

## HOW TRANQUIL THE SKEPTIC?<sup>1</sup>

There is a famous story told by Diogenes Laertius of when Pyrrho of Elis was at sea during a terrible storm. «When his fellow passengers on board a ship were all unnerved by [the] storm, he kept calm and confident, pointing to a little pig... that went on eating, and telling them that such was the unperturbed state in which the wise man should keep himself»<sup>2</sup>. Pyrrho contributed significantly to one of the main doctrines of ancient skepticism: ...[that] unsubstantiated claims (that the storm will not abate, that the ship will be destroyed, that death in these circumstances is a terrible fate, that it is unfair that one should die) are the cause of fear and panic. Scepticism can, by showing their unsubstantiated nature, help ensure composure<sup>3</sup>. According to Long and Sedley, the observers of Pyrrho found his state of imperturbability genuinely extraordinary: The wise man whose self-mastery in all circumstances is a paradigm of happiness was a concept of pre-eminent appeal to the Hellenistic schools<sup>4</sup>.

The state of tranquillity (*ataraxia*) that the Pyrrhonist attains is as unique to ancient philosophy as it is fascinating. Yet few scholars have examined the various aspects which contribute to this *eudaemonic* state. In this paper, I shall consider four characteristics which define the tranquil psychological state of Pyrrhonian *ataraxia*: 1) *Ataraxia* as recuperative pleasure. 2) The connection between *ataraxia* and the Pyrrhonist's use of the concept of moderation (*metriopatheia*). 3) The necessary causal factor for *ataraxia* is the Pyrrhonist's cognitive limitations (i.e. ignorance) in relation to an understanding of truth as *alatheia* (or metaphysically realist). 4) The ensuing consequences a Pyrrhonist must realize if he<sup>5</sup> remains *zetetic* in his tranquil

1. This paper is the result of many revisions of older, less mature papers dealing with similar topics. I am indeed indebted to many comments by anonymous referees, commentators, and friends throughout the years who have given me encouragement to pursue this area of study.

2. DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.68.

3. LEO GROARKE, *Greek Scepticism: Anti-Realist Trends In Ancient Thought*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990, p. 91.

4. A. A. LONG and D. H. SEDLEY, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 16. All future references to LONG and SEDLEY will be taken from this source.

5. In deciding whether to use the masculine or feminine pronouns (or both) I have, for the sake of consistency, chosen to use the masculine pronoun throughout this paper.





state. Tranquillity, as we shall see, may be as difficult to hold on to as it is to attain. And so the title of this paper may be interpreted as either a declarative or an interrogative statement. On the one hand, we can admire the Pyrrhonist for having attained his unperturbed state and declare how tranquil he is. Yet on the other hand, we can consider how he got there and wonder how long he shall stay.

To begin, I think it best to briefly outline what I call the path of the Pyrrhonian skeptic. This will give us some insight into how the Pyrrhonist attains his mental state of tranquillity. (i) First, the Pyrrhonist (of pre-Pyrrhonist, I suppose), experiences a mental state of disquiet brought about by the contradictions in things, and he is in doubt as to which of the alternatives he ought to accept. This leads him to inquire into what is true in things and what is false, hoping by the settlement of this question to attain quietude<sup>6</sup>. The *telos* of Pyrrhonian skepticism, then, is *eudaemonic*, but this is initially housed within an epistemo-metaphysical framework (i.e. knowing what is true and false in things will generate happiness by alleviating mental disquiet). (ii) The (pre-)Pyrrhonist experiences vast contradictions in things (*tarassomenoi dia ten en tois pragmasis anomalian* [PH, I, 12]) and equipollence (or equal bearing) of opposing dogmatic doctrines concerning what is true or false in things (*antitheses*). (iii) The Pyrrhonist suspends his judgment on such matters (*epoche*) and lives without beliefs (*adoxastos*). For the Sceptic, having set out to philosophize with the object of passing judgment on the sense-impressions and ascertaining which of them are true and which false, so as to attain quietude thereby, found himself involved in contradictions of equal weight, and being unable to decide between them suspended judgment; and as he was thus in suspense there followed, as it happened, the state of quietude in respect of matters of opinion (PH, I, 26). (iv) The final stage of the Pyrrhonist is the attainment of a psychological state of tranquillity (*ataraxia*): ... the Sceptics were in hopes of gaining quietude by means of a decision regarding the disparity of the objects of sense and of thought, and being unable to effect this they suspended judgment; and they found that quietude, as if by chance, followed upon their suspense, even as a shadow follows its substance (PH, I, 28-29). Tranquillity comes in the form of easing the mental disquiet associated with epistemometaphysical uncertainty. Let us now examine four characteristics which define this tranquil state.

