

## PYRRHO'S DOGMATIC NATURE

Sextus Empiricus (*A.M.* 11.20) preserves the following lines from Timon's *Indalmoi* (T62 Decleva Caizzi = fr. 842 Lloyd-Jones and Parsons = fr. 68 Diels):<sup>1</sup>

ἡ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω ὥς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι  
 μῦθον ἀληθείης ὀρθὸν ἔχων κανόνα  
 ὥς ἡ τοῦ θείου τε φύσις καὶ τὰγαθοῦ αἰεὶ  
 ἐξ ὧν ἰσότατος γίνεται ἀνδρὶ βίος

Traditionally, these lines have been translated in the following way: 'Come, I will speak a word of truth, as it appears to me to be, who have a correct yardstick, that the nature of the divine and the good [exists] forever, and from these life becomes most equitable for man.' But this translation is disputed, as are all other translations of the passage. The reason for such discontent is that they all saddle Pyrrho with a positive view on nature.

Consider the first couplet. All commentators agree that it is introductory in that it explains the status of the view expressed in the second couplet. The object of ἐρέω is μῦθον, later taken up by the declarative ὥς κτλ. in the third line.<sup>2</sup> What is unclear is whether ἀληθείης depends on μῦθον or κανόνα. There is no grammatical way of clarifying that issue. Most commentators have chosen the first option, because, if ἀληθείης depends on κανόνα, the qualification ὥς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι becomes less tenable than it would be if ἀληθείης depended on μῦθον; if one has a correct yardstick of truth, one hardly needs to qualify one's remarks with 'as it appears to me to be'.<sup>3</sup> I shall nevertheless take ἀληθείης with κανόνα and not μῦθον. My justification for doing so will shortly become apparent. The qualification itself, ὥς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι, can only refer to μῦθον, whether or not ἀληθείης depends on that word or not; it cannot qualify κανόνα as well.<sup>4</sup>

There are mainly two interpretations of the second couplet, depending on whether one places a comma at the end of the third line or not. Placing a comma at the end of

<sup>1</sup> The reading τοῖς Ἰνδαλμοῖς is an undisputed emendation: cf. F. Decleva Caizzi's *apparatus criticus* in *Pirrone Testimonianze* (Naples, 1981); see also H. Diels, *Poetarum Philosophorum Fragmenta* (Berlin, 1901), and H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons, *Supplementum Hellenisticum* (Berlin and New York, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> One could take μῦθον as the object of ἔχων. This reading is unnatural and now generally rejected: see A. A. Long, 'Timon of Phlius: Pyrrhonist and satirist', *PCPhS* (1978), 68–91 at 84–5, n. 16; M. Burnyeat, 'Tranquillity without a stop: Timon, frag. 68', *CQ* 30 (1980), 86–93 at 89; Decleva Caizzi (n. 1); R. Bett, 'What did Pyrrho think about "the nature of the divine and the good"?', *Phronesis* 39 (1994), 303–37 at 317, n. 33. Burnyeat says that ὥς κτλ. in the third line is grammatically dependent on μῦθον, that it is a specification of μῦθον. Bett (319, n. 36), is in agreement. Bett's treatment of our fragment is fuller in his 1994 article than in his *Pyrrho, his Antecedents, and his Legacy* (Oxford, 2000), 94–102; hence I shall refer to the article, as he does himself.

<sup>3</sup> The exceptions are R. G. Bury, in his Loeb translation (Cambridge, MA and London, 1936), and Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (n. 1). For a discussion of the merits of each reading, see Bett (n. 2, 1994), 317–18.

<sup>4</sup> This is pointed out by M. R. Stopper, 'Schizzi Pirroniani', *Phronesis* 28 (1983), 265–97 at 291, n. 35, and seconded by Bett (n. 2, 1994), 316–17, against Burnyeat (n. 2, 1980), 89, and others.

