

SKEPTICISM AND PLURALISM  
WAYS OF LIVING A LIFE OF AWARENESS  
AS RECOMMENDED BY THE *ZHUANGZI* 莊子

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

PHILOSOPHY

AUGUST 2004

By  
John Trowbridge

Dissertation Committee:

Roger T. Ames, Chairperson  
Tamara Albertini  
Chung-ying Cheng  
James E. Tiles  
David R. McCraw

© Copyright 2004  
by  
John Trowbridge

Dedicated to my wife, Jill

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In completing this research, I would like to express my appreciation first and foremost to my wife, Jill, and our three children, James, Holly, and Henry for their support during this process.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my entire dissertation committee for their insight and understanding of the topics at hand. Studying under Roger Ames has been a transformative experience. In particular, his commitment to taking the Chinese tradition on its own terms and avoiding the tendency among Western interpreters to overwrite traditional Chinese thought with the preoccupations of Western philosophy has enabled me to broaden my conception of philosophy itself. Roger's seminars on Confucianism and Daoism, and especially a seminar on writing a philosophical translation of the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (*Achieving Equilibrium in the Everyday*), have greatly influenced my own initial attempts to translate and interpret the seminal philosophical texts of ancient China. Tamara Albertini's expertise in ancient Greek philosophy was indispensable to this project, and a seminar I audited with her, comparing early Greek and ancient Chinese philosophy, was part of the inspiration for my choice of research topic. I particularly valued the opportunity to study Daoism and the *Yijing* 易經 with Chung-ying Cheng 成中英 and benefited greatly from his theory of onto-cosmology as a means of understanding classical Chinese philosophy. I am indebted to Jim Tiles not only for his keen expertise in Greek philosophy, particularly that of the Hellenistic Age, but also for his intensive proofreading of my work and providing me with many useful comments on it. I had the benefit of twice auditing a seminar on the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 with David McCraw. His love of the Classical Chinese language, and his feedback in those seminars

both on poetic and philosophical points has greatly enriched my text. I am further indebted to Tom Jackson (“Dr. J”) for serving as a proxy at my Dissertation Proposal Defense. His interest in the precise means by which withholding assent leads to imperturbability for the ancient skeptics, encouraged me to look more closely at this largely psychological and ethical phenomenon. I am also grateful to Eliot Deutsch for serving as a proxy at the final oral defense of my dissertation. His explanation of how philosophical pluralism is distinct from epistemological relativism was of tremendous value to this research project.

In addition I would like to thank the following members of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Much of this research was supported by my involvement as a Graduate Assistant and Editor of Philosophy with the Shuhai Wen Yuan 書海文源 Classical Chinese Digital Database and Interactive Internet Worktable, which is a project of the National Science Foundation’s Digital Libraries Initiative, in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Humanities. In this connection, I wish to thank my co-workers on the project, Brian Bruya for initiating it and recommending me for inclusion in it, Mary Tiles for her guidance, and Wen Hai-ming 溫海明 for his moral support. Speaking of moral support, it is vital for me to thank the department’s administrative staff. I would like to express my gratitude to Jackie Young for managing all of the bureaucratic paperwork related to my Graduate Assistantship and other matters, and Renee Kojima-Itagaki, who painstakingly arranged the dates and times of my Area Exams, Dissertation Proposal Defense, and Dissertation Defense with the committee. In addition, Roger Ames’ assistant, Marilyn Farrell was

helpful in providing moral support and the e-mail addresses of many senior colleagues in the field.

This research was also supported by a four-year Graduate Degree Fellowship, awarded to me by the East-West Center. It was truly a wonderful experience to be able to interact with representatives from countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region and to bounce ideas off people representing a wide variety of disciplines during the course of this research. I especially appreciate the feedback and support I received in presenting research papers at the annual East-West Center Participants' Conferences. I am particularly indebted to the following members of the Education Program for their support: Mendl Djunaidy, June Sakaba, Larry Smith, and Terry Bigalke. I also benefited from working closely with Peter Hershock and Betty Buck of the Asian Studies Development Program (ASDP) at the East-West Center on two "Infusing Asian Studies into the Undergraduate Curriculum Institutes." Peter is a philosopher and scholar of Buddhism, whose comments on my papers at the aforementioned conferences have been very insightful and helpful.

It is also important to thank some of my significant teachers along the way. I thank my ninth-grade history teacher, Bob Braren, for his support of my writing a comparative essay on Bushidō 武士道 and Chivalry, which three years later, he recommended I submit to the Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies Essay Contest, where it took first prize. Chad Hansen taught me "Comparative East-West Philosophy" in my freshman year at the University of Vermont and was a significant influence in my choice of career. The late Allan A. Andrews' course on Asian religious traditions was also influential in my appreciation of the contribution that the methodology

of comparative religion has to offer to research such as this. At Washington University in St. Louis, I benefited from several faculty members in the Asian Studies program.

Robert E. Hegel, a specialist in Ming-Qing 明清 fiction, taught an excellent survey class on East Asian philosophies, a course on Daoism and Chinese folk religion, and provided me with my first exposure to the Classical Chinese language. My advisor in Asian Studies, the intellectual historian, George C. Hatch, Jr. helped me to navigate my way through my undergraduate education and taught useful courses in the socio-political history of early China and the history of Chinese thought. Robert E. Morrell gave a lucid scholarly account of Buddhism in his class, “Buddhist Thought and Values” that has contributed greatly to my understanding of later Chinese philosophy and Zhuangzi’s influence on the Chinese development of Chan 禪 (Japanese: Zen) Buddhism. I also wish to thank J. Claude Evans in the Philosophy department at Washington University for encouraging me to pursue my interests in comparing Søren Kierkegaard’s notion of despair in *Either/Or* and the classical Buddhist notion of *dukkha* (turbulence, trouble, suffering, or craving) in a term paper for his course on Existentialism.

I also wish to express my gratitude to my teachers at The Ohio State University, where I earned my Masters’ degrees in Philosophy and East Asian Languages and Literatures (Chinese). I am indebted to Thomas P. Kasulis for arranging a Graduate Research Associateship for me as well as serving as my M.A. thesis advisor. I benefited a great deal from his insight and his career advice, which was unique in that it took factors other than academics into account. I further benefited from his courses on comparative Christianities, the Japanese religious tradition, and the methodology of comparative philosophy, wherein he developed his fascinating heuristic of intimacy and

integrity. Alan Code taught me courses on Plato and Aristotle, and in addition to his brilliant interpretations of these philosophers, encouraged me to pursue my interests in Greek philosophy as well as my comparative interests. Richard T. Garner taught an unforgettable class on moral anti-realism, and I benefited from auditing his undergraduate course on Asian philosophies as well as an independent study on Chad Hansen's then recent book, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Without the linguistic training of Frank F.S. Hsueh 薛鳳生 and Yan-shuan Lao 勞延煊 in Classical Chinese, this project would not have been able to go far. Professor Hsueh's training as a linguist and his traditional Chinese education was a winning combination for learning Classical Chinese grammar with precision. I especially appreciated Professor Lao's traditional education and his willingness to read the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 with me independently. During my year abroad at the Mandarin Training Center 國語教學中心 on the campus of National Taiwan Normal University 國立臺灣師範大學, I had the benefit of reading the *Laozi Daodejing* 老子道德經, the seven Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, and more than half of the *Analects* of Confucius (*Lunyu* 論語) with Fang Muli 方慕廉. Her requirement that I write Classical Chinese passages from memory (*moxie* 默寫) on a daily basis was at once a very desirable exposure to traditional Chinese methods of teaching Classical Chinese and a wonderful way of familiarizing me in a very intimate way with the texts. Lindsay Jones, also at Ohio State, offered two courses on the methodology of religious studies that have encouraged me to examine the materials under consideration here from a perspective broader than philosophy alone. And last but not least, I am indebted to Peter Nani, Victoria Wohl (both of the Department of Greek and



Latin at Ohio State), and J.D. Ellsworth (of the Department of Languages and Literatures of Europe and the Americas at the University of Hawai'i) for their instruction in the Ancient Greek language. I have also benefited from collaborating with Wen Hai-ming and with Tian Chenshan 田辰山, colleagues of mine at the University of Hawai'i.

