the first four refer to the relation between the objects observed together, while the last refers to the relation between the object and what does the judging. With these five arguments Sextus intends to complement the previous modes, since at *PH* I 137 he observes that those arguments represent another way to establish that everything is (appears) relative. Scholars have argued that the five arguments are sophistical. The reason seems to be that the kind of relativity that the arguments establish is not the kind of relativity they purport to establish, namely, ontological relativity. On the basis of the fact that the first four arguments have the same structure, Annas and Barnes examine only the first¹⁹:

It is true that, say, horses differ from cows. It is also true that things that differ are semantic relatives; i.e. “*x* differs” is elliptical for “*x* differs from *y*”. But it does not follow from those two truths that horses are relative; that is to say, it does not follow that “*x* is a horse” is elliptical for “*x* is a horse relative to *y*”. In

¹⁹ Annas and Barnes (*The Modes of Scepticism*, cit., p. 140) surprisingly say that at *PH* I 137-139 there are six arguments. By contrast, Barnes (*Scepticism and Relativity*, cit., p. 68) recognizes that there are five.

general, from the premisses that *F*s are *G* and “*G*” is a relative term, we plainly cannot infer that “*F*” is a relative term²⁰.

This sophism is also found in the fourth argument, that is, the one that affirms that similar and dissimilar things as well as equal and unequal things are relative. For instance, from the fact that a horse is similar to a donkey it follows that the former is relative to the latter, not ontologically or epistemically, but only semantically, since the existence of a horse does not imply that of a donkey and one can recognize that something is a horse even if one is unable to recognize that something is a donkey. It is clear that this semantic relativity does not pose any serious threat. Someone might argue that the same sophism is found in the third argument. However, Sextus thinks that sign and thing signified are epistemically relative (*AD* II 161-165), although this seems to be true only insofar as we consider them *qua* sign and thing signified. By contrast, it is clear that some evident things are ontologically relative to the non-evident things of which they are taken to be the signs, as is the case with smoke and fire and with sweat and pores. Concerning the second argument, from the perspective of the Dogmatists who divide existing things into genera and species, it seems that these are at least epistemic relatives insofar as the apprehension of a species presupposes that of its genus.

As for the fifth argument, expounded at *PH* I 139, Annas and Barnes affirm that it is invalid, the reason being that

The disagreement between the dogmatist and the Pyrrhonist does not show that universal relativity is itself relative to the Pyrrhonist (whatever that means) and thereby confirm the Pyrrhonist's opinion. It shows only that not everyone upholds universal relativity. In general, if two people disagree on some opinion, we cannot infer that the opinion holds (only) relative to one of them. If *x* maintains that *P* and *y* maintains that not-*P*, then one of them is mistaken – and that is all we can infer²¹.

²⁰ J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *ibid.*, pp. 140-1. Cfr. G. STRIKER, *The Ten Modes of Aenesidemus*, cit., p. 126.

²¹ J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *ibid.*, p. 141. In a similar vein, Spinelli claims that at *PH* I 139 «il ragionamento sestano non appare del tutto lineare e logicamente cogente» (E. SPINELLI, *I dieci tropi scettici*, in ID., *Questioni scettiche: Letture introduttive al pirronismo antico*, Roma 2005, pp. 27-60, at 46).

Annas and Barnes's view may be due to the fact that they interpret *PH* I 139 as saying that the Dogmatist «shows that the very relativity of everything is relative to us and not universal»²². However, in my view the text actually says that, by his opposition, the Dogmatist «shows that the very [proposition] “All things are relative”» is relative to the Pyrrhonist. It is plain that this proposition is relative to the Pyrrhonist provided that it is construed as a description of one of his own appearances. If this is so, then the person who rejects that proposition shows, by this very rejection, that it is not an accurate description of the way things appear to him, but only of the way they appear to the Pyrrhonist who utters the proposition. Such a rejection confirms the content of “All things are (appear) relative” because it shows that this phenomenological proposition is accurate only relative to the Pyrrhonist whose appearance is expressed by it. More generally, given that every proposition describes the way things appear to the person who utters it, each proposition is accurate only in relation to the person whose appearance it describes. Therefore, the person who denies that everything is relative confirms the very thing it denies in the sense that his denial confirms in a particular case that appearances are relative to the individuals who have them.