the line, and understanding an existential  $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota$ , leads to the traditional interpretation given above.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the second couplet acknowledges, in one way or another, a nature of the divine and the good, even if one drops  $\alpha\iota\epsilon\iota$  in favour of  $\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$ , as Natorp suggested.<sup>6</sup> Such an acknowledgement is inconsistent with the views expressed in Aristocles' famous testimony of Pyrrho's views.<sup>7</sup> In it Timon maintains that one should be without opinions concerning the nature of things. This testimony has both been interpreted so as to offer a view which is essentially the same as that of later Pyrrhonism as represented in the works of Sextus Empiricus, and as offering a version of negative dogmatism fundamentally different from Sextan Pyrrhonism. On the first interpretation one should be without views concerning the nature of things because one has no criterion with which to decide the nature of things, and on the second interpretation because the very nature of things is such that it cannot be decided.<sup>8</sup> Either way the view is at odds with the claim that the nature of the divine and the good is eternal. Further, if Pyrrho is acknowledging a nature of the divine and the good, such an acknowledgement is inconsistent with views expressed in other testimonies, according to which Pyrrho believed that nothing is by nature good or bad, and, in general, that nothing is in truth.<sup>9</sup>

Burnyeat then suggested that we should abandon the comma at the end of the third line, and understand a predicative  $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota$ , with the following result: 'that the nature of the divine and the good [is] always [that] from which life becomes most equable for man'.<sup>10</sup> This reading supposedly yields better results for Pyrrho: he need not be saying anything more than that the nature of the divine and the good is always the source of the good life. The claim is admittedly inconsistent with the Aristocles passage, since it cannot but remain a positive claim about the nature of things. But even though dogmatic, it is innocuous, one could maintain, compared to that resulting from the old interpretation.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Burnyeat seems to be offering damage control. Bett has criticized Burnyeat's interpretation on philosophical grounds: '... its reading of the second two lines is vacuous'<sup>12</sup> and does not fulfil its promise of supplying an interpretation less inconsistent with other testimonies for Pyrrho's views than the traditional interpretation. In the light of Bett's elaborate discussion of Burnyeat's suggestion, and since the passage remains positively dogmatic anyway, I shall retain the traditional interpretation of the second couplet, and translate it 'that the nature of the divine and the good [exists] forever, and from these life becomes most equable for man'. But it should be made clear that my interpretation of the couplets does not rest upon a

<sup>5</sup> There are variations of the traditional interpretation; for references, see Burnyeat (n. 2), and Bett (n. 2, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> See P. Natorp, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems in Altertum: Protagoras, Demokrit, Epikur und die Skepsis* (Berlin, 1884), 292.

<sup>7</sup> Aristocles ap. Eusebius, *P.E.* 14.18.1–5 = T53 Decleva Caizzi.

<sup>8</sup> For an exposition of the second interpretation, see R. Bett, 'Aristocles on Timon on Pyrrho: the text, its logic and its credibility', *OSAPh* 12 (1994), 137–81, and id. (n. 2, 2000), ch. 1, and of the first, T. Brennan, 'Pyrrho on the Criterion', *AncPh* 18 (1998), 417–34.

<sup>9</sup> D.L. 9.61 = T1A Decleva Caizzi, and S.E., *A.M.* 11.140 = T64 Decleva Caizzi. The inconsistency of the traditional reading of our passage with other testimonies is made clear in detail by Bett (n. 2, 1994), 320–2, as well as by Burnyeat (n. 2), 87.

<sup>10</sup> See Burnyeat (n. 2), 88–92. His suggestion is accepted by A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1987), Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (n. 1), and Long (n. 2), 85, n. 16, who seems to have been familiar with Burnyeat's suggestion before the publication of his paper.

<sup>11</sup> See Burnyeat (n. 2), 88–9.

<sup>12</sup> See Bett (n. 2, 1994), 305.

rejection of Burnyeat's suggestion, although it is more in tune with the traditional interpretation of the second couplet.<sup>13</sup>