**1. *Ataraxia* as recuperative pleasure.** From the developmental path of the Pyrrhonian above, what becomes distinctively clear is that a Pyrrhonist is made, he is not born a skeptic. The Pyrrhonist, like most non-skeptics, begins his pre-skeptical

6. SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, the Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1967. All future references will be taken from this edition and inserted directly in the text.





journey in the hopes of attaining knowledge — knowledge concerning what is true and false in things (*PH*, I, 12) and discerning the truth and falsity of sense impressions (*PH*, I, 26). He anticipates that satisfying this inquiry will, in some way, make him happy. But he is unable to accomplish this. Instead, he finds frustration results from the equipollence of opposing doctrines. However «by chance» he realizes that when he suspends belief on these matters, he is no longer burdened by his epistemic plight. Instead, he is tranquil. But the psychological state has not been brought about by accomplishing the Pyrrhonist's initial task. On the contrary, his tranquillity results *coincidentally* when he suspends judgment i.e. it 'just so happens' that his mental anguish ends with the discovery of *epoche*.

There is some similarity in Sextus' treatment of *ataraxia* and Plato's discussion of recuperative pleasures<sup>7</sup>. Although this similarity is never explicitly stated in the collected works of Sextus, it becomes apparent that the tranquillity attained through the suspension of judgment (*epoche*) alleviates mental disquiet and brings about a mental calm characterized by a state of moderation (*metriopatheia*). But should we consider something pleasurable when it simply causes pain (in the form of mental disquiet) to cease? This leads us to consider whether or not there is such a thing as a neutral mental state of what Plato called a «natural» condition to which one returns after such pain has ended. According to Plato, there are also degrees of pleasure — lower physical pleasures of the body and higher pleasures of the mind i. e. knowledge. The Pyrrhonist's initial goal (let's call it condition 1) was to gain tranquillity by satisfying an epistemic problem. To Long and Sedley, [Pyrrhonian] skepticism was not simply the outcome of equally-balanced and undecidable disagreements between philosophers but the response to a metaphysical thesis concerning the nature of things<sup>8</sup>. The success of this goal would have contributed to the Pyrrhonist's mental state by providing insight into what is true and false in things. It was presupposed by the Pyrrhonist at the outset that satisfying Condition 1 would bring about a contented mental state. *Why* the Pyrrhonians anticipated that knowledge would bring about happiness is a topic worthy of much more research and discussion than I can offer here. However, the point to note is that the Pyrrhonist was unable to satisfy Condition 1. In fact, it was the inability to satisfy Condition 1 which led the Pyrrhonians to suspend belief (*epoche*) on all matters of opinion (let's call this Condition 2) and to develop the modes which illustrate how no one else has satisfied Condition 1. Now, by satisfying Condition 2, the Pyrrhonist attains tranquillity, but it is clearly a recuperative pleasure. That is to say, it does not

7. In the *Protagoras*, Plato draws up a hedonistic calculus, but it is really in the works of the *Republic*, the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus* that Plato gives an account of what pleasure is.

8. LONG and SEDLEY, p. 17.



satisfy the Pyrrhonist's epistemic doubt and, in so doing, elevate him to a heightened psychological state. The suspension of judgment (i. e. *epoche*—or, satisfying Condition 2), allows the Pyrrhonist to ease the mental burden resulting from the inability to satisfy Condition 1. Satisfying Condition 2 puts the Pyrrhonist in a moderate state of psychological indifference to Condition 1 which no longer warrants moral concern. However, as we shall soon see, it still warrants epistemic concern.