This interpretation is confirmed by other passages from *PH* in which Sextus also indicates that the expressions uttered by the Skeptic describe that which appears to him, i.e., what is relative to him. At *PH* I 198-199, he cautions us that, when the Skeptic utters the phrase πάντα ἐστὶν ἀόριστα, he uses ἔστι in lieu of φαίνεσθαι αὐτῷ, and that the person who says πάντα ἐστὶν ἀόριστα is implicitly saying ὡς πρὸς ἐμέ or ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνεται. Likewise, in the chapter of *PH* I in which he expounds the rules concerning the Skeptical phrases, Sextus points out that «those phrases are not said to signify purely (εἰλικρινῶς) but relatively, that is, relatively to the Skeptics (πρὸς τι καὶ ὡς πρὸς τοὺς σκεπτικοὺς)» (*PH* I 207). Thus, nothing of what is said by the Skeptic purports to have universal or absolute validity, but merely describes what appears relative to him. In consequence, the proposition πάντα ἐστὶ πρὸς τι is not an asser-

²² J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *ibid.*, p. 129, and *Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Scepticism*, cit., p. 36.

tion about the nature of things or the nature of appearances, but a description of an appearance, which as such is to be considered relative to the Skeptic: it appears to him that all appearances are relative. This appearance is the result of the particular cases in which the Skeptic has noticed that things appear differently relative to various factors. This is confirmed by the special character and status of the Eighth Mode, which provides a description of the structure common to the other nine modes (*PH* I 39). The Eighth Mode expresses in a single general proposition the impression which the Skeptic is left with after considering each of the other modes: one of the modes shows that things appear different relative to different species, another that they appear different relative to different senses, another that they appear different relative to different positions, and so on.

Two interrelated conclusions can be drawn from what has been said. First, the relativity referred to in the last of the five arguments expounded at *PH* I 137-139 plays at two levels: the Pyrrhonist has the appearance that all appearances are relative, but that second-order appearance is as such relative, since its content appears to a given person, so that it constitutes a particular case that confirms the general proposition by which it is expressed. Second, if this proposition expresses an appearance about the relativity of appearances, then Pyrrhonian relativism is phenomenological in two senses: (i) it does not refer to the relativity of things, but to the relativity of appearances, and (ii) it does not affirm that appearances are relative, but only that they appear to the Pyrrhonist to be relative. Thus, unlike the other four arguments expounded at *PH* I 137-139, the fifth argument is key to understanding the kind of relativism adopted by the Pyrrhonist²³. This “phenomenological” relativism can be formulated thus:

²³ Barnes (*Scepticism and Relativity*, cit., pp. 68-9) claims that the five arguments presented at *PH* I 137-139 pose the following problem: if one accepts its validity, one must recognize that their conclusions establish, not the relativity of appearances, but the relativity of things. However, this problem would arise only in the case of the first four arguments, since the fifth clearly refers to the relativity of appearances. If this is correct, then at *PH* I 136-139 there seem to coexist two distinct

Phenomenological Relativism: Whether x appears F or G appears to me to be relative to certain variables, and I do not know whether x is a certain way either invariably or in particular circumstances.

From what has been said, it is plain that I do not agree with Gisela Striker's claim that in the Ten Modes there coexist two incompatible types of argument, the one referring to undecidability, the other to relativity. According to her, «the first leaves open the possibility that one of the conflicting views may be right, while the other seems to imply either that nothing is absolutely or unrestrictedly true or at least that none of the “relative” impressions is»²⁴. If my interpretation of the kind of relativism adopted in the Ten Modes is correct, then such a relativistic stance does not rule out the possibility that one of the conflicting appearances corresponds to the way the object really is. For, as we have seen, the Pyrrhonist does not affirm that appearances *are* relative to certain factors – in which case he would be denying their truth – but only that they *appear* to be so. Hence, his reporting that appearances appear to him to be relative is not incompatible with his reporting that conflicts of appearances have so far struck him as undecidable. We saw above that the Fourth Mode claims that, given that there are anomalies depending on the conditions in which people come to be, «it is probably easy to say how each of the underlying objects appears to each person, but not how it is, since the anomaly is undecidable» (*PH* I 112). The Skeptic observes a conflict of appearances, i.e., that a given object appears differently relative to different persons, and since he is unable to resolve this conflict because he cannot determine whether the object is such as it appears to one of those persons, he is forced to suspend judgment and to limit himself to reporting how the object appears relative to each person.

It is worth noting that Sextus's acceptance of relativity is confirmed by the chapter of *PH* I that discusses the differences between Skepticism

types of arguments, namely, that which refers to the relativity of things and that which refers to the relativity of appearances.