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, interpreters of the fourth century BCE Chinese Daoist text, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, have increasingly appropriated the term, ‘skepticism’ as a label for the philosophical contribution of that text to classical Chinese philosophy. Despite their terminological agreement, these authors differ significantly in what they take to be the substance of this philosophical term, especially in its context as an interpretive device for understanding the *Zhuangzi*. This dissertation aims to understand the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* by reference to the Greek tradition of Pyrrhonian skepticism transmitted to the modern age by Sextus Empiricus.

I illustrate the limitations of interpreting skepticism merely as negative dogmatism and illuminate the virtues of understanding it as the recommendation of a philosophical *attitude* of non-assertion and open-mindedness. Robert E. Allinson, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Bryan W. Van Norden, and Chad Hansen interpret skepticism as an anti-intellectual negative dogmatism, and I take issue with the appropriateness of such an interpretation. In so doing, I examine the work of A.C. Graham, Paul Kjellberg, and Lisa Raphals, who understand the skeptical sections of the *Zhuangzi* as recommendations for living a fulfilling life. These thinkers offer more coherent interpretations in so far as their readings construe Zhuangzi’s skepticism as supporting rather than conflicting with the passages that advocate a variety of spiritual practices designed to bring about peace of mind and harmony. While these interpreters have drawn attention to the importance of Zhuangzi’s spiritual and moral recommendations for living a productive life, my analysis, in suggesting that Zhuangzi moves from non-dogmatic or aporetic skepticism to way-making (*dao* 道), develops this positive result of Zhuangzi’s non-dogmatic skepticism

further. This positive result is explored in connection with the extent to which non-dogmatic skepticism can serve as a foundation for the adoption of an attitude of philosophical pluralism, which suggests that there are a plurality of different standpoints, attitudes, approaches, perspectives, and 'positions' each of which may be valid in some sense and in some degree, and yet none of which is immune from criticism. I also address the criticism of aporetic skepticism that living a life without dogmatic commitments is impossible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	v
Abstract.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xv
Preface.....	xvi
Chapter 1: The Problem of Conflicting Appearances and the Question of Authority.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540/520 – c. 487/475 BCE) on Conflicting Appearances: The Interconnectedness of Opposites.....	7
1.3 Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490 – c. 420 BCE) on Conflicting Appearances: Epistemological Relativism (Relativism of Truth).....	13
1.4 Democritus of Abdera (c. 460 – c. 380 BCE) on Conflicting Appearances: Denying the Trustworthiness of the Senses.....	17
1.5 Sextus Empiricus (c. 160 – c. 210 CE) and the Pyrrhonists on Conflicting Appearances: <i>Epochē</i> (Withholding Assent).....	19
1.6 Conclusion.....	20
Chapter 2: The Limitations of Understanding Skepticism as a Philosophical Position of Negative Dogmatism.....	24
2.1 Introduction.....	24
2.2 Definitions of ‘Skepticism’ in Contemporary Epistemology.....	28
2.3 Precursors to the Greek Skeptical Tradition, the Early Pyrrhonists, and Plato’s Academy from Arcesilaus of Pitane to Clitomachus of Carthage.....	29
2.3.1 Precursors to the Greek Skeptical Tradition.....	29
2.3.2 The Early Pyrrhonists: Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360 – c. 270 BCE) and Timon of Phlius (c. 320 – c. 230 BCE).....	32
2.3.3 Plato’s Academy from Arcesilaus of Pitane (c. 318/315 – 242/240 BCE) to Clitomachus of Carthage (c. 187 – c. 110 BCE).....	36
2.3.4 Was the Academy from Arcesilaus to Clitomachus Skeptical?.....	41
2.4 The Most Extreme Variety of Negative Dogmatism is Self-Refuting.....	45
2.5 The Relationship between Skepticism and Relativism.....	46
2.5.1 The Conflation of Extreme Negative Dogmatism and a Thoroughgoing Relativism.....	46
2.5.2 The Separation of Extreme Negative Dogmatism and a Thoroughgoing Relativism.....	47
2.5.3 The Logical Independence of Non-Dogmatic Skepticism and Relativism.....	49
2.6 Conclusion.....	49
Chapter 3: The Virtues of Understanding Skepticism as a Philosophical Attitude of Open-Mindedness.....	52
3.1 Introduction.....	52
3.2 The Hellenistic Revival of Pyrrhonism.....	53
3.2.1 Aenesidemus of Cnossus (c. 85 – 65 BCE).....	53
3.2.2 The Ten <i>Tropoi</i> of <i>Epochē</i> .....	57
3.2.3 The Eight <i>Tropoi</i> against Aetiology.....	66
3.2.4 Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus on Pyrrhonism, Heracliteanism,	

and Protagoreanism.....	68
3.2.5 The Five <i>Tropoi</i> of <i>Epochē</i> According to Agrippa (c. 40 – 70 CE)	72
.....	72
3.3 Conclusion .....	74
3.3.1 Early Skepticism: Epistemological Issues .....	74
3.3.2 Early Skepticism: A Way of Living.....	79
3.3.3 A Note on Iatric (or Therapeutic) Skepticism.....	85
Chapter 4: From Non-Dogmatic Skepticism to Way-Making in the <i>Zhuangzi</i> 莊子 .....	90
4.1 Introduction.....	90
4.2 Skepticism in the <i>Zhuangzi</i> .....	94
4.2.1 Non-Dogmatic Skepticism.....	94
4.2.2 Language Skepticism .....	109
4.3 Cosmology in the <i>Zhuangzi</i> : Transformation, Process, Change, and Flux....	114
4.4 Conclusion: Skepticism as a Way of Living: Positive Recommendations....	122
Chapter 5: The Misattribution of Dogmatic Skepticism to the <i>Zhuangzi</i> 莊子 .....	135
5.1 Introduction.....	135
5.2 Robert E. Allinson .....	136
5.3 Dogmatic Therapeutic Skepticism.....	141
5.3.1 Philip J. Ivanhoe.....	143
5.3.2 Bryan W. Van Norden .....	153
5.3.3 Eric Schwitzgebel .....	158
5.4 Chad Hansen .....	161
5.5 Conclusion .....	166
Chapter 6: Achieving Freedom from Disturbance in Cultivating a Disposition of Open-Minded Awareness: Zhuangzi 莊子’s Application of Non-Dogmatic Skepticism to the Plurality of Conflicting Perspectives and Changing Phenomena .....	168
6.1 Introduction.....	168
6.1.1 <i>Adoxastos</i> is Impossible .....	168
6.1.2 The Response of Sextus Empiricus to the Criticism that <i>Adoxastos</i> is Impossible .....	169
6.1.3 The Debate between Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede on the Scope of <i>Epochē</i> .....	172
6.1.4 The Non-Teleological Tendencies of Classical Daoism.....	182
6.2 The Pyrrhonist and Daoist Uses of Negative Discourse .....	183
6.3 Pluralism .....	187
6.4 Conclusion: The Affective Dimension of <i>Zhi</i> 知.....	193
Bibliography .....	207

