

Chapter 5

Pathos in the *Theaetetus*



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In his “Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed”, Myles Burnyeat argues, against George Berkeley, that idealism is one of the few major philosophical positions which was not anticipated in some form by the ancients. It was only after Descartes had doubted everything he believes, especially and crucially the deliverances of the senses, and then retreated to the certainty of inner experience with the Cogito that idealism could emerge as a serious philosophical possibility. Bishop Berkeley believed he had found antecedents for his idealism in Plato, Aristotle, and others of the ancients. But Burnyeat systematically argues that this position is nowhere to be found until at least Augustine. He then goes on to argue that although Augustine recognized subjective knowledge, it was not until Descartes that idealism was truly made possible, because it was not until Descartes that subjective knowledge was given its privileged foundational status.¹

¹Burnyeat (2012) “Idealism and Greek philosophy: What Descartes saw and Berkeley missed” in *Explorations in ancient and modern philosophy* vol. 1, Cambridge: CUP (originally published in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 1982). Burnyeat’s argument that Descartes is the crucial figure in the history of idealism has met with wide agreement. He also argues that the resources for Descartes’ retreat to inner experience can be found in ancient sources, but these resources were never used in the way Descartes uses them. Descartes’ originality, for Burnyeat, is rather in his arrangement of the material. More recently, Williams (2010) “Descartes’ Transformation of the Sceptical Tradition” in *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett, Cambridge: CUP has argued that Descartes is more innovative than this story would suggest. He argues that Descartes transformed ancient materials, particularly from Cicero’s *Academica*, into a new dreaming argument, which “points towards a notion of perceptual experience that is conceptually unconnected to the existence of material things” pp. 311–312. One of Descartes’ major ingenuities, then, is a new conception of experience. Descartes “detaches the possibility of content-identical experiences from causation by indistinguishable objects” p. 309. My sympathies are with Williams. For more discussion on Descartes’ relationship to and knowledge of ancient skepticism, see Fine (2000) “Descartes and Ancient Skepticism: Reheated Cabbage?”.

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Burnyeat's now-classic paper asks three questions: "(1) How did it come about that philosophy accepted the idea that *truth* can be obtained without going outside subjective experience? (2) When and why did philosophers first lay claim to *knowledge* of their own subjective state? (3) When and why did one's own *body* become for philosophy a part of the external world?" (p. 269). It is by searching for answers to these three questions that he reaches his negative conclusion about idealism. This paper will focus on claims (1) and (2).

I agree with Burnyeat's conclusion that idealism is not to be found in Greek philosophy. My aim here is to raise a challenge to the prior, related conclusion that there is in Greek thought no hint of the Modern preoccupation with subjective knowledge or truth. Subjective knowledge is at the heart of idealism, as Russell saw: "Idealism...says that nothing can be known except thoughts, and all the reality that we know is mental."² While it is not impossible to imagine idealism without subjective knowledge, the relationship between the two is very close. Without subjective knowledge, and especially the epistemic pride of place Descartes gave to it, idealism remains unmotivated, and skepticism would result. For suppose that we were in a state of innocence about our own mental life, which had from an epistemological perspective remained for the most part unexplored. In this state, there would be nothing to motive us to suppose that all there is are subjective objects and subjective knowledge. Without the idea that experiences of our own mental states constitute knowledge *par excellence*, idealism—the view that everything is somehow subjective or mental—would amount to a strange inversion of common sense. Why would we retreat to our subjective experience when this is still something ill-defined and uninteresting?³ On the other hand, Descartes' focus on and initial retreat into our own mental world—where this constitutes incorrigible knowledge—make it understandable that some philosophers would prefer to stay there.⁴ Without this retreat and without the hope that we can understand our epistemic place in the world by means of subjective knowledge, idealism, while possible, is very difficult to motivate.

Now, if anyone in ancient thought were likely to raise the specter of idealism, and especially of subjective knowledge, is it Protagoras. By far our best source for Protagoras' epistemology is Plato's *Theaetetus*, which will be my focus here. As Burnyeat himself must have noticed, there are moments in Socrates' and his interlocutors' grappling with Protagoras in which a perceiver's own experiences seem to be held up as true and knowledge. If this is the correct reading, then Protagoras

²Russell (1921) *The analysis of mind*, p. 7.

