

AGAINST PYRRHONISM

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Abstract: This paper has two critical aims. The first is a historical claim. My idea here is to deepen Fine's recent criticism to what he calls the "standard modern verdict" (200a, 200b; 2003a; 2003b;), that is, the established conviction that ancient skepticism was quite different from the modern one. In this regard, I aim to show that all forms of skepticism (despite their provenance) presuppose (without always assuming explicitly, as in case of Pyrrhonism) an absolute opposition between the way things appear to us (*tò phainómenon*) and the way things really are. That's what I here call the problem of cognitive access. Rather than questioning the very classical and stoic absolute opposition, Pyrrhonists tacitly assume or presuppose it to suspend his judgment about the real nature of things. The second claim is of systematic nature. My aim is to criticize Frede's urban Pyrrhonism as a doctrine of its own rather than as plausible reading of Sextus. Frede incurs in Quine's second dogma, namely, reductionism.

If we let outer objects count as things in themselves, then it is absolutely impossible to comprehend how we are to acquire cognition of their reality outside us, since we base this merely on the representation, which is in us. (...) Skeptical idealism thus requires us to take only refuge remaining to us, namely to grasp the ideality of appearances (Kant, 1956, A378)

1-INTRODUCTION

According to the "standard modern verdict" (Fine, (2000a, 2000b; 20003a, 20003b) the ancient Pyrrhonian skeptic should not be confused with the different kinds of skepticism of the modern period: Descartes, Berkeley, and Hume, among others (Barnes & Annas, 1985). Supporters of "standard modern verdict" are the follower of Burnyeat (1982, 1983, 1984). This widespread opinion is based on fourth different reasons. First, the argumentative strategies are completely different. While modern skeptics proceed by raising doubts and end up creating all of kinds of fictitious scenarios aimed at making knowledge claims (from the malign genius to brains in a vat), the ancient Pyrrhonian skeptic proceeds by so-called *tropes* or *modes*. The most usual trope is disagreement (*diaphonia*) between equivalent (*isosthéneia*) beliefs that leads them to suspend judgment (*epokhé*) about the subject matter. Second, ancient skeptics disavow belief, whereas the moderns disavow only knowledge. Third, ancient skeptics support only a "property skepticism", because they do not question whether they have bodies or whether there is an external world, but just whether objects are as they are represented. Fourth, the scope of ancient skepticism is mostly practical, whereas the modern one, by contrast, is strictly methodological and epistemological (Fine, 2000a., pp. 195-196). Interestingly, even though Fine questioned what he calls the "standard modern verdict", he still holds that ancient skepticism appears to be much less radical than the modern variety, and, consequently, that Descartes is said to be the first to articulate this allegedly new version of skepticism.

This paper has two critical aims. The first is a historical claim. My idea here is to deepen Fine's criticism to what he calls the "standard modern verdict" (200a, 200b; 2003a; 2003b;), that is, the established

conviction that ancient skepticism was quite different from the modern one. I aim to show that all forms of skepticism (despite their provenance) presuppose (without always assuming explicitly, as in case of Pyrrhonism) an absolute opposition between the way things appear to us (*tò phainómenon*) and the way things really are (“the real nature of things”). That is what I call here the problem of cognitive access. Rather than questioning the very classical and stoic absolute opposition, Pyrrhonists tacitly assume or presuppose it to suspend his judgment about the real nature of things. The second is a systematic claim. My aim is to criticize Frede’s urban Pyrrhonism as a doctrine of its own rather than a reading of Sextus. My complain is he that incurs in Quine’s second dogma, namely, reductionism.

2-THE LOST INNOCENCE OF METAPHYSICS: FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO PLATO’S CAVE

Our first step is to characterize precisely what the skeptic of Pyrrhonian provenance understands under the label “dogmatic beliefs.” On a closer look, the disagreement is not between ordinary beliefs because otherwise those could be resolved empirically. If I say that there is a certain mountain in a certain place in Africa and you disagree, we certainly come to an agreement when we come to the place and verify whether I am or you are right. When the old Pyrrhonian skeptics talk about disagreement (*diaphonía*), what they must have in mind was a disagreement insoluble on the basis of data, a disagreement between equivalent (*isosthéneia*) beliefs. Now, the only way to account for this equivalence is to assume that objects of their disagreement are not what appears, but rather, “the real nature of things” that supposedly underlies what appears. Thus, the proper characterization of what they mean by “dogmatic” beliefs leads logically to a crucial dichotomy between what appears sensible and intelligible to someone at some place—what they call *tò phainómenon*—and the “real nature of things” that supposedly underlie the phenomenon.