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. A Taxonomy of Positive and Negative Dogmatism and Non-Dogmatic Skepticism.	27

## PREFACE

The term ‘skepticism’ as it might apply (or fail to apply) to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子<sup>1</sup> is not itself well understood by contemporary Western interpreters who would use it to inform their interpretations of this Daoist text. It is my thesis that a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the historical development of skepticism in ancient Greece can provide us with a useful heuristic for interpreting the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>2</sup> It will be valuable, by way of a preface, to survey briefly some of the complex textual issues that confront any interpreter of the *Zhuangzi* and of Greek skepticism.

The extant version of the *Zhuangzi* is a text in thirty-three *pian* 篇 (“bundles” or chapters). Attributed to Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (also known as Zhuangzi 莊子 or ‘Master Zhuang’), the text was retrospectively catalogued by Han 漢 bibliographers as belonging to the Lineage or School of *Dao* 道 (*Daojia* 道家), known in English as ‘Daoism.’<sup>3</sup> In fact, the *Zhuangzi*, along with the *Laozi* 老子 (also known as the *Daodejing* 道德經), have been regarded as the two primary Daoist texts and have been labeled together as

---

<sup>1</sup> Some readers may be more familiar with the older Wade-Giles system of Chinese Romanization, wherein ‘Zhuangzi’ is spelled as ‘Chuang-tzū’ and ‘dao’ is spelled as ‘tao’. Throughout this work, Chinese words and names are transcribed in the now standard Hanyu Pinyin 漢語拼音 system of Romanization. Titles of works in English and quotations from sources that utilize an alternative Romanization system retain the original Romanization. The interested reader is hereby referred to any of a number of comparison charts to be found in the back of most Chinese-English dictionaries. See for example, “汉语拼音和威妥玛式拼法音借对照表 Chinese Phonetic Alphabet and Wade System” in Wu Jingrong 吴景荣, ed., *The Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary* 漢英詞典 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1979) 957-959.

<sup>2</sup> There is a precedent in this approach of seeking out the etymology of philosophical terms with Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Nietzsche going back to Greece to get behind contemporary prejudice.

<sup>3</sup> Sima Tan 司馬談 (died 110 BCE) in his essay, “*Lun Liu Jia Yaozhi* 論六家要旨” (“On the Key Themes of the Six Schools”) in the preface to the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*) named the school, “Daoism” in the second century BCE, but actually referred to it as “*Daodejia* 道德家” (the Lineage or School of *Dao* 道 and *De* 德). For an interesting discussion of the ambiguity of the label, ‘Daoism,’ see Nathan Sivin, “On the Word ‘Taoist’ as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China” in Nathan Sivin, *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China: Researches and Reflections* (Aldershot: Variorum; Ashgate Publishing, 1995) 303-330.

‘*Lao-Zhuang de sixiang* 老莊的思想’ (Lao-Zhuang thought)<sup>4</sup>. Little is known of the life of Zhuang Zhou. He is believed to have been a *shi* 士 (scholar-official) from a village or district called Meng 蒙 (in present day Henan 河南), where he held a minor office at Qiyuan 漆園 (Lacquer Garden). Meng was located in the southernmost region of the state of Song 宋, which was on the decline during this period and which shared a border with the southern state of Chu 楚.<sup>5</sup> Chu, as a southern state, reflected some cultural differences from the northern Chinese states as exemplified by the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*The Songs [or Elegies] of Chu*), a collection of songs and poetry attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340 – 278 BCE). Zhuangzi’s friend and interlocutor, Hui Shi 惠施 (380 – 305 BCE), who was associated with the Lineage or School of Names (*Mingjia* 名家), was also from Song, which suggests that in addition to the Chu culture, Zhuangzi was influenced by the Lineage of Names. In 742 CE, the name of Zhuangzi’s birthplace was temporarily changed to Nanhua 南華. An imperial edict of the same year decreed that he should be styled “the authentic person of Nanhua” (*Nanhua zhenren* 南華真人) and his text as the *Nanhua Zhenjing* 南華真經 (*The Authentic Classic of Nanhua*). Zhuangzi was a contemporary of King Hui of Liang (Liang Hui Wang 梁惠王, 370 – 319 BCE) and King

---

<sup>4</sup> Or ‘*Zhuang-Lao de sixiang* 莊老的思想’. The expression “*Lao-Zhuang zhi shu* 老莊之術” first occurred in the “*Yaolie* 要略” (“Postface”) to the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, compiled c. 139 BCE. See for example, Xiong Lihui 熊禮匯 and Hou Naihui 侯迺慧, eds., *Xinyi Huainanzi* 新譯淮南子 [*New Annotated Huainanzi*], Volume Two (Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1997) 1163.

<sup>5</sup> James Legge has observed that Zhuang Zhou 莊周 “belonged to the state or kingdom of Liang [梁] or Wei [衛]”. See James Legge, trans., *The Texts of Taoism: Part I: The Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu/The Writings of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Dover Publications, 1891, 1962) 11.



Xuan of Qi (Qi Xuan Wang 齊宣王, 319 – 301 BCE), and is thus estimated to have lived from c. 369/365 – c. 286/285 BCE.

The text of the *Zhuangzi* is a collection of writings from the fourth, third, and second centuries BCE.<sup>6</sup> A.C. Graham aptly points out that not all of the pieces in the collection are necessarily Daoist.<sup>7</sup> The only extant version of the text is corrupt in many places, and traditionally, only the first seven chapters, referred to as the *Inner Chapters* (*Neipian* 內篇) have been ascribed to Zhuang Zhou.<sup>8</sup> These chapters have titles based on their themes and despite some textual corruption, present a set of coherent philosophical musings in beautiful and vivid language. Chapters eight through twenty-two are known as the *Outer Chapters* (*Waipian* 外篇). The last six of these chapters, chapters seventeen to twenty-two, are arranged around certain themes and share certain parallels with the Inner Chapters.<sup>9</sup> It is for this reason that Graham thinks these should be regarded as

<sup>6</sup> For detailed treatments of textual matters concerning authorship of the text, see A.C. Graham, “How Much of *Chuang-Tzū* 莊子 Did Chuang-Tzū Write?” (1979) in A.C. Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, 1986) 283-321, Harold Roth, “Who Compiled the *Chuang Tzu*?” in Henry Rosemont, Jr., ed., *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham* (LaSalle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1991) 79-128, Graham, “Reflections and Replies: Roth” in the same volume, 279-283, and Harold D. Roth, “Colophon: An Appraisal of Angus Graham’s Textual Scholarship on the *Chuang Tzu*” in Harold D. Roth, *A Companion to Angus C. Graham’s Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003) 181-219. See also Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Classifying the Zhuangzi Chapters* (The University of Michigan: Center for Chinese Studies Press, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Graham, “How Much of *Chuang-Tzū* 莊子 Did Chuang-Tzū Write?”, 283. This observation coheres well with Sivin’s scholarship on the ambiguity of the word, ‘Daoist’.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Fu Sinian 傅斯年 in his article, “On the Authorship of *Ts’i-wu-lun* in *Chuang-tzū*” in *Bulletin of Academia Sinica* 6/4, 1936, 557-567, ascribed chapter 2, the “*Qiwulun* 齊物論” to Shen Dao 慎到, so there is no universal agreement about this widely accepted supposition.