One other interpretative issue should be clarified. As is to be expected, the adherents of the traditional interpretation had little choice but to posit a deeply dogmatic Pyrrho.<sup>14</sup> Some of them, however, pointed out, as did Burnyeat, that the acknowledgement of a nature is qualified in the first line by the phrase *ὥς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι*, 'as it appears to me to be'.<sup>15</sup> Thus Pyrrho's dogmatism, whether in its traditional or revised guise, could be mitigated. But the qualification is mystifying. For our speaker is about to speak *ὀρθὸν ἔχων κανόνα*, 'having a correct yardstick', which would guarantee the truth of what he is about to say. Qualifying this guaranteed truth with 'as it appears to me to be' amounts to nothing less than a withdrawal of the guarantee. Pyrrho is confused, on this interpretation. Nevertheless, all commentators have agreed that, notwithstanding Pyrrho's confusion, it is to this qualification of Pyrrho's that Sextus refers in his introduction to the quotation; indeed, Pyrrho's strange qualification is the reason why Sextus cites the couplets. If this is so, and the qualification does not work, then Sextus is mistaken, just as Pyrrho was mistaken. Sextus is even aware of his mistake, for he introduces the quotation with the words 'as Timon seems to indicate (*ἔοικε δηλοῦν*)', which words 'betray his embarrassment at the end', as Burnyeat says.<sup>16</sup> But the matter is not that simple, for Pyrrho need not have been mistaken at all. Although the verb *καταφαίνεσθαι* can mean 'appear', it standardly means 'be evident' or 'be plain', and it has been persuasively argued that in the fragment it has to have the latter meaning.<sup>17</sup> Therefore Pyrrho was not playing down the dogmatic ring of his claim in the manner of later sceptics. It was only Sextus who thought so, by misunderstanding the verb *καταφαίνεσθαι*. Hence, when referring to the qualification in the first line, it is only Sextus who is wrong.

These are the issues. Now I shall make a suggestion. Ponder the Greek word *μῦθος* rendered above as 'word'. Without more ado I offer another translation of it, namely 'fiction', or the like, 'false account', even 'mythical account'. Further, I shall take the verb *καταφαίνεσθαι* to mean 'be evident' and not 'appear', and take *ἀληθείης* with *κανόνα*, in accordance with the above discussion. The translation of the couplets now looks like this:

Having a correct yardstick of truth, I will relate  
a fiction, as it evidently is to me,  
that the nature of the divine and the good [exists] forever,  
and from these life becomes most equitable for man.

What are the consequences of this new reading? First, the speaker proposes to tell us a fiction, which he knows to be such since he knows the truth; thus he opposes his

<sup>13</sup> There are other issues concerning the second couplet, philosophical considerations and textual suggestions, for a discussion of which I refer to Bett (n. 2, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> See, for a clear example, W. Görler, review of Decleva Caizzi (n. 1), *AGPh* 67 (1985), 320–35 at 330, who says, discussing our second couplet: 'Mit Recht hat F. D. C. [= Decleva Caizzi] alle derartigen Versuchen zurückgewiesen [i.e. attempts at de-dogmatizing Pyrrho] und unbeirrt daran festgehalten, dass hier der Skeptiker Pyrrhon als fast leidenschaftlicher Dogmatiker spricht.' Görler offers various references.

<sup>15</sup> See Burnyeat (n. 2), 88–9.

<sup>16</sup> See Burnyeat (n. 2), 88, who points out that Natorp ([n. 7], 292) saw this; Bett ([n. 2, 1994], 315) agrees.

<sup>17</sup> See G. A. Ferrari, 'L'Immagine dell' Equilibrio', in G. Giannantonini (ed.), *Lo Scetticismo Antico* (Naples, 1981), 339–70 at 359; Decleva Caizzi (n. 1); Bett (n. 2, 1994), 315–20.

truth and the fiction to be related. Secondly, ὥς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι qualifies this fiction but not what is true; what the speaker is about to say is a fiction, and he will relate it as it plainly is to him who knows the truth. Thirdly, the second couplet emerges as descriptive of the content of the fiction. Thus Pyrrho believed that it is a fiction that the nature of the divine and the good exists forever, and from these life becomes most equable for man. I would add a fourth consideration, which relates to Sextus' understanding of the couplets. In his introduction, Sextus might not be referring to ὥς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι as a sceptical qualification at all, but rather to the speaker's description of a false view.