³One might object that something akin to idealism appears in Plato's *Parmenides* 132b–c, though it is strongly rejected. Here Plato raises the suggestion that the Forms are thoughts. Burnyeat discusses this passage on pp. 258–261, where he comments upon the "swiftness and the brutality" of the realism found in Socrates' reply. For a more recent discussion, see Christoph Helmig (2007), "Plato's Arguments against Conceptualism: *Parmenides* 132B3–C11 Reconsidered." With regard to Plato's assumption of realism with respect to perception, the *Timaeus* seems also to presuppose that perception and knowledge have as their objects something external.

⁴A lingering influence of idealism also helps to explain the popularity of sense-data theories of perception in the twentieth century.

(or the author of the theory attributed to Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*) would be a counterexample to Burnyeat's claim that subjective knowledge is unknown before Augustine. After raising the challenge, I shall argue that in fact the worry is illusory. The *Theaetetus* does not suggest that access to our own mental states is true or a form of knowledge. The question does not even arise. This sort of knowledge, which for Descartes and many after him became a preeminent type of knowledge and for some, Descartes included, a foundation for much of the rest of our knowledge, is absent from the ancient text in which we would most expect to find it. I conclude with a brief discussion of the importance of causes in Greek epistemology.

5.1 I

Burnyeat begins where Berkeley did, with the *Theaetetus*. But let's start later in our history, in the Hellenistic period with Sextus Empiricus, for here we can get a clearer idea of what a thinker of ancient Greek mold thinks about his own experiences. Having read Descartes and the later developments of skepticism, we might well expect Sextus to have quite a lot to say about our subjective experience, particularly whether or not it counts as knowledge. But this is not what we find.

In Pyrrhonian skepticism, as presented by Sextus, the skeptic suspends judgment on all theoretical matters,⁵ making no dogmatic statements about what is unclear. He thus suspends judgment about the real objective nature of, say, the gods or material bodies (whether, say, they are made of atoms) or whether there is a void. This *epochē* extends also to ethical questions, such as the nature of the good and whether pleasure is part of the good life. It is in this way that the Pyrrhonian suspends judgment about *everything*. It is in this sense that he is *adoxastos*, or "free of beliefs."⁶

We can naturally ask, then, whether Sextus recommends suspending judgment about one's own appearances. The short answer is no: the Pyrrhonian's rejection of beliefs does not prevent him from accepting and following his appearances. In fact, it is precisely by accepting his appearances that the skeptic is able to get along in the world. So, although he will suspend judgment about the essential nature of the gods, how many there are, or what sort they are—in short, on any theoretical and unclear matter—the skeptic will continue to perform the religious rituals of his community. He will also avoid falling into wells or off cliffs, as doing so appears better to him at the moment. Although he suspends judgment about whether it is *really* better to avoid falling into wells, he avoids them because this is what his appearances tell him to do, and this is required to get along in life. Burnyeat makes use of this essentially

⁵Or at least all matters which have been investigated and disputed by the dogmatists and which the skeptic himself has considered. See *PH* I.25 and Williams (2010), p. 290.

⁶I am here setting to one side the debate about the scope of belief in Pyrrhonian skepticism. For some of the *loci classici* of the discussion, see the collection of essays by Burnyeat and Frede published as *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*, Hackett Publishing (Burnyeat & Frede, 1997; Burnyeat, 1990).

practical aspect of ancient Pyrrhonism to explain why the Pyrrhonists never questioned the *existence* of the external world, only its nature.⁷

Burnyeat concludes from this that *in our terms* the Pyrrhonists did not suspend judgment about everything, for they accept their own appearances. Yet, he argues, from their point of view, they do indeed suspend judgment about everything—everything worth suspending judgment about. But in accepting their own appearances, are they not taking the dogmatic stance that they constitute truth and knowledge? No. This is because “to say that an appearance, or the statement expressing it, is true is to say that external things are as they (are said to) appear to be. ‘True’ in these discussions always means ‘true of the real objective world’, and that is how the word ‘true’ has been used since Protagoras and before” (p. 264). According to Burnyeat, then, a Pyrrhonian would not affirm that her appearance is *true* because this could only mean that her appearance accurately reflects the objective world, which is inapprehensible. Nor would she affirm that her appearances constitute knowledge for the same reason. There is no room for truth or knowledge in subjective experience; and it would be anathema to Greek thought to say that one’s appearance is true in the sense that one cannot be mistaken about the nature of that appearance itself. So argues Burnyeat.