<sup>9</sup> Traditional commentators going back to Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) have observed that the first six of the seven Inner Chapters seem to have “companion” chapters in the outer chapters as follows.

1 <i>Xiaoyaoyou</i> 逍遙遊	22 <i>Zhibeiyou</i> 知北遊
2 <i>Qiwulun</i> 齊物論	17 <i>Qiushui</i> 秋水
3 <i>Yangshengzhu</i> 養生主	19 <i>Dasheng</i> 達生
4 <i>Renjianshi</i> 人間世	20 <i>Shanmu</i> 山木

belonging to Zhuangzi's particular lineage of Daoism.<sup>10</sup> Chapters twenty-three to thirty-three are called the *Mixed (Miscellaneous) Chapters* (*Zapian* 雜篇) for the reason that their contents are not arranged according to any particular organizational scheme. The miscellaneous and fragmentary pieces in six of the Mixed Chapters (chapters twenty-three to twenty-seven and thirty-two) could be from any or all of the authors whose work is represented in the book.<sup>11</sup>

The first editors of the text were the famous 'father and son team' of Han bibliographers, Liu Xiang 劉向 (79/77 – 8/6 BCE) and Liu Xin 劉歆 (53 BCE – 23 CE), who refer to a fifty-two chapter version of the text. Liu Xiang and Liu Xin provided Ban Gu 班固 (32 – 92 CE) with his source for the mention of a fifty-two chapter version of the *Zhuangzi* in the 'Yiwenzhi 藝文志' ("Record of Arts and Letters") chapter of the *Qian Hanshu* 前漢書 (*History of the Early Han*), which he compiled. We know that an early version of the text, edited by Sima Biao 司馬彪 (240 – 306 CE) contained fifty-two-chapters (seven Inner, twenty-eight Outer, fourteen Mixed, and three Explanatory or Interpretive Chapters). This is probably the same fifty-two chapter version referred to in the 'Yiwenzhi' chapter of the *Qian Hanshu*. There was also in circulation a twenty-seven chapter version (seven Inner and twenty Outer Chapters). Cui Zhuan 崔譔 (died 290 CE) and Xiang Xiu 向秀 (? 221 – ? 300 CE) wrote commentaries on this version<sup>12</sup>. In

5 <i>Dechongfu</i> 德充符	21 <i>Tian Zifang</i> 天子方
6 <i>Dazongshi</i> 大宗師	18 <i>Zhile</i> 至樂

<sup>10</sup> Graham, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> The commentary by Xiang Xiu 向秀 may have been written to a twenty-six-chapter version of the text. The version(s) that Cui Zhuan 崔譔 and Xiang Xiu were working with may or may not have been the same.

addition to these, there was a thirty- or thirty-five-chapter version, upon which Li Yi 李頤 (third – fourth century CE) wrote a commentary. These shorter versions are likely to have been edited versions of the longer work, rather than alternative editions of the text.<sup>13</sup> Guo Xiang 郭向 (d. 312 CE), a neo-Daoist of the Western Jin (Xi Jin 西晉) period, basing much of his material on the Xiang Xiu edition, edited the present thirty-three chapter version of the text (dated c. 300 CE), and wrote the earliest extant commentary on it.<sup>14</sup>

Similar problems of authorship confront the interpreter of the Greek skeptical tradition. The works of Sextus Empiricus (c. 160 – c. 210 CE) are the only extant sources for understanding the role of various forms of skepticism in the Greek tradition. There are almost no sources for the early Pyrrhonists and their precursors, and Sextus offers the most complete account of both the skeptical Academy and the later Pyrrhonists of the Hellenistic Age (323 – 30 BCE). As for Sextus himself, like Zhuang Zhou, little is known. The name, Sextus Empiricus, means Sextus the Empiric, which aligns him with the Empiric school of medicine. The Empiric doctors relied exclusively on their

---

<sup>13</sup> H.D. Roth, “*Chuang tzu* 莊子” in Michael Loewe, ed., *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1993) 58.

<sup>14</sup> Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 – 89 BCE) in his *Shiji* 史記, refers to a *Zhuangzi* of about 100,000 characters. Guo Xiang’s thirty-three chapter version contains about 65,000 characters. According to Section 4.17 of the *Shishuo Xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the Age*) compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403 – 444 CE), Xiang Xiu passed away before completing his commentary on the ‘*Qiu Shui* 秋水’ (“Autumn Floods”) and ‘*Zhile* 至樂’ (“Utmost Happiness”) chapters. According to the story, Guo Xiang stole the manuscript, completed the commentaries on those two chapters, made some changes to the commentary on the ‘*Mati* 馬蹄’ (“Horses’ Hooves”) chapter, and punctuated the text. However, although Guo Xiang apparently borrowed heavily from Xiang Xiu’s commentary, this story is unlikely to be historically reliable.

perceptual experience as well as that of others to arrive at a diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy.<sup>15</sup>

Although Sextus' medical works are lost, three of his philosophical works are still extant. These are *Pyrroneioi Hypotypōseis (Outlines of Pyrrhonism)*, *Pros Mathēmatikous (Against the Mathematicians)*, Books 7-11, and *Pros Mathēmatikous (Against the Mathematicians)*, Books 1-6. Although the latter two works bear the same title and confusingly appear to be parts of one longer work, they have been judged to be distinct. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, an introductory account of skepticism, is three books in length. Book 1 explains the nature and purpose of skepticism, Book 2 treats logic or reason (including epistemology), the first part of Book 3 addresses itself to physics (metaphysics and philosophy of science in today's terminology), and the final part of Book 3 concerns ethics.

*Against the Mathematicians*, Books 7-8 (also referred to as *Pros Logikous* or *Against the Logicians*, Books 1-2) cover the same material as Book 2 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* in greater detail. Books 9-10 of *Against the Mathematicians* (also known as *Pros Physikous* or *Against the Physicists*, Books 1-2) cover physics in greater detail than the first part of Book 3 of the *Outlines*. *Against the Mathematicians*, Book 11 (also called *Pros Ēthikous* or *Against the Ethicists*), similarly covers ethics in more detail than the final part of Book 3 of the *Outlines*. The other work under the title, *Pros*

---

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that there was a close link between philosophy and medicine throughout the Greek tradition. In addition to Empiricism, there were at least two other schools of medicine during the time of Sextus: Rationalism and Methodism. The Rationalists, as their name implies, relied heavily on reason, and the Methodists were even more experience-oriented than the Empirics, relying on a less refined notion of experience as a basis for their practice of medicine. Sextus claimed that skepticism is distinct from medical Empiricism and that the skeptic actually has a greater affinity for Methodism.