**2. Ataraxia and moderation.** Sextus divides the concept of *ataraxia* into two parts. He states that the attainment of *ataraxia* shall bring about: 1) Quietude in respect of matters of opinion; and 2) Moderate feeling in respect of things unavoidable (*PH*, I, 25-30). We have already seen how the Pyrrhonist suspends judgment on matters of opinion; but at *PH* I, 29-30 and *DL* 9.68, it is suggested that the Pyrrhonist remains moderate concerning things unavoidable because such things e.g. storms, tragic events, etc., are beyond his control. Since he cannot effect any change on such events, the Pyrrhonist accepts them and abstains from placing any further dogmatic value on them. This idea of moderation (*metriopatheia*) is perhaps best defined by Philip Hallie as a common-sensical notion having to do with keeping passions under control when confronted with natural forces that are beyond our control<sup>9</sup>. Unlike the quietude which results «by chance» or coincidentally with the Pyrrhonist's use of *epoche*, the state of moderation is achieved through *deliberate mental action*. It is a wilful mental discipline on behalf of the Pyrrhonist to maintain a state of moderation in the face of uncontrollable adversity —and this is, by no means, easy to accomplish. ...[Pyrrhonism] requires a constant struggle against anger, impatience, disappointment, jealousy, shame, and other human weaknesses. Anyone who has tried to retain equanimity in the midst of calamity or pain must see that this is no easy matter<sup>10</sup>. We now see further evidence of how a Pyrrhonian becomes a skeptic. And what Popkin refers to as the «high road to Pyrrhonism» is neither easily nor quickly travelled but fraught with numerous obstacles which can only be overcome by strong mental discipline.

While keeping in mind the importance of the role of moderation in the Pyrrhonist's life (i. e. as that which keeps the skeptic in a position of equanimity in the consideration of metaphysical and moral judgments), one is led to wonder how the teleology of *metriopatheia* itself would affect the Pyrrhonist's psychological state of *ataraxia*. Although there are similarities concerning the concept of moderation

9. Philip HALLIE, *Sextus Empiricus: Selections from the Major Writings on Scepticism*, Indiana, Hackett Publishing Co., 1985, p. 13.

10. Leo GROARKE, *op. cit.*, p. 92.



between the Hellenistic schools, the notion of *epoche* has a distinct causal influence on the Pyrrhonian system. It has been pointed out that what makes Pyrrho's recipe for happiness distinctive or seminal is its emergence from a totally negative position concerning objective values and accessibility to truth<sup>11</sup>. Whereas the dogmatists escape mental disquiet through the supposed assurance that they have attained *the* true system of knowledge and morality, the Pyrrhonians achieve contentment of quietude by acknowledging their epistemic ignorance, suspending their judgment in matters of opinion, and remaining moderate concerning events beyond their control. The *eudaemonic* state of the Pyrrhonist is quite distinct in this respect. That is to say, it produces a desired end free from mental disquiet, but by its very definition, it is devoid of the elation we might normally associate with happiness. According to Annas and Barnes: ...we may well find such tranquillity a strange, or even a repellent, conception of what it is for a human being to be happy... we would, we suspect, find such a state profoundly boring; and we might also regard it as ignoble. Intensity and engagement are no doubt disturbing, but they are also rewarding—they add, at the lowest estimate, an edge and a zest to life. Human happiness, for some of us at least, requires activity and participation, even at the price of anxiety and disappointment. To adapt an ancient metaphor, we do not want merely to be unconcerned spectators at the Olympic Games: we want to take part<sup>12</sup>.

The Pyrrhonist's state of *ataraxia* does not produce an elated state of happiness for the simple reason that such a move would contradict his use of *epoche* and his conception of moderation. And there are a number of reasons for this. First of all, by remaining moderate, the Pyrrhonist does not have as far to fall from a state of elation when faced with apparent moral crises, and he does not have as far to climb to overcome such severity. The true Pyrrhonist rides the middle line between such peaks and valleys. What sets the Pyrrhonians apart from the general run of people is their consistent immunity to opinion on anything whatever: This equipoise enables [the Pyrrhonist] to remain quite indifferent to «the passions, opinions and futile legislation» the «weigh down» the opinionated masses, whatever their status, and cause them to veer hither and thither in response to their unfounded judgments about the world<sup>13</sup>. By maintaining a level of moderation according to the Pyrrhonist's understanding and use of the concept of *epoche*, and thereby living without dogmatic beliefs, the Pyrrhonist attributes neither positive nor negative value to his experiences. He's affected by them of course. He lives according to what Hallie calls the four