²⁴ G. STRIKER, *The Ten Modes of Aenesidemus*, cit., p. 117. See also P. WOODRUFF, *Aporetic Pyrrhonism*, cit., pp. 154-5; and R. BETT, *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy*, Oxford 2000, p. 208.

and Protagoreanism. Sextus begins by presenting the man-measure doctrine and then points out that Protagoras «posits only the things that appear to each person, and in this way introduces what is relative (τὸ πρὸς τι). For this reason he seems to have something in common with the Pyrrhonists» (*PH* I 216-217). Sextus here seems to recognize the central role that the notion of τὸ πρὸς τι plays in Pyrrhonism. For the reason why the Protagorean doctrine is said to be similar to Pyrrhonism is that it makes use of that notion and Sextus does not deny this appearance of similarity in the rest of the chapter. By suggesting that the similarity between Protagoreanism and Skepticism is confined to noticing appearances' relativity to each individual, Sextus makes it clear that the two philosophies start from noticing the same fact but then part ways: whereas Protagoras formulates a theory purporting to account for the objective validity of appearances, the Skeptic refrains from going beyond the limits of that which appears to him, contenting himself instead with adopting a phenomenological relativism. For in his case the observation of the relativity of appearances is nothing but the expression of something that appears to him. This is why Sextus says that Protagoras «dogmatizes about matter being in flux and about the reasons of all things that appear subsisting in it, things that are non-evident and about which we suspend judgment» (*PH* I 219).

I would like to conclude my analysis of Sextus's texts by pointing out that some scholars have claimed that in *AD* v one finds a relativistic stance that amounts to what I have called «moderate relativism»²⁵. At *AD* v 114, Sextus presents three alternatives: either everything anyone deems to be good or bad is such by nature, or only a certain one of the things deemed good is good and a certain one of the things deemed bad is bad, or these things depend on their

being somehow in relation to something (ἐν τῷ πρὸς τί πως ἔχειν), and in relation to this person this thing is to be chosen or to be avoided, but in relation to the

²⁵ J. ANNAS-J. BARNES, *The Modes of Scepticism*, cit.; J. ANNAS, *Doing without Objective Values*, cit.; R. BETT, *Sextus Empiricus's Against the Ethicists: Scepticism, Relativism of Both*, cit., and *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists*, cit.

nature of things it is neither to be chosen nor to be avoided, but at one time to be chosen and at another to be avoided.

That Sextus adopts this third view seems to be confirmed by the fact that, after referring to the first two, he points out that the third view is the one which leads to undisturbedness (*ἀταραξία*) and happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*), which are the states the Skeptic purports to have attained:

If someone were to say that nothing is by nature more to be chosen than to be avoided, or more to be avoided than to be chosen (since each thing that occurs is somehow in relation to something and, according to differing times and circumstances, turns out at one time to be chosen and at another to be avoided), he will live happily and undisturbedly (*AD* v 118).

Since I have analyzed in detail the skepticism of *AD* v elsewhere²⁶, I will here limit myself to summing up the results of that analysis. In *AD* v Sextus seems to accept *in propria persona* the view that nothing is by nature good or bad, while making it clear that he does not believe that things are objectively good or bad relative to a given person, time, or circumstance, but that they appear to him to be so. In other words, in *AD* v Sextus seems to deny moral absolutism, but without embracing a non-absolutist form of moral realism. At *AD* v 114 and 118, he is either arguing dialectically or (more likely) talking about the different ways things appear to be in relation to different persons, times, or circumstances²⁷. If this is correct, then in *AD* v Sextus does not espouse a moderate relativism because, even though he apparently denies that things are good or bad invariably or without qualification, he does not affirm that they are good or bad only in relation to specific persons, times, or circumstances. Neither does he espouse a radical relativism because, even though he seems to deny moral absolutism, he does not also deny that things are good or bad in relation to particular persons, times, or circumstances. However, he does not seem to adopt a phenomenological

²⁶ In *Moderate Ethical Realism in Sextus' Against the Ethicists?*, in D. MACHUCA (ed.), *New Essays on Ancient Pyrrhonism*, Leiden-Boston 2011, pp. 143-78.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 163.

relativism either because, even though he talks about how things appear to be in relation to certain variables, he seems to deny that they are a given way invariably or without qualification, which is an important departure from the outlook of *PH*.