The question we now face is how to understand this key dichotomy. When we look for an explanation in the secondary literature, unfortunately what we find is nothing further than the mere *restatement* of Sextus’s own words (Frede, 1987, p. 189; Porchat, 1993, p. 180). We seem to move in a circle. In order to understand what the Pyrrhonist calls a *dogmatic belief* we need to understand first the dichotomy between what appears (*tò phainómenon*) and the “real nature of things” that underlie what appears. Nonetheless, to understand that key opposition we are now told that the skeptic suspends his judgments only about the truth of dogmatic beliefs, that is, beliefs that raise claims about the “real nature of things.”

There are only two possible readings. The first is the Kantian one. By opposing what appears to the “real nature of things” what the skeptic has in mind are just *two ways of thinking about the very same reality*. We can consider this reality absolutely *sub specie aeternitatis*, so regardless of our own human ability to represent it according to our cognitive apparatus. However, we can also understand it in an empirical sense, that is, the reality that appears to us in space and time, and can be known by our cognitive apparatus. In this Kantian reading, the skeptic suspends his judgment about how things are in themselves, that is, when considered absolutely *sub specie aeternitatis*. Yet he can hold urban beliefs about the same reality as far as this same reality appears to him. In the Kantian sense, what appears has an epistemic reading as Frede claims.

However, it is improper to interpret ancient authors based on more recent philosophies, but there is another reading by far the most plausible. By opposing what appears to the “real nature of things,” what the skeptic has in mind is an old classical metaphysical opposition between two realities or two dimensions of reality: the way things appear to be and the way things really are. This becomes apparent from Sextus’s own examples:

For example, it appears to us that the honey sweetens (we concede this inasmuch as we sweetened in a perceptual way); but whether it is actually sweet is something we investigate—and this is not what is apparent, but something said about what is apparent. (Sextus Empiricus, 1993, book 1, line 19; hereafter SE)

By saying, for example, that honey is sweet, the Pyrrhonian skeptic does not assume the *real nature* of honey or sweetness, that is, sweetness as a real property inherent in it that underlies the appearance of sweetness. Thus, what he has in mind are two different realities or two dimensions of the reality rather than the Kantian two ways of thinking about the same reality, *sub specie aeternitatis*, or as what appears to our cognitive apparatus.

The best illustration of what is at stake here is the famous Carnapian scenario: Based on satellite images, two geographers disagree whether there is a certain mountain in a certain place in Africa. Now they travel to Africa, and their disagreement is supposed to be resolved when they verify *in loco* whether there is such mountain. If the mountain exists, the one who doubted about its existence, based on satellite images, might conclude that things are not *always* the way they appear to be. Let us call this a simple commonsense *relative opposition* between appearance and reality.

Now let us suppose further that they are also philosophers. Facing the mountain they both discover in Africa, one of them believes that the mountain is *real*, while the other disagrees. Of course, we are not talking anymore about how things appear to them, but rather about how things really are. Moreover, and this is crucial, the way things appear to them both, or to the whole human race, does not provide any more cognitive access to the way things really are as if we have to divorced realities or two divorced domains of reality. Believing or disbelieving that the mountain is real under those conditions is what Pyrrhonian skeptics call *dogmatic beliefs* (*dogmata*). Those who believe in the real existence of the mountains are realists, and those who deny that underlying reality are idealists. In contrast, in face of this insoluble disagreement (*diaphonía*) between equivalent (*isostheneia*) dogmatic beliefs, the Pyrrhonian skeptic suspends his judgment (*epokhé*) about the real nature of the mountain.

Thus, I stress once again. What underlies their the trope of *diaphonía* is the highly controversial assumption that there is an *absolute* opposition between the way things appear to them and the way things really are. The idea is not that the way things appear might *sometimes* deceive us and not correspond to the ways they really are. Rather, the Pyrrhonian idea is that the way things appear *might never* provide cognitive access to the way things really are.