11. LONG and SEDLEY, p. 16.

12. Julia ANNAS and Jonathan BARNES, *The Modes of Scepticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 170.

13. LONG and SEDLEY, p. 20.





stage practical criterion (*PH*, I, 23-24)<sup>14</sup>. But the manner and extent to which he is affected is due to the conventional beliefs of his culture and his time. As well, we must remember that there is a considerable difference between the Pyrrhonist's outward expression(s) and his inner disposition. That is to say, although the Pyrrhonist may outwardly show various signs of reaction to particular actions or events, his inner disposition is one of detached moderation. In this way, the Pyrrhonist: ...reacts to incest with horror because he is a Greek. But he can regard this as no real *concern* of his. His upbringing and dispositions are simply part of the appearances; just as he suspends judgement as to whether his own responses to it are well founded or not... In practical matters, then, the sceptic is led to suspend judgement on, and thus to be detached from, and indifferent about his own dispositions to act. So, even if his behaviour is externally indistinguishable from the dogmatist's, his inner state is totally different<sup>15</sup>.

And we are led to believe that this would hold for his inner reaction towards his state of *ataraxia* as well since it falls into the category of things beyond his control i.e. *ataraxia* simply *happens* «by chance». And so, if asked whether he enjoys his state of *ataraxia*, or whether he attributes any significant value to it, in order to maintain consistency, the true Pyrrhonist must respond by saying something like: «I am (undogmatically) moderate about being tranquil».

**3. The necessary causal factor for *ataraxia* is epistemic ignorance.** As I mentioned above, it becomes apparent that the psychological state of *ataraxia* which the Pyrrhonist claims to attain is not the result of that which he initially set out to attain. For he has not attained quietude by either settling the disputes of his sense impressions or determining what is true in things and what is false. What he **has** gained is tranquillity of quietude, but its cause is quite different. Originally, the Pyrrhonist thought that knowledge was singularly, a necessary condition for *ataraxia*, when, much to his surprise, it turns out that it was a sufficient condition and that, in fact, *epoche* can also bring about *ataraxia*. Instead of steadfastly clinging to a supposed assurance of a particular dogmatic doctrine, the Pyrrhonist realizes that by refraining from placing any value on matters of opinion or things unavoidable, he attains a state of quietude: «For the man who opines that anything is by nature good or bad is ever being disquieted: when he is without the things which he deems good he belie-

14. Basically, the four stage practical criterion is as follows: 1) The significance of Nature: the skeptic is guided by the human capacity for perception and thought; 2) The constraint of bodily drives: hunger leads the skeptic to eat, thirst to drink, etc.; 3) The tradition of laws and customs: the skeptic keeps the rules and observes in the conduct of life the pieties of his society; 4) Instruction in the arts: the skeptic practices an art or profession. See also HALLIE, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 9.

15. ANNAS and BARNES, *op. cit.*, p. 169.



ves himself to be tormented by things naturally bad and he pursues after the things which are, as he thinks, good; which when he has obtained he keeps falling into still more perturbations because of his irrational and immoderate elation, and in his dread of a change of fortune he uses every endeavour to avoid losing the things which he deems good. On the other hand, the man who determines nothing as to what is naturally good or bad neither shuns nor pursues anything eagerly; and, in consequence, he is unperturbed» (*PH*, I, 27-28).

As I mentioned earlier, what emerges are two distinct conditions for *ataraxia*: *Ataraxia* **will be** attained by satisfying Condition 1: The settlement of what is true in things and what is false (*PH*, I, 12) and the discernment of the truth (and falsity) of sense impressions (*PH*, I, 26). *Ataraxia* is attained by satisfying Condition 2: The suspension of belief (*epoche*) concerning matters of opinion and moderate feeling in respect of things unavoidable (*PH*, I, 30). As we noted above, it was the attempt to satisfy Condition 1 which led to skeptic's mental disquiet. But when Condition 1 seemingly cannot be satisfied, the Pyrrhonist gives up, so to speak, and in so doing, satisfies Condition 2—a condition of which he was not even aware.