4. *Concluding Remarks*

If the interpretation defended in the previous section is correct, then unlike the moderate and the radical moral relativists, the Pyrrhonist, at least in *PH*, does not deny that anything is invariably or absolutely good or bad; and unlike the moderate relativist, he does not affirm that things can be deemed to be objectively good or bad relative to a person in specific circumstances. The Pyrrhonian relativist starts, like the others, from the observation of the existence of a plurality of conflicting moral judgments, but he does not affirm that their truth and justification are relative to, or dependent on, certain circumstances or certain frameworks. Rather, he limits himself to noticing that moral judgments in fact vary in relation to particular circumstances or frameworks, without going beyond this empirical observation by offering an explanation of such a variation²⁸. He merely remarks that the truth and justification of a moral judgment appear to be relative to the circumstances in which the action referred to in the judgment is performed or to the framework within which the judgment is made. Unlike the moderate moral relativist, he does not affirm (or deny) that the dispute among moral absolutists may be settled by requiring that the circumstances be taken into account, nor that the dispute among those who do take into consideration the circumstances can in principle be resolved by considering all the relevant evi-

²⁸ As the reviewer for the journal has noted, the idea of restricting oneself to making an empirical observation without providing an explanatory account is reminiscent of medical Empiricism. For two different views on the relation between Sextan Pyrrhonism and medical Empiricism, see D. MACHUCA, *Sextus Empiricus: His Outlook, Works, and Legacy*, cit., pp. 40-50; and E. SPINELLI, *Sextus Empiricus, l'expérience sceptique et l'horizon de l'éthique*, «Cahiers Philosophiques», cxv (2008) pp. 29-45.

dence. Unlike the radical moral relativist, he does not believe (or disbelieve) that moral disagreements in general are to be dealt with by affirming either that none of the parties is objectively right insofar as none describes how things objectively are, or that all are right but only relative to different belief systems, none of which is superior to the others as far as the real nature of things is concerned. The Pyrrhonian relativist therefore suspends judgment about both moral absolutism and moral realism. The reason is that, at least until now, he has been unable to resolve the second-order disagreement between moral absolutism, moderate moral relativism, and radical moral relativism.

Pyrrhonian relativism is phenomenological in two senses. First, the Pyrrhonist does not affirm that what things are like is relative to a given circumstance or framework, since he merely refers to the relativity of the different ways things appear. Second, when he says that appearances are relative, he is not expressing a belief about what is objectively the case, but only reporting what appears to him. If he maintained that appearances are relative, he would be affirming that none of them corresponds to how things objectively are, but this is something about which he suspends judgment. Pyrrhonian relativism is therefore a second-order phenomenological relativism, since the Pyrrhonist reports that it appears to him that the way things appear is relative to a number of factors.

I would like to conclude by considering two possible objections to the interpretation proposed in this paper. First, it could be argued that employing the term “relativism” in connection with Pyrrhonism is a mistake, because that term refers to a stance radically different from the Pyrrhonian outlook. The first thing to note is that, as we have seen, in a considerable number of passages Sextus makes use of the notion of relativity (τὸ πρὸς τι) and refers to the Pyrrhonist’s acceptance of the apparent relativity of appearances. This is precisely what my use of “relativism” in connection with Pyrrhonism is intended to capture. Second, the use of that term in connection with Pyrrhonism is not at all uncommon in the specialist literature, since all the interpreters who have examined the Sextan texts that refer to the notion of τὸ πρὸς τι have employed “relativism” to understand and explain those texts. Finally, I do not think it illegitimate to use that word, which already refers to distinct

positions, to designate a stance that has the same starting point as those positions, namely, the observation that perceptual and intellectual appearances vary in parallel with, or in relation to, various factors.

The second objection to my interpretation is that, although the notion of τὸ πρὸς τι does repeatedly appear in the modes of suspension, this does not tell us anything about Pyrrhonism because these arguments are *ad hominem*, or dialectical more generally. This objection overlooks the fact that, even though the modes of suspension are dialectical weapons, this should not prevent us from recognizing that at least some of the disagreements referred to in the modes are disagreements that the Pyrrhonist himself observes. As I have argued, the relativity perceived in those disagreements is a relativity that he himself perceives in the sense that it appears to him that conflicting appearances vary in relation to a number of factors²⁹.

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²⁹ A distant ancestor of this paper was presented at a conference held at Sapienza Università di Roma on October 9-10, 2009, and then at Durham University on October 20, 2009. Another version was read at a conference on skepticism held at the Universidade Federal da Bahia on August 23-25, 2010. I am grateful to the audiences in these venues for helpful feedback. I would also like to thank an anonymous reviewer for his/her useful comments.