The first critical and polemic claim of this paper is that the very same absolute opposition underlies all kinds of skepticism. There is a widespread consensus in the literature that what underlies the modern forms of skepticism from Descartes to Kant is the idea that we do not have epistemic access to the mountain as it is in itself, but only to its appearances. The Cartesian dream argument and the scenario of the malignant genius aim to persuade us that the way things appear to us might *never* provide us cognitive access to the

way things really are. In the same vein Hume says,

To begin with the question concerning EXTERNAL existence, it may perhaps be said, that setting aside the metaphysical question of the identity of a thinking substance, our own body evidently belongs to us; and as several impressions appear exterior to the body, we suppose them also exterior to ourselves. The paper, on which I write at present, is beyond my hand. The table is beyond the paper. The walls of the chamber beyond the table. And in casting my eye towards the window, I perceive a great extent of fields and buildings beyond my chamber. From all this it may be inferred, that no other faculty is required, beside the senses, to convince us of the external existence of body. But to prevent this inference, we need only weigh the three following considerations. First, that, properly speaking, it is not our body we perceive, when we regard our limbs and members, but certain impressions, which enter by the senses; so that the ascribing a real and corporeal existence to these impressions, or to their objects, is an act of the mind as difficult to explain, as that which we examine at present. Secondly, Sounds, and tastes, and smells, though commonly regarded by the mind as continued independent qualities, appear not to have any existence in extension, and consequently cannot appear to the senses as situated externally to the body. The reason, why we ascribe a place to them, shall be: considered afterwards. Thirdly, Even our sight informs us not of distance or outness (so to speak) immediately and without a certain reasoning and experience, as is acknowledged by the most rational philosophers. (Hume, 1992, pp. 118–119)

Just like in the Carnapian scenario, insofar as the empirical reality of what appears is at play, we all agree with Hume when he believes that the paper is beyond his hand, that the table is beyond the paper, that the walls of the chamber is beyond the table, and so on. However, we are also philosophers who raise the question of whether the way things appear to us provides us access to how things really are. We want to know whether we are entitled to “ascribe a real and corporal existence to those impressions.” However, now, as Hume puts it, “that is an act of the mind ... difficult to explain,” and the reason is the very same as before: We assume that there is an *absolute* opposition between the way things appear to us and the way things really are. Therefore, we have no cognitive access to the way things really are by means of the ways things appear to us as being. In Hume’s own words, “properly speaking, it is not our body we perceive, when we regard our limbs and members, but certain impressions, which enter by the senses” (ibid.).

Thus, behind all different dialectic strategies and goals, what really motivates all kinds of skepticism is what could be called here the problem of cognitive access to external reality, a problem whose basis is the absolute opposition between the way things appear to be (*tò phainómenon*) and the way things really are, between the way the mountain sensibly and intellectually appears to us and the “real nature” of the mountain. Now on the basis of those inferences that Hume sees as problematic, Lockean believe that there really are external objects underlying sense impressions; otherwise, how we could possibly account for the order of impressions? Berkeleyans, on the other side, disagree and claim that the only reality is constituted by the flux of sense impressions perceived by the mind. We are confined to our own mind or to our own consciousness, and the world outside is lost. Kant summarizes the widespread idea in the following words:

If we let outer objects count as things in themselves, then it is absolutely impossible to comprehend how we are to acquire cognition of their reality outside us, since we base this merely on the representation, which is in us. For one cannot have sensation outside oneself, only in oneself, and the whole of self-consciousness therefore provides nothing other than merely our own determinations. Skeptical idealism thus requires us to take only refuge remaining to us, namely to grasp the ideality of appearances (A 378).

In at least one crucial passage, Sextus clearly identifies what appears with mental states:

Some say that the Cyrenaic persuasion is the same as Skepticism, since it too says that *we only apprehend feelings...* [However,] we suspend the judgment [as far as the argument goes] about the

external things, while they assert that they have an inapprehensible nature. (SE, book 1, line 215; my emphasis)

Pyrrhoneans and Cyrenaics are in full agreement on the solipsistic assumption according to which we are confined to our own consciousness or mind. Only impressions (*phantasiai*) are directly accessible. The only difference between the two schools is that while Cyrenaics are just dogmatic idealists who deny the existence of the outside world by the apprehended impressions, Pyrrhonists are skeptics in the proper sense, that is, they suspend their judgment about the existence of anything beyond impressions.