It should be made clear at the outset that μῦθος can be translated as 'fiction' or 'false account'. No one would dispute that claim. There is hardly need to enumerate examples from across Greek literature. Originally, that is in Homer, the word was close in meaning to ἔπος and opposite to ἔργον (cf. *Od.* 11.561, *Il.* 9.443). It could refer to an account without any distinction of truth and falsehood; the word did not carry connotations of falsehood.<sup>18</sup> But at some point μῦθος became a fictitious and necessarily false account, set in opposition to λόγος, which signifies a rational account, true or false. This may have happened sometime before the middle of the fifth century B.C. Burkert tells the following story, referring to this time:<sup>19</sup> 'Myth is left behind. The word *mythos*, obsolete in Attic, is now redefined and devalued as the sort of story that the old poets used to tell and that old women still tell to children.' Burkert pinpoints the earliest preserved text that contains the word with this meaning, as contrasted with λόγος, namely Pindar's *First Olympian Ode*, line 29.<sup>20</sup> Lines 28–9 of the ode are as follows: ἡ θαυματὰ πολλά, καί πού τι καὶ βροτῶν / φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀλαθὴ λόγον / δεδαιδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι.<sup>21</sup> After that time, especially in philosophical texts, the word quite often has this meaning.<sup>22</sup> In Aristotle the word is not common, but it is in Plato.<sup>23</sup> I offer these examples: *Gorg.* 523A: Ἄκουε δὴ, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὃν σὺ μὲν ἡγήσῃ μῦθον, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον. *Crat.* 408 C: Οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν ἀληθές . . . τὸ δὲ ψεῦδος . . . ἐνταῦθα γὰρ πλείστοι οἱ μῦθοί τε

<sup>18</sup> For the semantics of the word, cf. G. Nagy, 'Early Greek views of poets and poetry', in G. A. Kennedy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 1: *Classical Criticism* (Cambridge, 1989), 1–77 at 3–4.

<sup>19</sup> See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), 312, which is a translation by J. Raffan of *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> See Burkert (n. 22), 466, n. 4. Nagy ([n. 18], 22) adduces the passage as illustrating 'a struggle between *muthos* and *aletheia*'. Burkert refers to *Nem.* 7.23 and 8.33. According to him, the word occurs next, with this meaning, in Eur. *Hipp.* 197, and Diogenes of Apollonia 64A8 [DK6], who ἐπαινεί τὸν 'Ὅμηρον ὡς οὐ μυθικῶς ἀλλ' ἀληθῶς ὑπὲρ τοῦ θείου διειλεγμένον. In his *Commentaries on Pindar* 2 (Leiden, 1988), 19, W. J. Verdenius expresses reservations about such an interpretation of Pindar's lines, but his seems to be the minority view. Eur. *Hipp.* 197, however, is indubitably an instance of this meaning, μύθοις δ' ἄλλως φερόμεσθα; see W. S. Barrett, *Euripides: Hippolytos* (Oxford, 1964), 198.

<sup>21</sup> In his Loeb translation (Cambridge, MA and London, 1997), W. H. Race translates these lines thus: 'Yes, wonders are many, but then too, I think, in men's talk stories are embellished beyond the true account and deceive by means of elaborate lies.'

<sup>22</sup> For an extended study of the relationship of μῦθος and λόγος, especially in the fifth century, see W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos: die Selbstentfaltung des Griechischen Denkens von Homer bis auf die Sophistik und Sokrates* (Stuttgart, 1942); according to Nestle they are 'die zwei Pole, zwischen denen das menschliche Geistesleben schwingt' (1).

<sup>23</sup> For Aristotle's use and understanding of the word, see especially *Metaph.* 982b18–19 and 1074a38–b2. He does not put much faith in μῦθοι. One might also point out the following words of Democritus (68B297 [DK6]). ἐνιοι θνητῆς φύσεως διάλυσιν οὐκ εἰδότες ἀνθρώποι, συνειδῆσει δὲ τῆς ἐν τῷ βίῳ κακοπραγμοσύνης, τὸν τῆς βιοτῆς χρόνον ἐν παραχαῖς καὶ φόβοις ταλαιπωρεῖουσι, ψεύδεα περὶ τοῦ μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν μυθοπλαστούντες χρόνου.

καὶ τὰ ψεύδη ἐστίν . . . *Tim.* 26E: τό τε μὴ πλασθέντα μῦθον ἀλλ' ἀληθινὸν λόγον εἶναι.