It is my contention that the cause not only of the Pyrrhonist's state of tranquility but the efficacy of his skeptical arguments is due to the cognitive limitations which prevent the Pyrrhonist from satisfying Condition 1. We have just seen that the Pyrrhonist suspends judgment on matters of opinion because neither he nor anyone else is capable of providing what is true in things or what is false. But the notion of truth to which the Pyrrhonist refers is realist (*aletheia*): «Nothing is more important to an understanding of the sceptics than an appreciation of the Greek commitment to a «realist» account of truth. It maintains that a claim is true if it corresponds to an objective world that exists independently of the mind. A claim is not, in view of this, true simply because it appears so given the structure of the human mind, of perception, of one's society, of one's historical circumstances, or of personal propensities... Truth must be objective and transcend subjective determinants of belief»<sup>16</sup>.

And the Pyrrhonist realizes that neither he nor anyone else has any special access to this truth. We may possess beliefs, but as Barnes has pointed out, we may be ignorant of the causes of these beliefs<sup>17</sup>. As Sextus states in *Against the Mathematicians*: «Let us imagine that some people are looking for gold in a dark room full of treasures. It will happen that each will grasp one of the things lying in the room and think he has got hold of the gold. But none of them will be persuaded that he has hit upon the gold even if he *has* in fact hit upon it. In the same way, the crowd of

16. Leo GROARKE, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

17. Jonathan BARNES, *The Toils of Scepticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 142.





philosophers has come into the world, as into a vast house, in search of truth. But it is reasonable that the man who grasps the truth should doubt whether he has been successful»<sup>18</sup>.

The Pyrrhonist realizes his epistemic limitations i.e. his ignorance, and uses this to his advantage in two ways: A) As we have seen, the skeptic's realization of his inability to settle what is true of false in things has led him to the discovery of *epoche* which brings about his state of tranquillity (*ataraxia*). B) But also, the Pyrrhonist exploits this ignorance of *alatheia* extremely well through the several sets of modes of Aenesidemus and Agrippa (and discussed by Sextus). In the *Outlines*, Sextus lists them in sets of 10, 8, 5 and 2 and each illustrates the manner in which appearances vary i.e. according to the perceiver, the perceived, the circumstances, etc., as well as the limitations of argumentation e.g. Agrippa mentions the arguments of circular reasoning, infinite regress, etc. These modes were used to reveal the weaknesses of the dogmatist's (i.e. Stoics and Epicureans) arguments<sup>19</sup>.

Through the use of these modes the Pyrrhonians came to distinguish three philosophic systems: the Dogmatists: those who claim to have discovered the truth. Unlike the Pyrrhonist, Epicureans and Stoics posit 'criteria of truth' which give their wise men cognitive access to the real nature of things<sup>20</sup>; the Academics: those who claim that the truth cannot be apprehended (and so by virtue of this claim become negative dogmatists); and the Pyrrhonians: those who suspend belief on such matters but «keep on searching» (*PH*, I, 1). To be tranquil yet to continue the search for truth (*zetesis*) is perhaps the most interesting feature of Pyrrhonian skepticism.

**4. *Ataraxia* and *zetesis*.** Although the Pyrrhonist never satisfied Condition 1 (i.e. settling what is true and false in things and of sense impressions), he is quite content with satisfying Condition 2 (i.e. suspending belief concerning matters of opinion and remaining moderate in respect of things unavoidable). Having satisfied Condition 2, one might think the Pyrrhonist's job is done. But this is not the case. For one of the most interesting facets of the Pyrrhonist's skeptical position is that it is not a closed system. According to Barnes, the Pyrrhonian school of skepticism was referred to as the enquiring school (*skeptikos* literally means «enquiring»); the notion of *epoche* holds good only 'up to now' thereby hinting that future resolution of the doubt and future knowledge are not formally excluded... it remains true that Pyrrhonian scepticism is, formally speaking, open-minded and in principle tolerant of future

18. SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, *Against the Mathematicians* (M VII 52), translated by Jonathan BARNES and listed in *The Toils of Scepticism*, p. 138.