Here I might be accused of providing an uncharitable reading of Sextus. Indeed, historians of the ancient Pyrrhonian skepticism usually make this complaint:

The question, though, is does Sextus Empiricus speak this way because this is how *he* sees the problem of knowledge or because he needs to tailor his argument to his dogmatic opponent's way of regarding matters. After all, his goal is to get the dogmatist to suspend judgment on the basis of his own principles and theories. This much at least is clear: it is the dogmatists, especially the Stoics, who assume that certain impressions arise in us, impressions which we voluntarily either do or do not assent to, which we—if we proceed responsibly—need to judge by a criterion of truth, before we assent to them and form a judgment. (Frede, 1987, p. 192)

However, this possible reply misses the point entirely. It does not matter whether this absolute opposition between the phenomena and the real natures of things comes from the Pyrrhonian skeptic or from his adversaries. Still, the fact is: without that absolute opposition he cannot characterize what Sextus has called “dogmatic beliefs”, and without knowing what these beliefs are, the equivalence in disagreement (*diaphonía*) makes no sense at all. Thus, even if Sextus never *assumes* this absolute opposition as his own, the equivalence in disagreement (*diaphonía*) about dogmatic beliefs *presupposes* it!

However, why we do have to assume that Sextus only phrased the question in the Stoic way rather than assume, at least in part, the Stoic doctrine itself? A much more plausible explanation is that etymologically, the Pyrrhonian concept of what appears (*tò phainómenon*) as the intentional object comes from the Stoic concept of cognitive impressions (*phantasia*)—“*tò phainómenon, dynámei tèn phantasían autou hoúto kalountes*” or literally, “the phenomenon, virtually to the representation of it thus calling” (SE, 1994, book 1, line 22). Therefore, while in Stoic epistemology the notion of cognitive impression or representation (*phantasia*) is understood as a modification or alteration of our souls that may perhaps copy the real object, by assuming that we have only cognitive access to representations or cognitive impressions, the Pyrrhonian skeptic ends up hypostatizing the very appearance, taking it as its intentional object of any possible mental state.

Interestingly, the Pyrrhonian conversion from *phantasia* into *phainómenon* is in several aspects similar to Kant's own ambiguous positions about the concept of representation (*Vorstellung*). In several places, Kant treats “representations” like the old Stoics as mere modifications of the mind, induced by the action of external things that, hence, represent those external things. In contrast, in several other places, Kant states that we have only cognitive access to “mere representations” rather than things in themselves, clearly suggesting that “representation” now becomes the only possible object of ordinary justified belief. In those passages, the word *Vorstellung* means exactly the same as the word *Erscheinung*.

Be that as it may, it is actually irrelevant whether ancient skeptics, like the modern ones, have identified

phenomena with mental states and so have historically embraced some form of solipsism according to which we are confined to our own mind or our own consciousness. Even if we identify the *phainómenon* with what sensibly and intellectually appears *to everyone in every place and in every time*, the problem still stands under the crucial assumption that there is an absolute opposition between the way things appear to all of us and the way things really are.

Now, we are halfway to problematic idealism once we accept such absolute divorce between two realities or, if you will, between two separate dimensions of reality. The next step consists of a critique of so-called *indirect realism*, represented by Plato in antiquity and in modern times by Locke. According to this indirect realism, we could have immediate access only to our own representations (whether mental states or shadows cast on the walls of Plato's cave). Access to external reality would then be inferred as the probable cause of such representations. Why, as such inference would never have to be justified (or so *a priori* or empirically), the problematic idealism would be the only acceptable conclusion. According to this, our epistemic access would be restricted to our representations (what appears to us) that would be hypostatized as well as the intentional objects themselves of our beliefs, perceptions, and so on.

Now we come to second critical and polemic claim of the paper. If we assume the metaphysical thesis that there is an absolute divorce between the way things appears to us and the way things really are, we may not be confined to our own individual minds or consciousness, perceiving internally only our own mental states (like Descartes, Hume, or Berkeley), but it is inevitable to assume that we are all collectively confined to the haunted Plato's cave. Indeed, it matters little whether representations (*phantasiai*) are seen as internal states or modifications of an individual mind or whether they are the way things appear to mankind in general. We would not know anything because the way things appear to all of us might *never* provide us cognitive access to the way things really are.