The reason I cite these examples is that they oppose *μῦθος* as a fictitious and false account with either *λόγος* as a rational account or with *τὸ ἀληθές*.<sup>24</sup> And it is this opposition that we encounter in the second line of the first couplet in our *Indalmoi* fragment, if *μῦθος* means 'fiction'. In fact it starts in a striking and oxymoronic way: *μῦθον ἀληθείης*. This is the first consequence of the change. If the word has the meaning that I assign to it, it would be strange that *ἀληθείης* depended on it, although not impossible. For then it could mean 'a fictitious account of truth'. But on my interpretation the phrase could not mean 'a fictitious account *consisting of* truth', for obvious reasons. It should also be pointed out that it is apt for the speaker to offer a *μῦθος*, a fiction or a myth, since its subject is the nature of the divine and the good. The divine, at least, is the traditional subject matter of myths. I doubt that we could safely say that Timon, in the light of the semantic status of the word, had to have understood *μῦθος* as 'fiction' or 'false account'. But we can safely say that that he could easily have understood it thus.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, the qualification, *ὥς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι*, is directed at 'a fiction' and not at 'a word of truth'. The second couplet is 'plainly' a fiction, because the speaker has a correct yardstick of, as I prefer, truth. This claim might be thought dogmatic. And so it is. But it is no more dogmatic than views expressed in other testimonies for Pyrrho's views, and, most importantly, it is dogmatic *in the same way*. In the Aristocles passage, referred to above, Pyrrho expresses his scepticism in dogmatic terms. As indicated, he has there been taken to claim that the nature of things is undecidable regardless of us and that hence sensations and opinions neither tell the truth nor lie. Such a claim is highly dogmatic. He has also been taken to claim that because our sensations and opinions are not consistent in telling the truth, we cannot decide the

<sup>24</sup> Plato's use of *μῦθοι* as a means of communicating a philosophical view is a complicated issue that I shall not discuss. I do not think his use of myths, especially his own eschatological myths, or of other fictive accounts (usually poetical), devalues the distinction made above and the possibility that Timon can take the word to mean 'fiction'. I concede that the word may have many nuances of meaning in Plato, but he seems constantly aware of the opposition between *λόγος* and *μῦθος*. Consider *Rep.* 377 A, where Socrates discusses education: *Λόγων δὲ διττὸν εἶδος, τὸ μὲν ἀληθές, τὸ δ' ἕτερον; Ναί. Παιδευτέον δ' ἐν ἀμφοτέροις, πρότερον δ' ἐν τοῖς ψευδέσιν; Οὐ μανθάνω, ἔφη, πῶς λέγεις. Οὐ μανθάνεις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὅτι πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους λέγομεν, τοῦτο δὲ πού ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἐνὶ δὲ καὶ ἀληθής*. For a recent discussion of Plato's views towards the distinction, see S. Halliwell, 'The subjection of mythos to logos: Plato's citations of the poets', *CQ* (2000), 94–112, esp. 101–2; and the more detailed essay of C. Gill, 'Plato on falsehood—not fiction', in C. Gill and T. P. Wiseman (edd.), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (Austin, 1993), 38–87.

<sup>25</sup> In fr. 820 Lloyd-Jones and Parsons = fr. 46 Diels, from D.L. 9.40, Timon calls Democritus *ποιμένα μύθων*, which is usually translated as 'shepherd of discourses', but is equally translatable as 'shepherd of fictions'; in fact, the latter seems to me to be a preferable translation. In the works of Sextus we find other instances of the word. A list of the instances would not of course settle what *μῦθον* in our Timon fragment means. But it could perhaps indicate how Sextus would have understood the word. In all cases, except when he quotes Euripides' *Phoenissae* (line 469), he uses the word to refer to fictional accounts. That quotation occurs twice, in *A.M.* 3.3 and 7.50. Otherwise he is referring either to classical Greek myths or what he believes are fictional and fabulous accounts. In *A.M.* 9.66–7, for instance, he avers that every *μῦθος* is false; for similar sentiments, see *A.M.* 8.66, 9.71, 9.178, and especially 1.292, where he declares that grammar is useless since it cannot tell us *τίσις πιστευτέον ἐστὶν ὡς ἀληθέσι καὶ τίσιν ἀπιστητέον ὡς μυθικοῖς ψεύσμασιν*. Within the rhetorical tradition of the Hellenistic world, the word simply meant 'false account'; Sextus is clearly using this tradition (e.g. in his explicit reliance on Asclepiades of Myrlea in *A.M.* 1.252–3); see J. Martin, *Antike Rhetorik* (Munich, 1974), 75–7.