Evidence for something like this reading, in Sextus, can be found at *HP* I.21–4, on the skeptic’s criterion.⁸ Sextus is here reacting to a long, particularly Stoic tradition on the criterion of truth. He tells us first that the skeptic’s criterion is a criterion of *action* rather than of conviction (*pistis*) about whether something is or is not the case. The Pyrrhonian’s criterion is what explains why the skeptic *does* something, not why the skeptic *believes* something. The skeptical criterion, Sextus goes on to explain, is what is apparent (*to phainomenon*), by which he means the appearances (*phantasia*). This is because “they [the appearances] depend on passive and unwillful feelings and are not objects of investigation” (ἐν πείσει γὰρ καὶ ἀβουλήτῳ πάθει κεϊμένη ἀζητήτος ἐστιν).⁹ Sextus then concludes from this that “no-one, presumably, will raise a controversy over whether an existing thing appears this way or that; rather they investigate whether it is such as it appears” (Annas & Barnes, 2000; Fraser, 1901).

In the following remarks, Sextus tells us that the necessity of the *pathos* (“feeling” in Annas and Barnes) is one of the four common observances that allow the skeptics to live belief-free and yet act in the world. These experiences, such as the experiences of hunger or thirst, come naturally and cannot and should not be banished. The skeptic simply accepts them as necessary and follows them, like he accepts the norms of piety of his community. A crucial move in the explanation of Pyrrhonian action is to say that the Pyrrhonians follow their appearances, which

⁷ Burnyeat’s argument on this point is questionable. After all, a Berkeleian idealist takes himself to be able to act in the world just as well as a materialist does. He just thinks that the world is in some sense mental. See also Fine (2003) “Sextus and External World Skepticism”.

⁸ Burnyeat (2012) briefly discusses this passage on p. 263.

⁹ See also *HP* I.19.

“depend upon” passive and involuntary experiences.¹⁰ Inquiring into these appearances themselves either takes the form of asking whether they reflect reality (which is a dogmatic enquiry and so off the table) or asking whether the actual thing appears this way or that, this being “incontrovertible” (*azētētos*) and so not worth bothering over. It is worth noting that both of these inquiries involve the relationship between the world and our appearances. The second question does not ask, precisely, what our relationship is to our appearances, but rather whether the world appears as it does. These two issues are ultimately the same, but the way Sextus states the point encapsulates that what matters is our relationship to the world.¹¹ He never specifies the nature of the appearances themselves or whether we can know them, which would presumably also be pointless. Sextus, therefore, accepts the existence of a passive experience (which he calls a *pathos*) but does not find it useful to inquire into its nature or epistemic status. In particular, he does not ask whether it constitutes truth or knowledge; still less does he make any of the moves a post-Cartesian philosopher would be expected to make regarding our access to these experiences. In this respect, Sextus is a decidedly pre-Modern thinker.

5.2 II

With this in mind, let’s turn now to the *Theaetetus*. We find in this work a long discussion of the views of Protagoras, who, as a sometime champion of relativism and humanism, has been held up by some as advocating some very modern views. The discussion from 151d to 186e is centered upon Theaetetus’ first viable definition of knowledge, that it is perception, and Protagoras’ measure doctrine, that man is the measure of all things. Protagoras’ view is commonly abbreviated, both in Plato and especially in Aristotle, as *the truth of the appearances*. This way of describing Protagoras’ view might seem immediately to militate against Burnyeat’s claim that there was nothing in ancient Greek philosophy like Descartes’ retreat to the certainty of one’s impressions. But it is important to note at the outset that the Protagorean claim is in the first place that the appearances, all of them, accurately *reflect* or *correspond* to an external world. They constitute knowledge for this reason and not because we have infallible access to them.