*Mathēmatikous* (translated by R.G. Bury as *Against the Professors*<sup>16</sup>), Books 1-6 is apparently a separate work casting skeptical aspersions on the liberal arts.

It is important to note that, although Sextus' works are the primary extant source concerning the Greek tradition of skepticism, hints of a skeptical spirit can be traced all the way back to Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 580 - c. 480/470 BCE) and throughout the works of many of the early Greek philosophers, such as Anacharsis the Scythian (flourished c. 600 BCE), Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540/520 – c. 487/480/475 BCE), Zeno of Elea (c. 490/485 – c. 420 BCE), Melissus of Samos (fifth century BCE), Democritus of Abdera (c. 460 – c. 380 BCE) and Metrodorus of Chios (mid-fourth century BCE). There is a direct line of succession from Democritus through Metrodorus, Diogenes of Smyrna, and Anaxarchus of Abdera to Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360 – c. 270 BCE), who was later regarded as the founder of the school of skepticism that carried his name. Since there is no record of Pyrrho having written anything, it was his disciple, Timon of Phlius (c. 320 – 230 BCE), who transmitted the teachings of Pyrrho to posterity.

Plato's fifth successor as head of the Academy, Arcesilaus of Pitane (c. 315 – 240 BCE) is considered the founder of Academic skepticism. This was apparently a response to a new form of dogmatism that he perceived to be arising in Athens at the time and which he regarded as antithetical to the inconclusive or aporetic nature of Plato's early dialogues. The skeptical Academy continued under Carneades of Cyrene (214 – 149 BCE) and his student, Clitomachus of Carthage (c. 187 – c. 110 BCE). The Academy

---

<sup>16</sup> See R.G. Bury, trans., *Sextus Empiricus I, II, III, IV* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1933, 1935, 1936, 1949) for a complete translation of Sextus' corpus. Bury translates *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* in *Sextus Empiricus I*; *Against the Logicians*, Books 1-2 in *Sextus Empiricus II*; *Against the Physicists*, Books 1-2 and *Against the Ethicists* in *Sextus Empiricus III*; and *Against the Professors*, Books 1-6 in *Sextus Empiricus IV*.

returned to dogmatism under Philo of Larissa (c. 160 – c. 83 BCE) and Metrodorus of Stratonicea/Stratonicea.

At this point, the Academic Aenesidemus of Cnossus (c. 85 – 65 BCE) broke off from the Academy and aligned himself with the Pyrrhonist revival begun by Ptolemy of Cyrene, who had retrospectively identified Pyrrho, who had flourished some three centuries earlier, as the founder of his movement. Aenesidemus' eight *Pyrrhonian Discourses* (*Pyrrōniōn Logoi*), no longer extant, were a significant source for Sextus. In addition to a fascination with Heraclitus, not shared by Sextus, he is credited with developing the ten modes or tropes of skepticism, a systematization of the skepticism that was already present in the Greek philosophical tradition and the eight tropes against aetiology. After Aenesidemus came Agrippa (c. 40 – 70 CE), who developed the five modes or tropes of skepticism, and a few other skeptics, such as the Empiric doctor and medical theorist, Menodotus of Nicomedia (second century CE), whose names are the only remnant left to us, up until Sextus himself.

With this brief account of the problems of authorship, textual matters, and various forms of Greek skepticism behind us, we can turn now to the substance of this research project.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE PROBLEM OF CONFLICTING APPEARANCES AND THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem of conflicting appearances arises whenever two or more different observers give conflicting accounts of their experiences of what seems to be one and the same phenomenon. Plato's famous example of this problem is that of two observers, in this case Socrates and Theaetetus, reporting on their experience of the same wind, the one asserting that the wind appears cold to him, the other not cold. Or one may feel slightly cold and the other very cold.<sup>1</sup> Another example of this phenomenon, which recurs in the Greek literature, is that of honey appearing sweet to some observers and bitter to others. A further development of this problem is embodied in the example of one and the same observer experiencing honey as sweet while in good health and as bitter while ill.

For philosophers interested in establishing the truth of the matter, it is easy to account for these differing reports of a single phenomenon by drawing a distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. When the grammatical subject of an assertion is an individual, that assertion is referred to as a subjective assertion. There is no contradiction in the subjective realm, since the subjects of our sentences differ. For example, one can agree that the assertion "x experiences a particular breeze B as warm" is true and still hold the assertion "y experiences breeze B as cool" to be true without contradiction. The reason there is no contradiction involved in holding both of these sentences to be true is that they concern different subjects.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Plato, *Theaetetus*, 152b.

However, philosophers of this persuasion historically have had a much more challenging time establishing truthful sentences wherein the grammatical subject is supposedly a singular object held in common, in this example, a particular breeze B. It is not uncommon for the different observers in the previous example to universalize or generalize their subjective experiences of the breeze, changing their utterances from “I experience B as warm” to “B is warm,” and “I experience B as cool” to “B is cool.” This shift, however, involves a blatant violation of the law of non-contradiction, in which a property and its contrary are both ascribed to the same thing at one and the same time and in the same respect.<sup>2</sup> This problem has had a long history in philosophical traditions, which seek to find a final answer to the question of what properties can be objectively and truly ascribed to things supposedly universal to all human beings.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, much has been written on this problem from the perspective of truth-seeking philosophers. Here I intend to avoid the many challenges which one encounters when trying to ascertain the nature of objective truth. Although such concerns may never be too distant, I intend here to concentrate on the question of whose perspective is to be granted authority in the light of conflicting appearances, a model of interpretation that seems to fit the Greek examples mentioned above better than the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. While the nature a particular breeze B

---

<sup>2</sup> In contemporary logic, the law of non-contradiction is expressed in the propositional calculus by the theorem,  $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$ , where P is a propositional variable standing for an entire sentence. The contemporary version differs from the ancient version in that it employs sentence negation, whereas the ancient version involves predicate negation in taking the attribution and non-attribution of a property to the same thing at the same time and in the same respect.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note, however, that when Plato concerned himself with these matters, he was interested both in the question of what can be ascribed truly to things and in the question of which statements have sufficient authority to guide our conduct. There are important parallels in traditional Chinese philosophical literature, notably the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. For this reason, those modern philosophers who are interested in truth without a simultaneous interest in authority or reliable guidance have little to offer us in terms of understanding the ancient Greeks or the ancient Chinese.



has in itself, may have little practical significance, there are examples of the problem of conflicting appearances rearing its ugly head in pragmatic contexts that have a direct bearing on how we are to live our lives. The question of authority is especially useful in examples of this sort.

There were at least four logically independent responses to the problem of conflicting appearances that were promulgated in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, I will be surveying the approaches of Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540/520 – c. 487/475 BCE), Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490 – c. 420 BCE), Democritus of Abdera (c. 460 – c. 380 BCE), and Sextus Empiricus (c. 160 – c. 210 CE). It is important to point out that we have only extremely fragmentary records of the lives and thought of Heraclitus, Protagoras, and Democritus, as well as the tradition of Pyrrhonian skepticism that Sextus represents. Consequently, it has been necessary to rely upon quotations in other sources, such as those by their critics, as well as historical and/or biographical sources.