nature of things. This view is also dogmatic insofar as it allows this supposedly true judgement about other judgements. The expression of his views is dogmatic insofar as it is unguarded, whether one considers him to have been a genuine forerunner of Sextan Pyrrhonism, or whether one considers him to have offered a fundamentally different philosophy, perhaps only tenuously and circumstantially related to that of later Pyrrhonists. So, we can live with the expression 'having a correct yardstick of truth' as expressing Pyrrho's attitude towards his own stance that is very different from Sextus' attitude towards his own stance.

Now we come to the third consideration, which addresses the problem of the consistency between this testimony and other testimonies. This problem concerns the second couplet, in which the speaker offers a positive view on the nature of the good and the divine. Pyrrho should not have such a view. The interpretation offered above does not saddle him with such a view. In fact, according to it, Pyrrho regards such a view as a fiction, a false tale. But why would Pyrrho want to tell such a tale? He may have believed that 'nothing is either good or bad by nature, "but these things are judged by mind on the part of humans", to quote Timon' (T64).<sup>26</sup> The dogmatists, however, believe that something is by nature good and divine, and that this nature is the source of the equable life. Pointing out that this dogmatic claim is false could serve a purpose for Pyrrho. For he probably held that it is the realization that nothing is by nature good or bad that will lead to the equable life, while it is the belief that things are by nature good and bad that makes one disturbed.<sup>27</sup> The attribution of this view to Pyrrho is not only supported by T64 but also by the interpretation of the Aristocles passage, according to which things are not by nature of one kind or of the opposite kind, and that realizing this fact leads to tranquillity. Thus, we can infer, grasping the fiction leads to the most equable life.<sup>28</sup>

Admittedly, this interpretation of our fragment is corroborated by T64 (which Fabricius attributed to the *Indalmoi*) and a not uncontested reading of the Aristocles passage. The interpretation would look different if one disregarded T64 and based it only on the interpretation of the Aristocles passage according to which one cannot decide the nature of things, while the nature may be of some specific kind. Then one could find Pyrrho claiming that one's equable life rested upon realizing that one could not find out the nature of things. But even on this interpretation, the second couplet of

<sup>26</sup> οὔτε ἀγαθόν τι φύσει ἔστι οὔτε κακόν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων ταῦτα νόμῳ κέκριται κατὰ τὸν Τίμωνα (S.E., *A.M.* 11.140 = fr. 844 Lloyd-Jones and Parsons = fr. 70 Diels). It is possible to read νόμῳ with Rudolf Hirzel for the manuscript reading νόω. The first part of the view is not explicitly referred to Timon, but 'the context of the quotation at least implies that he held some such view', as Bett says ([n. 2, 2000], 45).

<sup>27</sup> In *A.M.* 11.68–95, Sextus argues for the claim that nothing is by nature good or bad, and that realizing this leads to tranquillity. Bett has claimed that Sextus here confusingly abandons his own version of scepticism in favour of Pyrrho's views, which have come down to him from Aenesidemus (see R. Bett, *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists; Translation, Commentary, and Introduction* [Oxford, 1997], introduction, and id. [n. 2, 2000], ch. 4, section 3). I would maintain, however, that Sextus employs the argument in a dialectical way and is not confused (see S. H. Svavarsson, *Tranquillity of Sceptics: Sextus Empiricus on Ethics* [Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1998], 57–66). The argument itself is nevertheless in all probability Pyrrhonian in origin, as Bett maintains. If such is its origin, that supports the idea that Pyrrho held that realizing that there are no natural values leads to the good life, as I maintain in the main text.