To be sure, it seems reasonable to accept a relative opposition: Things do not always appear to us as they really are. Sextus provides us good examples:

For example, the same colonnade appears foreshortened when seen from one end, but completely symmetrical when seen from the middle. The same boat appears from a distance small and stationary, but from close at hand large and in motion. The same tower appears from distance round, but from close at hand square. (SE, 1994, book 1, line 118)

According Sextus, there are further empirical reasons to suspect, first, that the reality appears in the same way to different species (according to the first mode of Aenesidemus). However, there would be reason to suspect that reality would appear in the same way to different races (according to second mode of Aenesidemus). Anticipating William Molyneux in the seventeenth century, there were also good empirical reasons to suspect that an object could appear differently to different human senses (according to the third mode of Aenesidemus). However, if all this were not enough, there were also good empirical reasons to suspect that reality could appear differently to different people when under different conditions (the fourth mode of Aenesidemus). Thus, for example, to someone with jaundice, honey does not appear sweet; to someone dreaming, reality could appear distinct.

Yet the pressing question is: Why do we have to assume the highly controversial absolute gap between two dimensions of reality in such a way that the way things appear to us might never provide us cognitive access to the way things really are?

In the modern forms of skepticism we find a battery of arguments in support of the absolute opposition, that is, why we must distinguish the real nature of the mountain from the ways the mountain appears to us. However, In the ancient Pyrrhonian skepticism, I have found no argument in support of this ancient absolute opposition. Frede insists that it is the “Dogmatic (rather than the Pyrrhonist) who talk endless about the need to go beyond the phenomena” (Frede, 1987, p. 191). Now with all due respect to the skeptical tradition, the Carnapian account is still more appealing: As the very absolute gap between the way things appear to us and the way things really are is unfounded, the best attitude is not to suspend judgment about the real nature of the mountain the stoic claims to know as the Pyrrhonian skeptic does, but rather to question the very absolute opposition between the real nature of the mountain and the way the mountain appears to us as meaningless. The stoic claim to know the real nature of the mountain and the idealist questioning of that claim are both meaningless. To be sure, Carnap uses his *infamous* principle of verification to disqualify the question. Still, by all accounts, that absolute opposition is unfounded. The point here is that those who assume that there is an absolute divorce between the way things appear to us and the way things really are owe us an explanation.

Thus, this paper can now address to the second question raised by historians. Recall, they claim that while the modern skeptics aim to attack the ordinary belief of our commonsense life, the Pyrrhonian skeptics attack only dogmatic beliefs and aim to live in conformity with common life as everyone else. However, it is an ordinary claim of everyday life that the way things appear to us normally provides us cognitive access to the ways things really are. This commonsense claim could be called *innocent realism*.

Let us reconstruct here the path that leads to Pyrrhonian skepticism in an unusual mythological way. Suppose we met in the Garden of Eden. Then we would be in direct epistemic contact with both external objects to us as to their Edenic intrinsic properties. Thus, the external reality would be revealed to us as naked, without any epistemic mediation, exactly as it appears to us. Under the innocent realism thesis, there would be no possibility of mistake, since there would be no distinction between being and appearing to be: Things would be in themselves such as they appear; moreover, they would appear as such, as they would in themselves.

The first wrong step of humanity was when we taste the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge. From that moment, we lose our initial naiveté and become suspicious that Edenic properties are not necessarily real: Under abnormal conditions the way things appear to us does not provide us reliable access to the way things really are. It is noteworthy, however, that those trivial arguments from sense-deception cannot ground the absolute gap between the way things appear to us and the way things really are. Descartes was well conscious of it. That is why in his first *Meditation* he took steps forward and raised what he calls “unnatural doubt”: the Cartesian dream argument and the scenario of the malignant genius. Thus, at this moment, *phantasia* has not yet transformed to *phainómenon* as the intentional objects of our attitudes. Furthermore, because of the natural evolution of our human species, there is, perhaps, empirical evidence to believe that under normal conditions, even considering the differences between genders, between species and between the human senses, our representations provide us a direct epistemic access to the external reality they represent. This is position that this paper defends, and that, in absence of better name, could be called here *innocent natural realism*.