The fact that our information is far from complete and reliable makes anything other than tentative interpretation impossible. It is not surprising, then, that there have been several rather incomplete summary accounts of the philosophy of these thinkers. Some examples of these are the following. Heraclitus was a proponent of a theory of extreme flux wherein the only constancy is the law of change itself. Protagoras was a sophist who taught a doctrine of epistemological relativism, wherein truth is relative to individual perceivers. Democritus was an atomist who doubted the reliability of the

---

<sup>4</sup> I do not claim that these four responses are exhaustive of the solutions proposed in either Greek philosophy or the history of philosophy as a whole, only that they represent four logically distinct possible approaches to the problem.

senses.<sup>5</sup> Although these single sentence interpretations are not entirely inaccurate, it is all too easy, on the basis of such heavy-handed readings, to caricature these thinkers as simple-minded. The result can be the unwarranted assumption that these early Greek philosophers have little to add to contemporary philosophical discussions.<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to this impression, these philosophers were among the most learned and highly regarded of all people at the time they were living and in their geographical and political realms. To recover a sense of their importance, I would like to attend to a few significant background assumptions that seem to apply in general to the philosophy of the ancient Greeks. These are what we might today refer to as: 1) the interdisciplinary nature of the philosophical endeavor and the appropriateness of a variety of literary genres for philosophical expression, 2) the central place of ethical concerns, very broadly construed, to philosophical inquiry, and 3) a general sense of continuity running through the wide variety of Greek philosophers of different persuasions.

In ancient Greece, especially prior to the third century BCE, there was no such thing as philosophy that could be distinguished sharply from religion, literature, poetry, fortune-telling, and so on. Some such as Francis MacDonal Cornford have postulated a gradual shift from *mythos* to *logos*, wherein religious explanations of natural phenomena

---

<sup>5</sup> I will consider some of the limited and over-simplified treatments Greek skepticism has received at the hands of contemporary scholars in Chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> I use the term “early Greek philosophers” to refer to those thinkers who have regularly been labeled “pre-Socratic philosophers” in the literature. Although, “early Greek philosophers” is perhaps less elegant and less convenient than “pre-Socratic philosophers,” it has the benefit of not overtly buying into the questionable assumption that there was a radical shift in Greek philosophy with the advent of Socrates. It is extremely unlikely that the Greeks were aware of anything revolutionary happening when Socrates came onto the scene. Moreover, the term, ‘pre-Socratic’ is philosophically reductionistic, implying that Socratic philosophy is the aggregate of the reflections of its precursors. The person who uses the label, “pre-Socratic philosophers” implicitly accepts the anachronistic projection that Greek philosophy began with Socrates and Plato.

were replaced with more rational and scientific accounts over time.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for example, instead of explaining thunder and lightning as Zeus' angrily throwing thunderbolts down from Mount Olympus to the earth, more naturalistic explanations were sought. It seems to me that the limitations of such an account reside in its emphasis on the replacement of one of these with another, rather than a continuity between them. At this point in time, I would venture to guess that such boundaries as there were between mythopoeic thinking and rational thinking were extremely fluid.

This also has some bearing on the genre in which philosophical concerns were expressed. In ancient times, a poetic or literary writing style did not preclude one from being considered a philosopher. One reason for this is that technology plays a role in determining genres, and these early writers wrote in verse as a means of aiding memorization of their texts in an age when people did not have access to written texts as readily as they did in later ages. This is not to say that Homer and Hesiod were necessarily philosophically inclined, only that it is impossible to draw a definitive line between what qualifies as philosophy and what does not. It is far too easy for scholars today to exclude certain thinkers from philosophy on the basis of contemporary biases concerning philosophical writing style. I would thus propose that in the period under discussion here and beyond, there was no hard and fast delineation between philosophical inquiry and other modes of discourse, and that any suggestion that there was is retrospectively and anachronistically reading later developments into earlier ones.

---

<sup>7</sup> F.M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1957) 122-123.

Scholars such as Cornford and W.K.C. Guthrie have surmised that early Greek philosophy began with metaphysical and cosmological speculation.<sup>8</sup> By and large, the Greeks were at least equally concerned with ethics. However, without qualification, this statement will likely be misunderstood. In connection with the theme of continuity among various kinds of scholarly endeavors discussed above, the Greek approach to ethics was quite different from contemporary understandings of ethics. For the Greeks in general, ethics was broadly understood as centered on the question of how to live a good and successful life. As such the ancient approach to ethics was probably somewhat more psychologically oriented than contemporary discussions of ethics.<sup>9</sup> In light of the significant place of ethics in ancient Greek philosophy, epistemological and metaphysical questions were usually addressed with the larger ethical question of how to live a good life in mind.

The final point I wish to address in connection with interpreting early Greek philosophy is intrinsically related to the first two. When one considers the population of the Greek world during this period, one must not fail to recognize the important fact that there is a great deal of continuity among thinkers of different theoretical orientations. It can be reasonably speculated from archaeological evidence that the population of the ancient world was quite small.<sup>10</sup> It can be surmised further that only a very small

---

<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.* and W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1950, 1975) 22.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted here that I am using the word, 'psychology' in its original etymological sense, that is as meaning a "logos (rational account) of the *psychē* (soul, mind)," and not in its contemporary sense as the name of a social scientific discipline.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah B. Pomeroy writes, "[...] numbers available for demographic study of the Greek world are so few as to make generalizations hazardous." See her book, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975, 1995) xii. In the same work, she surveys the work of the paleodemographer J. Lawrence Angel, which includes information on average life span, birth rates, and infant mortality among the citizens of classical Athens and classical Greece. See *ibid.*, 68-70.

percentage of that already small population would have constituted the educated elite.<sup>11</sup>

There are numerous examples where the lineage of one philosophical tradition crosses with the lineage of another. In general, these thinkers were probably as aware of the similarities as they were of the differences between their views and the views of their predecessors and contemporaries. Thus, it is possible that the tendency to view them as participating in a clear dialectical relationship is overstated. It can be seen that there is a theme running through these three background assumptions. That theme is continuity: continuity among scholarly ‘disciplines’ and writing styles, continuity among philosophical ‘sub-disciplines,’ and continuity among individual thinkers, as well as their schools of thought and their writings.

#### 1.2 HERACLITUS OF EPHEBUS (C. 540/520 – C. 487/475 BCE) ON CONFLICTING APPEARANCES: THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF OPPOSITES

Heraclitus’ contribution to the problem of conflicting appearances was his epistemological doctrine of the interconnectedness or unity of opposites, which suggests that apparent opposites are in some sense interconnected.<sup>12</sup> This epistemological stance

---

<sup>11</sup> The word ‘scholar’ comes from the Greek ‘*scholē*’ meaning “spare time, leisure, rest, ease”. The educated elite was small because the population with enough wealth for the leisure of such pursuits was small.