<sup>28</sup> If one understands μῦθος as I suggest, the *Indalmoi* passage may call to mind Democritus' lines (68B297 [DK6]), referred to above, since Democritus says that people fabricate fictions about the afterlife, and that these fabrications are connected with human disturbances. Nor is his sentiment far removed from Euripides' *Hippolytus* passage referred to above, i.e. lines 191–7.

our fragment is better interpreted as expressing a fiction than Pyrrho's positive claim about the nature of the divine and the good. For he could hardly be interpreted as saying 'I cannot decide what the nature of things is, while the nature of the divine and the good is eternal and the source of my tranquillity' (or, adopting Burnyeat's reading, 'while this nature is always the source of my tranquillity').

Someone might object at this point. It might be observed that the characterization of a man's good life as 'most equable' is highly Pyrrhonian, and hence that Timon was here describing Pyrrho's positive view.<sup>29</sup> The observation does not detract from the plausibility of the above interpretation. For if Pyrrho is saying 'the dogmatists falsely believe that the nature of the good is eternal and the source of the most equable life', he is not at all precluded from having his own view on what leads to 'the most equable life'. In fact, it would be natural for him to refer to the most equable life, if he is highlighting the difference between his view on the most equable life and that of the dogmatists.

This observation leads us to another matter. It has usually been assumed that our fragment is an answer to Timon's question, as preserved in T61, in which Timon asks Pyrrho about the source of his calm.<sup>30</sup> This assumption seems to be somewhat speculative.<sup>31</sup> There is no compelling reason to forge a textual link between the two fragments.<sup>32</sup> But our fragment could nevertheless be taken as a reply, or part of a reply, to the question posed in T61, without damage to the above interpretation. 'How did you achieve tranquillity?', Timon may have asked Pyrrho, who may have answered 'I did so by realising that it would be an error to believe that there is something by nature good and everlasting, which is the source of my tranquillity, as the dogmatists believe.'

What are the benefits of the new reading? If the problem with previous readings is that Pyrrho could not consistently have held the view expressed in the second couplet, and we find that Pyrrho did not hold that view, then the problem disappears. He remains dogmatic because he actually believes that the view is false and that his insight is true (a 'flaw' in the eyes of later sceptics, common to many of Pyrrho's testimonies), but he is acquitted of having positively identified the nature of the divine and the good. Further, if we adopt this new reading, the couplets can comfortably be brought in line with other testimonies that suggest that Pyrrho actually believed that nothing was by nature good and bad, and that this realization leads to tranquillity. In fact, the couplets can then be brought in line with most interpretations of Pyrrho's stance. The three preceding considerations have to do with Pyrrho's views, and the couplets' expression of those views. The fourth consideration is of another kind. It addresses the thornier issue of Sextus' understanding of the fragment, and its purpose within his work.

As far as I know, Sextus has always been considered to introduce the couplets 'precisely in order to illustrate the sceptic's practice of referring to the way things

<sup>29</sup> See Ferrari (n. 17), 360.

<sup>30</sup> Fr. 67 Diels = T61A–D Decleva Caizzi = fr. 841 Lloyd-Jones and Parsons = D.L. 9.65 + S.E., A.M. 11.1 and 1.305.

<sup>31</sup> See Bett (n. 2, 1994), 326–8, with n. 63, who finds no link between the passages.

<sup>32</sup> One might speculate further. While our fragment could indeed be an affirmation, could it not also be a question? As far as I can see the opening two words, *ἦ γάρ*, are at least as common in introducing questions as they are in introducing affirmations. See J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1954), 284–5. While Timon may well have had in mind *Od.* 19.224 (*αὐτὰρ τοι ἔρέω, ὥς μοι ἰνδάλλεται ἦτορ*), the possibility nevertheless remains that the fragment is a question. But, again, one can answer a question with a question, especially a rhetorical question.

appear'.<sup>33</sup> What I suggest is that it was *not* Sextus' intention in quoting the couplets to illustrate the propriety of the sceptical qualification. Consider Sextus' introductory remarks to the couplets:

For we have plenty of disputes with the dogmatists about the nature and existence of the things which are good and bad and neither; but we have the habit of calling each of these things good or bad or indifferent according to their appearance—as Timon seems to indicate in his *Images*, when he says . . .<sup>34</sup>

As commentators would have it, the couplets are simply (and erroneously) an illumination of the second sentence quoted above. This interpretation would have Sextus (i) disregard the qualification's cancelling effect on the words 'having a correct yardstick'; (ii) disregard the strikingly dogmatic and un-Pyrrhonian force of the words 'the nature of the good and the divine'; (iii) misunderstand *καταφαίνεσθαι*; and even (iv) acknowledge at least this blunder with the words *ἔοικε δηλοῦν*, before he proceeded to write the couplets down. Whether desparate or unduly optimistic, this interpretation is not charitable towards Sextus.