It is the *Theaetetus*’ buttressing of this strictly epistemological claim by a metaphysical theory of perception that excited Berkeley enough for him to declare that

¹⁰The relationship between the *phainomenon* and the *pathos* which gives rise to it is not entirely clear. The *pathos* is passive and unwilling, and the *phainomenon* is incontrovertible. Burnyeat writes that there is a “class of statements which... are immune from inquiry, not open to dispute, because they make no claim as to objective fact. They simply record the sceptic’s own present experience, the way he is affected (in Greek, his *pathos*), leaving it open whether external things really are as they appear to him to be” (p. 263). This is rather more specific than what we find in Sextus. For a helpful discussion of Sextus on *phainomenon*, see Porchat (2013).

¹¹Burnyeat (2012), pp. 263 and 274 note 53, reads Sextus here in terms of incorrigibility: since our access to our own appearances is incorrigible, it is *azētētos* or immune to inquiry.

Plato had anticipated his idealism and that, for Plato as for him, sensible qualities “exist ... in the soul, and there only” (*Siris*, §316). Burnyeat is right to find fault in Berkeley for this reading, not least because the view set out is quite explicit that in a perceptual encounter the perceptual object, i.e., a *material* object, takes on the perceived quality. The view set out is neither a form of idealism nor endorsed by Plato (or even Socrates). This metaphysical view, based upon flux, has it that each perceptual interaction produces a private (*idion*) and unrepeatable quality and perception. This view, therefore, far from dispensing with a material world actually presupposes its existence, albeit one in constant change. And as I suggested, Socrates questions and ultimately rejects Protagoras’ epistemological claim and the metaphysics mobilized in support of it. Berkeley’s reading seems impossible.

But what to make of a passage like the following?

Or how should we put it, Theodorus? For if whatever one judges by perception will indeed be true for him, and if no one assesses *one’s experience* [*pathos*] better than he, nor will anyone be able to investigate with more authority whether someone else’s judgment is correct or false—if, rather, as has been repeatedly said, each one alone will judge of his own things, all of these being correct and true—then how in the world, my friend, is Protagoras wise? (161d1–8: my translation).¹²

Or, in a related passage:

There are many other ways, Theodorus, to convict a view such as that all of everyone’s beliefs are true. But as concerns *each person’s present experience* [*to paron ekastōi pathos*], from which perceptions and beliefs corresponding to them arise, it is harder to convict these of not being true. (179c1–5: my translation).¹³

Both of these passages are describing the metaphysical view introduced to explain and support Protagoras’ measure doctrine. Again, these positions are not endorsed by Plato. And on first reading, both of them say quite clearly that our subjective experiences are true and knowledge. Both use *pathos*, the same word Sextus uses for passive subjective experiences. The second passage seems to say that all of our experiences are true. Since, presumably, we are *perceiving* these experiences¹⁴ and since all perception is (according to Theaetetus’ first definition) knowledge, our access to our experiences constitutes knowledge.

This is not an artifact of my doubtless idiosyncratic translations. The standard translations all suggest that it is a subjective experience which is at issue. For the key bit of the first passage, the main English translators give “what another [person] experiences” (Cornford), “someone else’s experience” (McDowell), “another’s experience” (Levet-Burnyeat), and “what has happened to someone else” (Rowe).

¹² ἢ πῶς λέγωμεν, ὦ Θεόδωρε; εἰ γὰρ δὴ ἐκάστῳ ἀληθὲς ἔσται ὃ ἂν δι’ αἰσθήσεως δοξάζῃ, καὶ μήτε τὸ ἄλλου πάθος ἄλλος βέλτιον διακρινεῖ, μήτε τῆνδὸξαν κυριώτερος ἔσται ἐπισκέψασθαι ἕτερος τὴν ἑτέρου ὀρθὴν ἢ ψευδῆς, ἀλλ’ ὁπολλάκις εἴρηται, αὐτὸς τὰ αὐτοῦ ἕκαστος μόνος δοξάζσει, ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ὀρθὰ καὶ ἀληθῆ, τί δὴ ποτε, ὦ ἑταῖρε, Πρωταγόρας μὲν σοφός [...];

¹³ πολλαχῆ, ὦ Θεόδωρε, καὶ ἄλλη ἂν τὸ γε τοιοῦτον ἀλοίη μὴ πᾶσαν παντὸς ἀληθῆδὸξαν εἶναι: περὶ δὲ τὸ παρὸν ἐκάστῳ πάθος, ἐξ ὧν αἰ αἰσθήσεις καὶ αἰ κατὰ ταῦτα δοξαὶ γίγνονται, χαλεπώτερον εἶναι ὡς οὐκ ἀληθεῖς.