<sup>12</sup> According to traditional accounts, Heraclitus reached his acme (age 40) in the sixty-ninth Olympiad (504 – 501 BCE) and his main philosophical activity came to an end around 480 BCE. The only facts about the life of Heraclitus that are safe to accept as relatively certain are that that he came from an ancient and aristocratic family, that he was not on good terms with his fellow citizens, and that he lived his life in Ephesus. The city of Ephesus was one of the wealthiest and most splendid cities in all of Asia Minor. It was located 25 miles north of Miletus, which had been destroyed at the beginning of the fifth century BCE, leaving Ephesus *the* major Greek city of Asia Minor. Ephesus was under Persian rule at the time of Heraclitus’ life. The remainder is speculation. Some say that Heraclitus resigned the hereditary and honorific title of ‘king,’ a religious-political office that involved supervision of sacrifices, to a younger brother. If this is true, it implies that he was the oldest son of one of the most aristocratic families in Ionia, the Androclids. The Androclids traced their ancestry back to Androclus, son of King Codrus of Athens, the reputed leader of the Ionian migration to Asia Minor and the founder of Ephesus. See Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 2.

Heraclitus has been described by later writers as supercilious, haughty, and gloomy, a misanthrope who withdrew from the world. Timon of Phlius (c. 320 – 230 BCE), a disciple Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360 – c.

is closely related to Heraclitus' flux ontology, wherein things in the world are forever undergoing a process of cyclical change. For example, night and day are inseparable to the extent that night is always understood as "night becoming day" and "day" is always conceived as "day becoming night." The opposites of night and day flow into one another ontologically, and we describe them epistemologically as significantly interconnected.<sup>13</sup>

---

270 BCE), who was later considered the founder of Pyrrhonian skepticism, referred to Heraclitus as *ainiktēs* ('the riddling'). See below and Chapter 2 for more on Pyrrho and Timon. He has been called *hō skoteinos* and *obscurus* (the obscure), as well as 'the weeping philosopher,' and Theophrastus, Aristotle's immediate successor at the Lyceum, described him as characterized by *melancholia* ('impulsiveness'). Plato and Aristotle did not exert too much effort in trying to understand Heraclitus' thought, which was cryptic and obscure. Plato concentrated on the humorous and ironic aspects of Heraclitus' idea that "*Panta rei*" or "*Panta chorei*" ("All things are in flux") and contrasted this doctrine with the permanence of Parmenides. Aristotle saw Heraclitus as following in the tradition of a group of thinkers from Miletus in articulating a material monism where fire is the world's underlying element and criticized Heraclitus for denying the law of non-contradiction by claiming that opposites are not essentially distinct. The Stoics, such as Zeno of Citium (335 – 263 BCE) and Cleanthes (c. 300 – c. 230 BCE), the latter of whom wrote a commentary on Heraclitus in four books, considered Heraclitus to be an authority on physical matters. Diodotus, a Hellenistic critic of Heraclitus, claimed that his book was not about the nature of things (*peri physeōs*) but about human life in society (*peri politeias*). Diodotus' claim gives support to my suggestion above that metaphysical and cosmological speculation generally took place in light of ethical concerns. Sextus Empiricus presented Heraclitus as a Stoic rationalist in epistemology. For the ways in which Aenesidemus of Cnossus (flourished c. 80 BCE) and Sextus differ on the question of the relationship between Heracliteanism and Pyrrhonism, see Chapter 3.

It is said that Heraclitus wrote a book entitled *Peri Physeōs* (*On Nature*), which consisted of three discourses, "On the Universe," "Politics," and "Theology." Supposedly, Heraclitus placed a copy as a dedication in the great temple of Artemis, arguably the most opulent Greek temple of the time (built c. 560 BCE). The attribution of a book of this title to Heraclitus and its division into three parts is somewhat dubious, since *On Nature* was a common title for works by *physikoi* (students of the *physis* or nature of things; natural philosophers) and it is arguable that Heraclitus was not himself a *physikos*. All that remains to us today of Heraclitus' writings is not a book, but a series of *gnomai* (carefully formulated opinions). His philosophy can be seen as a response to the material monism that characterized the cosmological and cosmogonical writings of a group of thinkers from Miletus, especially Anaximander and Anaximenes, and to Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 580 – c. 480/470 BCE), and Pythagoras of Samos (flourished c. 530 BCE). Some, including Aristotle as mentioned above, have interpreted his thought as a continuation of Milesian material monism. This interpretation has led to the supposition that Heraclitus may have been taught by Hippasus of Metapontum (or Croton or Sybaris), who flourished some time in the sixth century BCE, who was probably a Pythagorean, and who held a material monism wherein fire was the central cosmic element. But this is far from certain, since it is even unclear whether Hippasus antedated or postdated Heraclitus. There is no significant follower of Heraclitus known until Cratylus of Athens (c. fifth century BCE), who was probably an older contemporary of Plato's. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987<sup>a</sup>32, 1010<sup>a</sup>11. It is widely believed that Cratylus exaggerated Heraclitus' doctrine of flux and considered it to preclude the possibility of meaningful language, which may explain Plato's disdain for Heraclitus and his followers.

<sup>13</sup> I believe there to be significant similarities between Heraclitus' flux ontology and Zhuangzi's notion of "things-and-events transforming" (*wu hua* 物化). See Chapter 4 below.

Sextus Empiricus contrasts Heraclitus and Democritus concerning the example of honey tasting sweet to some observers and bitter to others: “Democritus, as we know, on the basis that honey appears bitter to some people and sweet to others, said that it is neither sweet nor bitter, while Heraclitus said that it is both.”<sup>14</sup> If Heraclitus used the honey example, that passage is no longer extant among the fragments of his work that remain.<sup>15</sup> However, there are other fragments ascribed to Heraclitus that make the same point: “The sea is the purest and foulest water: for fish drinkable and life-sustaining; for men undrinkable and deadly.”<sup>16</sup> In this example, it appears that Heraclitus ascribes a property, purity, and its contrary, foulness, to a single object, seawater. Consequently, this would seem to be a violation of the law of non-contradiction. About this logical law, Aristotle claimed, “For it is impossible for anyone to believe that the same thing is and is not, as some consider Heraclitus said—for it is not necessary that the things one says one should also believe.”<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> *Amelei goun ek tou to meli toisde men pikron toisde de glukou phainesthai ho men Dēmokritos ephē mēte glukou auto einai mēte pikron, ho de Hērakleitōs amphotera.* Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 2.6.63. Greek text from R.G. Bury, trans., *Sextus Empiricus I: Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1933) 190. English translation from Benson Mates, trans., *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 135.

<sup>15</sup> There are several complete translations and interpretations of Heraclitus' remaining fragments. The three to which I will be primarily referring are (in chronological order): Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), and T.M. Robinson, *Heraclitus: Fragments* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). For convenience, I follow the numbering of the fragments provided in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker I* (Berlin-Charlottenburg: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1952) 139-190. Friedrich Nietzsche also refers to the honey example: “Honey, says Heraclitus, is at the same time bitter and sweet...” See Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, translated by Marianne Cowan (Regnery Gateway, 1962) 54.

<sup>16</sup> *Thalassa hudōr katharpōtatōn kai miarōtatōn ichthusi men potimon kai sōtērion, anthrōpōis de apoton kai olethrion.*

Heraclitus, Fragment 61. Greek text and English translation from Kahn, *op. cit.*, 60-61.