Yet when Eve finally tasted the Tree of Knowledge, then came the Fall. It is here that Cartesians put to

work their counterfeit devices (dreams, malignant geniuses and their contemporary surrogates, brains in the vat or the matrix, etc.) to persuade us that there is an unbridgeable gap between the way things appear to us and the way things really are. We are all confined in Plato's haunted cave contemplating the appearances of the real things projected on the walls. Several philosophers have tried to show that those scenarios are incoherent in themselves (Putnam, 1975). Still, whether or not those scenarios are emotional arguments in favor of the absolute divorce between the way things appear to us and the way things really are is a question this paper leaves open here. Here the paper is limited to registering that Sextus has never presented any argument in favor of the absolute divorce between appearance and reality. He simply tacitly assumes or presupposes the gap is unbridgeable without argument and on this basis shows the *diaphonia* between dogmatic equivalent beliefs leading to the *epokhé*.

2-THE URBAN PYRRHONEAN SKEPTIC

According to Frede's (1987) famous "urban" reading of old Pyrrhonism as depicted by Sextus, the Pyrrhonist is not without belief, rejecting Burnyeat's (1983) equally famous "rustic" interpretation. These labels come from Barnes (1997). In the interest of space, this paper cannot appreciate here Burnyeat's reason in favor of his "rustic" non-epistemic reading of the old Pyrrhonism. Frede's urban reading is based on the main opposition between what he calls "ordinary" and "dogmatic" beliefs. Rather than seeing the Pyrrhonian skeptic as disavowing beliefs of all kinds, Frede argues that the Pyrrhonist only disavows the dogmatic ones. As Frede puts it, an ordinary belief involves accepting a particular acceptance as an accurate representation of reality under "normal circumstances." In contrast, a dogmatic belief involves accepting a particular appearance as an accurate representation of how things are "in reality." In the central passage of *Pyrrhoneioi Hypotyposesis* that gives rise to Frede's urban reading of old Pyrrhonism, Sextus clearly distinguishes two possible meanings of "belief":

When we say that Sceptics do not hold beliefs, we do not take "belief" in the sense in which some say, quite generally, that is acquiescing in something; for Sceptics assent to the feelings (*pathé*) forced upon them by appearances- for example, they would not say, when heated or chilled. "I think I am not heated (or chilled)." Rather, we say that they hold beliefs in some sense in which some say that belief is assent to some clear object of investigation in sciences, for Pyrrhonism do not assent to anything unclear. (SE, 1994, book 1 line 13)

Here Sextus is telling us here that even the skeptics have beliefs that, hence, would be outside the scope of his *epokhé*. The crucial distinction lies here on the opposition between obvious and non-obvious objects (*Ádela*). The interpretation of this passage is quite controversial. On this standard rustic interpretation, the appearances that skeptics have beliefs about are non-doxastic or non-epistemic. A classic example of a non-doxastic appearance is an oar's appearing bent in water to someone who does not believe that it is bent. Non-epistemic appearance opposes epistemic appearance in several important aspects. First, non-epistemic appearance is not a propositional attitude, as is epistemic appearance. When I see an oar partially submerged in water and say, "It appears bent to me," "appears to me" has not the sense that we believe that the oar is bent. On the contrary, we might believe that the oar is not bent, and it stills appears to me to be bent. Second, insofar as propositional attitudes are concerned, epistemic appearance naturally raises truth claims that are usually based on evidence that raises controversies. In contrast, non-epistemic appearance is a direct

relation of contact with appearances (acquaintance); they do not raise truth claims that can be object of controversy. Thus, the epistemic appearance of the oar bent submerged in water conveys a truth claim that could only be settled by evidence. In contrast, nonepistemic appearance, as of an oar bent submerged in water, raises no truth claims. Third, epistemic appearances come in degrees, while nonepistemic appearance is all or nothing. While we can be more or less convinced that the oar is bent, either the oar appears to us bent or not. Finally, epistemic appearance is usually under a certain limited, voluntary control: By investigating better the situation, we can change our minds and disbelieve that the oar is bent when submerged in water. In contrast, nonepistemic appearance is completely involuntary: Regardless of what we do, the oar submerged in water will always appear to us as bent.