I suggest that the couplets, according to Sextus, are supposed to emphasize that the sceptics disagree with the dogmatists on the '*nature and existence* of the things which are good and bad and neither'. The very occurrence of the problematic '*nature*' in the couplets suggests that Sextus intended them to shed some light on the dogmatic view of the nature and existence of the good, to which he has just explicitly referred. For the couplets actually offer a view on the *nature* of the good, and also, if one understands an existential *ἔστι*, on its eternal *existence*. The object of the illumination would then shift to the first sentence of Sextus' introduction to the quotation, where it is pointed out that the sceptic has plenty of disputes with the dogmatist on the nature and existence of the good. Consider the original point of the couplets, according to my interpretation. Pyrrho has realized, with his correct yardstick, the error of the dogmatists, and that this error consists in believing that there actually is a nature of the divine and the good, which is the source of the most equable life. Pyrrho himself probably held that things were not by nature good or bad. And although he did indeed concede that they appeared good or bad, according to another testimony,<sup>35</sup> that is simply not the issue in the couplets, as should be clear by now. They state how things evidently are, to one who knows the truth, not how they appear. If Sextus' intentions are understood as I propose, Timon's couplets do illuminate Sextus' remarks.

Yet an objection might be raised. For does Sextus not say that Timon 'appears' to lend support to his remarks? It sounds as if Sextus is somewhat hesitant. But let us bear the following in mind. In his introduction to the couplets, Sextus is critical of the dogmatic view that there really are such things as the good and the bad (and he is careful not to exclude the possibility that there really are such things). Then he does undeniably introduce in opposition the sceptical custom of calling things good and bad without claiming that they really are such. After that he quotes Timon in order to illuminate the erroneous dogmatic view, namely that there is a nature of the good and

<sup>33</sup> Bett (n.2, 1994), 315.

<sup>34</sup> The translation is that of Bett (n. 27, 1997). The Greek is as follows: *περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν ὑποστάσεως τῶν τε ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν καὶ οὐδετέρων ἱκανοὶ πῶς εἰσιν ἡμῖν ἀγῶνες πρὸς τοὺς δογματικούς· κατὰ δὲ τὸ φαινόμενον τούτων ἕκαστον ἔχομεν ἔθος ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἢ ἀδιάφορον προσαγορεύειν, καθάπερ καὶ ὁ Τίμων ἐν τοῖς Ἰνδαλμοῖς ἔοικε δηλοῦν, ὅταν φῇ κτλ.*

<sup>35</sup> See T64, cited above, and cf. D.L. 9.105, where Timon says *τὸ μέλι ὅτι ἔστι γλυκὺ οὐ τίθημι, τὸ δ' ὅτι φαίνεται ὁμολογῶ.*



the divine, which is such that it leads to the equable life. Timon, however, sets this dogmatic view in opposition to the correct yardstick of Pyrrho. Thus, in Timon's couplets a distinction, which corresponds to that made by Sextus, is made between the erroneous dogmatists with their *μῦθος* and the sound sceptics with their correct yardstick. I say 'corresponds', for it is not the same distinction; Timon's Pyrrho was too dogmatic (irrespective of how deep that dogmatism went) for declaring his views in a qualified manner like that of Sextus, and it is this fact that most likely accounts for Sextus' hedging remark *ἔοικε δηλοῦν*. It is the unqualified way in which Timon expresses the dogmatists' error that makes Sextus hesitate.

If Sextus' intention was not to illuminate the sceptical use of 'appear' but rather the dogmatists' error, there is no reason to suppose that he misunderstood the Greek. We could actually turn the reasoning around. If we charitably assume that Sextus did not misunderstand Timon's Greek, then it is far likelier that Sextus was not concerned with illuminating the sceptic's custom of qualifying his claims with 'appear', but rather with illuminating the error of the dogmatists.<sup>36</sup>

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