¹⁴ After all, the dialogue is at this stage constructing a theory of perception.

And in our second passage, the key bit is glossed as “what the individual experiences at the moment” (by Cornford), “each person’s present experience” (McDowell), “that immediate present experience of the individual” (Levet-Burnyeat), and “what each individual experiences in the immediate present” (Rowe).¹⁵ Unless by “experience” or “what has happened,” these translators mean, quite oddly, the *object* of one’s experience and not the experience itself, they are unanimous in their tacit conclusion that for Protagoras our subjective experiences are true and correct and so constitute knowledge. Both of these passages, then, seem to indicate that Protagoras himself (or the author of this metaphysical theory¹⁶) endorsed the view that our subjective experiences are “correct and true.” As we saw, this view is not taken seriously by Sextus. But here, some five centuries before Sextus, it would seem that the idea was at least entertained and even endorsed by at least one thinker.

5.3 III

Now, the basic meaning of *pathos*, reflected in my translations and in those cited, is an experience, i.e., what occurs, what one undergoes. It is closely related to the verb *paschein*, which similarly means to experience, undergo, etc. And this is what *pathos* generally means in the *Theaetetus*. The word is used by “Protagoras” himself to mean experience at 166b2: “[D]o you think anyone is going to concede to you that when we have a present memory of things that have happened to us, this is the same sort of experience [*pathos*] as the one we had originally?” And outside the Protagorean context, Plato does not hesitate to use the word in this its most common meaning. Among a number of possible examples, I mention three. When Socrates raises the worry about the possibility of false belief, he says, “I just can’t see what this thing is that happens [*pathos*] with us, and how it comes to happen at all” (187d3–4). And in a discussion of heterodoxy (“other-judging”), *Theaetetus*, following Socrates’ use just before (193c8, d1), says that he has described wondrously “what happens” [*pathos*] in belief (193d3–4). A bit earlier, Socrates states in an important conclusion which finally dismisses with the definition of knowledge as

¹⁵Bostock, in his commentary, does not translate our first phrase. For the second he gives “each person’s present experience” (1988), p. 95. Bernadete (1986) gives “the experience of someone else” and “the experience each has in the present.” Lest this be thought merely to be an Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, I have also consulted three non-English translations, all of which confirm the unanimity of this reading. Narcy (1995), the French translator, gives “ce qu’éprouve un tel, tel autre” in our first passage and “à l’impression présente à chacun” in our second. The Portuguese translators (2010), Nogueira and Boeri, offer “a experiência de outro” and “a experiência presente de cada um.” And Ferrari (2011), the Italian translator, gives “l’affezione provata da un altro” and “l’affezione che ognuno prova al momento presente” (Cornford, 1935; McDowell, 1977).

¹⁶There are some indications in the dialogue that Protagoras did not actually endorse this metaphysics but also that it was a running view and not merely a Platonic invention. I remain neutral on both these points.

perception: “In that case knowledge does not reside in what we experience¹⁷ [*pathēmasin*], but rather in our reasoning about those experiences; because in the latter, it seems, it is possible to get a hold on being and truth, whereas in the former it is impossible” (186d2–5).¹⁸

Are the translators right to see this same meaning in our two passages? Let’s return to the second of these and the key phrase “*to paron ekastōi pathos*.” It can be seen that for *paron* (“present” in my initial translation and in most of the others), the translators give what seem to be temporal renderings. And a temporal rendering is natural given the immediately preceding context, which was about the future. No doubt the translators have been influenced particularly by Socrates’ contestation that we not fight about what already is or has come to be, say, sweet for an individual (178d10–e2). It would seem, then, that the natural rendering of “*to paron ekastōi pathos*” is “each person’s experience in the present.” The second passage would then be saying that it is difficult to attack the position—attributed to Protagoras—that each of our private experiences is true and knowledge.