But on the urban reading Frede favors (1987), the appearance to which the Pyrrhonists assent are epistemic. The reading comes as a solution to the old problem of Apraxia: without genuine beliefs the skeptical behavior could not be seen, as intentional actions would. Indeed, it becomes very plausible when we consider first that Sextus “emphasizes that the skeptical life is, and should be expected to be, a conventional one” (p. 183), that is to say, that skeptics live in accordance with the common life. However, Frede adds “[t]o be left with the impression or thought that *p* [...] *does not involve the further thought that it is true that p*” (133. The emphasis is mine). His idea seems to be that a thought can count as a belief, but not as a belief in the usual sense with a truth-claim. To be sure, one might distinguish belief and judgment. I believe that I was born in this country where I live, but never have the need or the opportunity to make the correspondent judgment raising a truth-claim. Still, one might hold that the proposition believed is at least potential object of judgment, in particular when we take into account the notion of belief that the pyrrhonian skeptics invoke in discussions with their contemporary critics (Vogt 2012). For this reason Burnyeat claims that Frede’s distinction between two kinds of beliefs is unclear, to say the least (Burnyeat 1983). If he does not have in mind a propositional attitude, it is hard to see how he could make sense to his idea of an epistemic appearance. The real danger here is that Frede’s urban belief is nothing more than a new rhetorical label for the old non-epistemic appearance (Striker, 2001).

I think that it is unconceivable to dissociate the notion of belief from truth-claims. Thus, the only way I can see to make sense of Frede’s claim is to read the urban beliefs as beliefs what I call here, in the absence of a better name, “phenomenal truth”. Along this line of reasoning, the best way of making sense of the urban Pyrrhonists is to appeal, once more, to the mentioned Carnapian scenario. Recall, contemplating satellite images, two geographers disagree about the existence of a certain mountain in a certain place in Africa. Now, as far as their beliefs are ordinary beliefs of everyday life, it is expected that their disagreement comes to an end when they both travel to the place and verify *in loco* whether or not there is such mountain. However, let us suppose further that they are also philosophers, one of them a Stoic realist, while the other an Academic idealist. On the basis of his cognitive impression, the Stoic believes that the mountain in Africa before his eyes is *real*, while on the basis of the same impression the Academics deny such reality. Of course, we are not talking anymore about what appears to them at the place and time where they are, but rather about non-obvious objects (*Ádela*). In contrast, in face of this insoluble *diaphonía* (disagreement) between equivalent (*isosthéneia*) dogmatic beliefs, the urban Pyrrhonian skeptic suspends his judgment (*epokhé*) but still maintains his ordinary belief in the agreed phenomenal truth.

In this regard, however, the urban reading of the old Pyrrhonism seems to be incompatible with the

letter and the spirit of Pyrrhonian skepticism in some crucial respects. First, understood as a doxastic propositional attitude, ordinary belief in the truth of the proposition, for example, that there is a certain mountain in Africa, would only make sense if one could distinguish between being and appearance. Thus, to make sense of ordinary beliefs, Frede must make room *within the phenomenal domain* for the opposition between phenomenal reality and phenomenal illusion, between phenomenal truth and phenomenal falsity. However, I really do not know any Pyrrhonian textual evidence that supports that reading. On the contrary, within the phenomenal domain, things appear to be as they are, and they are as they appear to be. There is no place for an *illusory appearance* in the old Pyrrhonian tradition.

The second reason that Frede's urban reading is suspicious is the explicit and repeated Pyrrhonian rejection of what Aristotle calls *logos apophanticus*:

For if you hold beliefs, then you posit as real the things you are said to hold beliefs about; but the Sceptics posit these phrases not as necessarily being real.... Thus, if people who hold beliefs posit as real the things they hold beliefs about, while Sceptics utter their own phrases in such a way that they are implicitly cancelled by themselves, *then they cannot be said to hold beliefs in uttering them.* (SE, 1994, book 1, line 14; my emphasis)