19. For a more detailed account of this, see BARNES' *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

20. LONG and SEDLEY, p. 22.





progress<sup>21</sup>. In other words, even though the Pyrrhonians had satisfied Condition 2, the possibility of satisfying Condition 1 was never entirely abandoned – that is, they remained zetetic. And this leads to another interesting question: Would the Pyrrhonist believe that if Condition 1 were (somehow) satisfied, it would produce a state of *ataraxia* preferable to what he experiences from having satisfied Condition 2? After attaining a state of *ataraxia* through *epoche*, the anticipatory (albeit, implicit) value which was originally placed on satisfying Condition 1 is gone. Though the Pyrrhonist's epistemic inquiry continues, it does so at a far less anxious pace. He remains zetetic and neither dismisses nor gives up on the possibility of somehow satisfying Condition 1. According to Sextus, the skeptic «keeps on searching» (*PH*, 1, 4). Though tranquil, the Pyrrhonist is not dogmatic in his contented state. He leaves the future open and allows for the possibility of attaining *alatheia*.

It may be argued that the Pyrrhonist has no desire to continue his zetetic quest. Instead, he may be content with his current state and is satisfied with being the philosophic trouble-maker to the dogmatic schools of thought (i.e. trying, as Barnes says, to snare the dogmatist in his skeptical net). It is no secret that the Pyrrhonians spare little expense when poking fun at their contemporaries, especially the Stoics and Epicureans. Be this as it may, however, the Pyrrhonians' search for truth must continue. To end this search or even to claim that the attainment of truth is impossible would make the Pyrrhonians negative dogmatists, a title they had reserved for the Academic skeptics (*PH*, I, 4). And so the Pyrrhonist does not, say, he *cannot* doubt the possibility of eventually satisfying Condition 1. He simply has not yet attained it (if it exists at all – for even on this he suspends judgment); but he is undogmatically content nonetheless with the acknowledgement and acceptance of his epistemic and normative limitations.

In keeping with his zetetic nature, it would seem that though the Pyrrhonist has attained a quieted state from satisfying Condition 2, he must be willing to surrender this rather unique tranquillity for whatever may come from satisfying Condition 1. In other words, one of the central defining properties of the Pyrrhonist's attained state of *ataraxia* is that, although tranquil, it may be transitory. *Epoche* may produce tranquillity but it has a purely substitutive function. For it substitutes knowledge. If (and when) the Pyrrhonist were to satisfy Condition 1, he would abandon *epoche* in an instant. Were Condition 1 to be satisfied, the skeptic would become a dogmatist of course, but of an entirely different nature than the dogmatists whose positions he attacked in the past. Instead, the skeptic would possess irrefutable knowledge, immune from any and all skeptical attack. Indeed, the skeptic would have no need or reason to be skeptical at all.

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21. Jonathan BARNES, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.



But this now raises a further problem. Prior to satisfying Condition 2, it was anticipated by the Pyrrhonist that satisfying Condition 1 would produce a state of *ataraxia*. Having satisfied Condition 2, is there any guarantee that satisfying Condition 1 will generate contentment? And if so, would this new contentment be preferable to the Pyrrhonist's present state of *ataraxia* because its cause is not transitory but permanent? Truth may satisfy curiosity and, in one sense, quiet the inquisitive mind, but it could also bring about some rather unsavoury realizations (i.e. the 'horrible truth'). The transcendence of ignorance may be intrinsically valuable but its consequences may not be. On the positive side, there may be feeling of accomplishment, perhaps even relief, but how much more happy would I be if, say, I knew with certainty that honey really *is* sweet? Or that the tower looks round but really *is* square? These are trivial examples, to be sure, and I do not intend to belittle the impact such a feat as satisfying Condition 1 might have. However, the Pyrrhonist does initially present his disquieted state in such a way as to be an epistemic thorn in his side. And he believed the attainment of knowledge would not only remove the thorn, but would, in the process, make him content and tranquil beyond the recuperative point of his (pre)-disquieted state.