However, the full passage shows that the reading shared by apparently all the translators cannot be sustained. It is better to take *paron* here as “nearby,” “at hand,” or “present” in a nontemporal sense, although this is not necessary for my reading. The worry is that reading *paron* in a temporal sense suggests (though it needn’t imply) that *pathos* here means an experience. And this is what we must resist. To see why, let’s look in more detail at the second passage. I repeat a part of my initial translation: “But as concerns each person’s present experience, from which perceptions and beliefs corresponding to them arise, it is harder to convict these of not being true.” If we read *to paron ekastōi pathos* as “each person’s present experience,” we are left with no way to make sense of what follows. *Pathos* has, on this reading, the same meaning as “*aisthēseis*” (perceptions); yet the passage says that the *pathos* is what gives rise to perceptions and beliefs.¹⁹ The only way to make sense of this while treating *pathos* as an experience would be to imagine Plato positing a basic, general experience, neither perception nor belief, which gives rise to both. There is no evidence of such a view anywhere in the *Theaetetus* or in Plato. Nor is it a view in any way suggested by the theory of perception outlined in the 150s of the dialogue. What gives rise to perceptions, in that theory, are instead perceptual objects and their qualities.²⁰ This comes out in the clearest way, perhaps at 156a–b:

¹⁷ Rowe gives here “directly experience,” which I have modified. The use of *pathos* in this passage might well be best understood alongside that of the two passages I have highlighted. I am in doubt about how best to take it.

¹⁸ Translations in this paragraph are those of Rowe (2015). *Pathos* is a fairly common word in the dialogue: see also 155d3; 186c2, d2; and 199c8, which also include some uses of *pathēma*.

¹⁹ It is interesting to compare this with the *PH* passage discussed above in which a *pathos*, there definitively an experience, gives rise to appearances (*phantasia*). The origin of the distinction between *pathos* and *phantasia* in Sextus might be the very misreading of the *Theaetetus* passage I am objecting to.

²⁰ I cannot agree with Burnyeat’s influential analysis of the logical connections between Theaetetus’ definition of knowledge a perception, Protagoras’ measure doctrine, and the Heraclitean view that

Their starting point, on which hangs everything we were talking about just now, was that everything was change and that there was nothing besides change; and of change there were two forms, each unlimited in plurality but with different powers, one to act, the other to be acted upon. From the coming together of these two motions, and the friction of one against the other, offspring come into being—unlimited numbers of them, but twins in every case, one twin being what is perceived [*aisthēton*], the other a perception, emerging simultaneously with what is perceived [*aisthētou*] and being generated along with it. (156a3-b2, Rowe translation).

According to this theory, when two commensurate objects (or slow motions) come together, they produce twin offspring: the active thing takes on a perceptual property, and the passive thing gains a perception. There is much more to this complicated theory,²¹ but what is crucial for our purposes is just to identify the *pathos* in our two highlighted passages not with the perception but with the perceptual quality. The alternative which presents itself, then, is to take *pathos* in our two passages not as the experience but as the quality or attribute of a perceptible object which gives rise to an experience. It is equivalent to the *aisthēton* at 156b1–2. This is hardly an unknown use of *pathos*. The dictionaries tell us that it can mean either what happens (i.e., an experience) or the quality or attribute of an object. It can be used, for instance, for the sweetness of a wine, as Aristotle uses it in a passage (*Met.* IV, 1010b20 and 21) closely related to the *Theaetetus* context we are discussing.²² That is, the same word can refer to one's experience of an object and the *cause* of that experience: the sweetness of the wine or the sweetness I experience upon drinking it.

There is now a natural sense that we can give to the second passage. The *pathos* at hand, understood now as a perceived quality, does indeed give rise both to perceptions and opinions on the theory of perception laid out by Socrates. It is the active element in the pair, not the passive one. The *pathos*, therefore, gives rise to experiences but is not itself an experience. For example, in a perceptual interaction with a white stone and my eyes, the stone's white color causes my eyes to perceive a white thing: the stone becomes white for me, and my eyes come to be perceiving something white.

This reading of *pathos* also helps us understand an otherwise puzzling feature of our first passage. On the standard reading, where *pathos* is taken as an experience, Socrates is describing Protagoras' view as claiming that no one can assess someone

everything is in continual motion. Burnyeat holds (and is followed by Fine among others) that the three views are inter-entailing: each is necessary and sufficient for the others. As Aristotle's discussion in *Metaphysics* IV shows, there are a number of possible ways to cash out and explain the measure doctrine which do not involve extreme flux.