The skeptical speech is not in any case assertoric (*apophanticus*); it does not *posit* that what appears is real, that is, as true or false. Therefore, it is hard to see how a skeptic of Pyrrhonian provenance could believe or disbelieve in the *truth* of the proposition that there is a certain mountain in Africa. According to Sextus, when the skeptic utters the sentence, "The honey is sweet," what he really says is simply, "It seems to me that the honey is sweet." "It seems to me" is then a sentential operator whose function is just to suppress any truth claim of the propositional content. The skeptic does not *posit* what appears as something true and, hence, he does not manifest any belief. Rather, he limits himself to a protocol report of how things appear to him. Thus, when the skeptic says or thinks, "The oar is bent when submerged in water," what he has in mind is its nonepistemic appearance. I prefer to interpret Sextus's statement (*P.H.* 1.13) that skeptics "assent to some clear object" as nonepistemic protocol report of what appears. The main difference between ordinary beliefs and nonepistemic protocol reports can be couched in terms of the classical opposition between the *epistème* as the knowledge of truths and the *tékhnē* as the instrumental mastering of things. By nonepistemically reporting how things appear to him, the Pyrrhonian skeptic does not acquire any knowledge of truths, but rather acquires techniques that help him to live an ordinary life. Whether the *tékhnē* can account for the skeptical behavior as intentional actions is question that I leave open here.

Be that as it may, this part of this paper is systematic rather than historical. Instead of criticizing urban Pyrrhonism as an implausible *reading* of Sextus or defending Burnyeat's rustic reading, my aim is to criticize urban Pyrrhonism as a philosophical doctrine of its own. Let us assume that the urban Pyrrhonian skeptic does possess ordinary beliefs as everybody else about epistemic appearances. However, as we claimed, now he has to make room within the phenomenal domain of everyday life to the key oppositions between *phenomenal reality* and *phenomenal illusion* or between *phenomenal truth* and *phenomenal falsity*. In other words, he is committed to reshaping in phenomenal terms the traditional concepts of truth, reality, and knowledge; otherwise, his alleged ordinary beliefs are incomprehensible.

The first question is how our ordinary belief could be illusory. The Carnapian scenario is once more illustrative here. Let us suppose the geographers are sent to right place in Africa, but none of us could see

the mountain because of bad weather conditions, and we came to false empirical belief that there is in fact no such mountain. That is, to make sense of false ordinary beliefs within the phenomenal domain, we must assume that *appearances can be deceptive*: The way things appear to us do not always correspond to the way things really are. However, let us suppose now that by contemplating the mountain *in loco*, we come to the true belief that there is indeed a mountain in Africa. Now to make sense of true ordinary beliefs, we must assume further that, normally, the way things appear to us provides us cognitive access to the way things are. To reintroduce the key notion of truth, the urban Pyrrhonist has to give up the assumption that there is an unbridgeable gap between the way things appear to us and the way things really are.

The usual way to circumvent this objection is to appeal to the Kantian distinction between the empirical and the transcendental (Porchat, 1983; Forster, n.d.). The skeptic of Pyrrhonian provenance assumes that there is an unbridgeable gap between the way things appear to us and the way things really are at the transcendental level rather than at the empirical level. Thus, within the phenomenal domain, he can account for the possibility of empirical mistakes and empirical truths. As geographers, they are subject to empirical illusions or can hold empirically true beliefs. For one thing, at the empirical level, there is no unbridgeable gap between the way things empirically and intellectually appear to us and the way things really are. As this paper has shown, the redefined notion of truth and illusion in empirical terms is incompatible with the letter and the spirit of old Pyrrhonism. Everything seems to indicate that the skeptical assent would be nothing more than a nonepistemic protocol report of what appears to him: “It seems to me that there is a certain mountain in Africa.”

Yet even assuming Kant’s empirical/transcendental distinction, the question still stands. Can we *reduce* the truth of the proposition that there is a mountain in Africa to what appears to everyone under any conditions? Let us suppose that the geographers were never sent to Africa to verify *in loco* whether their initial claims are true or false. Moreover, let us suppose that they even have forgotten what they thought about before. They never had any cognitive impression (*tò phainómenon*) about the truth value of the belief that there is a mountain in Africa. Can we still hold that the truth value of the belief that there is a mountain in Africa is reducible to what appears to them or to everyone? In other words, can we reduce our truth claims to the way we verify them? Thus, the urban Pyrrhonian redefinition of truth in phenomenological terms is nothing more than the second *dogma* of reductionism, as called by Quine (1951).

Thus, the urban skeptic is between the devil and the deep blue sea. On the one side, he assumes the highly controversial, unbridgeable gap between the way things appear to us and the way things really are (when it is reasonable to accept only a relative opposition: not always things appear as they really are). On the other side, by postulating what he calls an epistemic appearance, he incurs the opposite error: Now he wants to reduce the truth value of our ordinary beliefs to the ways we verify truth claims.

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