**5. Conclusion.** And so we have discovered the secret to the Pyrrhonist's formula for contentment—it is ignorance itself. For it is his own ignorance which simultaneously keeps him in both a contented and zetetic state. What could be better than to continue the search for truth but avoid disappointment if this is never attained? The Pyrrhonist truly has the best of both worlds. He lives quite unperturbed in the world of ignorance but yet is quite willing to accept the truth should he somehow stumble across it and shuffle off his skeptical coil. For now, the thorn is still in the Pyrrhonist's side but he claims that since he is unable to discern whether it is good or bad, he remains moderate and tranquil. Unlike the dogmatists, the Pyrrhonians do not conquer doubt with belief. For they live without beliefs (*adoxastos*). Due to their own epistemic limitations—their ignorance, they have been unable to satisfy Condition 1. And it is this very inability which allows the Pyrrhonist to secure the state of *ataraxia* by satisfying Condition 2. In this respect, it is ignorance itself which acts as both the constraining element and the liberating tool of the Pyrrhonist<sup>22</sup>. And though the Pyrrhonist has developed an ingenious method for turning his own epistemic deficiency to his favour, we may still wonder how tranquil he truly is.

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22. Part of my ongoing research involves the development of a concept called the two faces of ignorance.





ΠΟΣΟ ΗΡΕΜΟΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ Ο ΣΚΕΠΤΙΚΟΣ;

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Ἀπὸ τὶς διάφορες εὐδαιμονιστικὲς φιλοσοφίες τῆς ἀρχαιότητος, διαπίστωσα ὅτι ἡ φιλοσοφία τῶν πυρρωνικῶν εἶναι ἡ πιὸ περίπλοκη. Καὶ αὐτὸ ὀφείλεται, κατὰ τὴ γνώμη μου, στὸ μοναδικὸ τρόπο μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο καθόρισαν τὴν ἔννοια τῆς ἀταραξίας. Παρ' ὅλα αὐτὰ λίγοι ἐρευνητὲς ἔχουν ἐξετάσει τὶς ποικίλες ὁψεις ποὺ συμβάλλουν στὴ δημιουργία μιᾶς τέτοιας ἡρεμῆς κατάστασης ἀλλὰ καὶ προέρχονται ἀπὸ αὐτήν. Ἡ μελέτη αὐτὴ ἀποσκοπεῖ νὰ ἐξετάσει τὴν ψυχολογικὴ κατάσταση τῆς πυρρωνικῆς «ἀταραξίας» καὶ νὰ ἀποκαλύψει τέσσερα εὐδιάκριτα χαρακτηριστικά της: (1) Ἡ «ἀταραχία» ὡς εὐχαρίστηση. (2) Ἡ σχέση μεταξὺ «ἀταραξίας» καὶ τῆς πυρρωνικῆς χρήσης τῆς ἔννοιας τῆς «μετριοπαθείας». (3) Ὁ ἀναγκαῖος αἰτιακὸς παράγων γιὰ τὴν «ἀταραξία» εἶναι τὰ γνωστικὰ ὅρια τοῦ Πυρρωνικοῦ σὲ σχέση πρὸς μίαν κατανόηση τῆς ἀλήθειας μὲ τὴν ἔννοια τοῦ μὴ-λάθους. (4) Ἐνας πυρρωνικὸς μπορεῖ νὰ καταλάβει τὶς συνέπειες ποὺ προκύπτουν ἐὰν παραμείνει ζητητικὸς κατὰ τὴν ἡρεμία του. Ἡ ἡρεμία καθὼς θὰ δοῦμε εἶναι ἴσως ἐξίσου δύσκολη νὰ διατηρηθεῖ ὅπως καὶ νὰ ἐπιτευχθεῖ. Ἔτσι ὁ τίτλος τῆς μελέτης μπορεῖ νὰ ἐρμηνευθεῖ εἴτε ὡς δηλωτικὴ εἴτε ὡς ἐρωτηματικὴ πρόταση. Ἐξ ἄλλου, μποροῦμε νὰ θαυμάζουμε τὸν Πυρρωνικὸ γιὰ τὸ ὅτι κατέκτησε τὴν ἀταραξία του καὶ νὰ δηλώνουμε ἀνοιχτὰ πόσο ἡρεμος εἶναι. Ὅμως, ἀπὸ τὸ ἄλλο μέρος, μποροῦμε νὰ θέσουμε τὸ ἐρώτημα πῶς ἔφθασε μέχρι τὸ σημεῖο αὐτὸ καὶ πόσο θὰ παραμείνει.

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(Μετάφραση: Α. Ἀραβαντινοῦ)