²¹ For instance, the fact that the sensible object and sense organ are called slow motions, while the perceived quality and the perception fast motions which move in place; and that the active element becomes the passive element in a different interaction, etc. For detailed discussions, see Silverman (2000), van Eck (2009), and Thaler (2013).

²² For a discussion of Aristotle's use of *pathos* and its relation to *pathēmata*, see essay V in Bonitz's (1969): "Über πάθος und πάθημα im Aristotelischen Sprachgebrauche."

else's subjective experience better than the person himself. This, I have argued, is the wrong reading. But if *pathos* here is a synonym for *aisthēton*, the view is that no one can assess another person's perceptual quality better than the person himself. But how can another person have access to a perceptual quality which, according to the theory just set out, is something private (*idion*)? The claim makes best sense, I think, if it is understood as a report. The passage goes on to make the same claim about judgments: that they too are best assessed by the person judging. The idea that my perceptual qualities and judgments are private is best understood as saying that I am the only one who can *perceive* these qualities. It should not be taken to imply that I cannot communicate my judgments to others. Otherwise, interpersonal communication would be impossible. According to the theory, no two people (nor the "same" person over time) can share a perceptual quality. But just as I can convey my judgments to others, I can describe the objects of my appearances to others. These others can also assess the truth of my perceptions and judgments, but as they only have indirect access (by means of my conveying this information to them) to the qualities in question, then I am the better judge.

The issue of interpersonal access is of first-order importance for the interpretation of Protagoras' views in the *Theaetetus* and the self-refutation argument. I will not get into the weeds here, but the self-refutation argument presupposes that we are able to communicate our beliefs to one another. It is when Protagoras accepts that other people disagree with his belief about the truth of his own view that the argument gets off the ground. The thesis that all of our perceptual qualities, and by extension every object of perception and belief, are private must be attenuated at least to the extent that they can be communicated to others. And it is this attenuation that leads to the self-refutation argument.

One final point: I have argued that Burnyeat is correct that there is no claim in the *Theaetetus* that our access to our own experiences constitutes truth and knowledge. I have taken up two particularly troublesome passages in the attempt to show that they do not suggest what they might seem to suggest. If Burnyeat is correct, then this absence goes beyond the *Theaetetus* to the whole of Greek philosophy. Why might this be so? Why did incorrigibility not strike the Greeks as a type of knowledge—even as the basis for our empirical knowledge, as Descartes argued? A possibility, suggested by my discussion of the causes of perception, is that this causal context is a part of the explanation for why the Greeks did not take subjective experiences to be the objects of knowledge. Knowledge is, for them, paradigmatically knowledge of causes. You only know something, in the proper sense, if you know its cause or explanation.²³ If we apply this principle to perceptions, the natural candidate for their cause is, of course, an external object. This helps to explain why the truth of appearances always means that they reflect reality and never that we have infallible access to them. Descartes, on the other hand, was content to have found that the subjective deliverances of the senses are incorrigible, without having

²³A concise statement of this can be found in the famous opening lines of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* I.2.

determined their cause. Mere incorrigibility would, I venture, not be considered sufficient for knowledge, as it very much is for us moderns.

Descartes' method of radical doubt finds him doubting the existence of anything of which he can be mistaken. This begins with external objects, and by the end of the First *Meditation*, he finds himself seemingly with nothing to hang his epistemological hat on. He then goes on to recognize that he exists and that we can be sure about our appearances. This is a turning point in Western philosophy in part because it allows a basis for knowledge which does not venture outside the realm of the mental. By the same token, it sets up incorrigibility as a mark of knowledge. And this dispenses with the necessity for knowledge of causes. It is crucial for Descartes that we do not need to know the cause of our appearances or thoughts in order to know their content. Even if they are caused by an evil genius, this does not undermine our access to them. And while, as we saw, for Sextus at least the idea of infallible access is granted, it has no epistemic importance. For the Greeks, perceptions are caused by something in the world, and perceptual knowledge can only be knowledge of this world.²⁴

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