<sup>17</sup> *Adunaton gar hontinoun tauton hupolambanein einai kai mē einai, kathaper tines oiontai legein Hērakleitōn ouk esti gar anankaion, ha tis legei, tauta kai hupolambanein.* Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Γ, Chapter 3, 1005<sup>b</sup>18-34. Greek text from Hugh Treddenick, trans., *Aristotle XVII: Metaphysics, Books I-IX* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1933)

However, it is unlikely that interpreting this fragment as a violation of the law of non-contradiction is its most charitable reading. It is significant that Heraclitus immediately qualifies his bald statement ascribing contrary properties to seawater by identifying the agents for whom seawater is the most pure, namely fish, and those for whom it is the most polluted, namely people. Heraclitus is not saying that seawater *simpliciter* is both pure and polluted, but that it has these properties only from certain perspectives. Fragment 60 further illustrates this point: “The way up and down is one and the same.”<sup>18</sup> This sentence can be interpreted simply as saying that every uphill path can be equally described as a downhill path depending upon where one is standing. Fragment 9 even more clearly brings out the perspectival angle and thus shows that Heraclitus is not interested in violating the law of non-contradiction: “Asses prefer garbage to gold”<sup>19</sup> The implicit point is that donkeys are right *from their perspective* in preferring chaff to gold, just as human beings are right *from their perspective* in choosing gold over garbage.<sup>20</sup> The matter at hand is one of preferences, which are nearly always perspectivally based.

There are numerous other examples of this point of view among the fragments:

Immortals are mortal, mortals immortal, living the others’ death, dead in the others’ life.<sup>21</sup>

---

162. English translation from Christopher Kirwan, trans., *Aristotle: Metaphysics Books Γ, Δ, and Ε*, Second Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, 1993) 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> *Hodos anō katō mia kai hōutē.*

Heraclitus, Fragment 60. Greek text and English translation from Kahn, *op. cit.*, 74-75.

<sup>19</sup> *Kathaper Hērakleitōs phēsin onous surmat’ an elesthai mallon ē chruson.*

Heraclitus, Fragment 9. Greek text and English translation from *ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>20</sup> M.F. Burnyeat, “Conflicting Appearances” in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Volume LXV, 1979, 70.

<sup>21</sup> *Athanatoi thnētoi, thnētoi athanatoi, zōntes ton ekeinōn thanaton, ton de ekeinōn bion tethneōtes.*

Heraclitus, Fragment 62. Greek text and English translation from *ibid.*, 70-71.



The same...: living and dead, and the waking and the sleeping, and young and old. For these transposed are those, and those transposed again are these.<sup>22</sup>

The teacher of most is Hesiod. It is him they know as knowing most, who did not recognize day and night: they are one.<sup>23</sup>

These passages suggest a cyclical process whereby one of a pair of opposites transforms into the other: life becomes death as part of the larger life process, young becomes old, waking becomes sleeping, and day becomes night. Heraclitus linked this idea of the interconnectedness of opposites with his ontology of flux and continuity: “It is wise, listening not to me but to the report<sup>24</sup>, to agree that all things are one.”<sup>25</sup> When one pair of opposites is understood as continuous with other pairs of opposites, the idea of one, the

---

<sup>22</sup> *Tauto t' eni (?) zōn kai tethnēkos kai to egrēgoros kai to katheudon kai neon kai gēraion tade gar metapesonta ekeina esti kakeina palin metapesonta tauta.*

Heraclitus, Fragment 88. Greek text and English translation from *ibid.*, 70-71.

This passage resonates in interesting ways with passages on dreaming and death in the *Zhuangzi*, notably the following passage from Chapter 2, the ‘*Qiwulun* 齊物論’ (“Discussion on Giving Parity to Things and Events”):

方其夢也不知其夢也。夢之中又占其夢焉。覺而後知其夢也。且有大覺而後知此其大夢也。而愚者自以爲覺。竊竊然知之。君乎牧乎。固哉。丘也與女皆夢也。予謂女夢亦夢也。(6/2/81-83)

During one’s own dream one does not realize that one is dreaming. In a dream one may interpret another dream within it. Only after waking does one realize that one was dreaming. And this is to have a great awakening and only then realize that this is a great dream. And yet the simple-minded think they themselves are awake. They seem to know this with an air of confidence. Lords and shepherds are obstinate in this confidence. [Kong] Qiu 丘 and you are both dreaming. I, who say that you are dreaming, am also dreaming.

References to the *Zhuangzi* in the form “x/y/z”, where x = the page number, y = the chapter number, and z = the line number, are to Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 20 哈佛燕京學社引得纂處, 特刊第二十號, *A Concordance to Chuang Tzū* 莊子引得, May 1947. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Classical Chinese are my own. For the passage quoted here (6/2/81-83), compare with A.C. Graham, trans., *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters* (London: Mandala, 1991, 1981) 59-60 and Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) 47-48.

<sup>23</sup> *Didaskalos de pleistōn Hēsiodos touton epistantai pleista eidenai, hostis hēmerēn kai euphronēn ouk eginōsken esti gar hen.*

Heraclitus, Fragment 57. Greek text and English translation from Kahn, *op. cit.*, 36-37. In Chapter 33 of the *Zhuangzi*, ‘*Tian Xia* 天下’ (“Under the Heavens”), *Zhuangzi*’s friend, Hui Shi 惠施 is attributed with the following claim, which bears some resemblance to this fragment of Heraclitus:

日方中方睨。物方生方死。(93/33/71-72)

As the sun reaches the center, it is already waning. As a thing is at the prime of its life, it is dying.

Compare with Graham, *op. cit.*, 283 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 374.

<sup>24</sup> This is an unusual translation for ‘*logos*’, which is usually rendered as “account”.

<sup>25</sup> *Ouk emou alla tou logou akousantos homologein sophon estin hen panta einai.*

totality of particulars interconnected by virtue of their participation in the inexorable process of flux, emerges as a logical extension of the interconnectedness of opposites.

Heraclitus' contribution to the problem of conflicting appearances is embodied in his doctrine of the interconnectedness of opposites. Heraclitus seems to imply that authority is to be assigned equally to the different observers who experience a single phenomenon differently: fish and human beings on seawater, asses and human beings on garbage and gold, and the observer at the top of the hill and the one on the bottom. The interconnectedness of opposites is closely linked to an ontology that understands conditions changing from what they currently are to the opposite conditions. Perspectives vary according to the constantly changing conditions in which they are embedded.

Some of the linguistic features of the fragments are worth noting, since the language used by Heraclitus and the way it is used clearly show that Heraclitus was a great literary artist. The fragments are full of puns, ambiguities, and other forms of word play. Heraclitus was not merely a philosopher but also a great poet. Charles H. Kahn has identified two complementary linguistic devices that Heraclitus used to express a conceptual structure in a non-linear way. These are linguistic density and resonance.<sup>26</sup> Linguistic density is characterized by the use of a single word or phrase to capture a multiplicity of ideas, and resonance is the exploitation of an image or verbal theme from one passage or text to another with the result that the meaning of each passage is

---

Heraclitus, Fragment 50. Greek text and English translation from Kahn, *op. cit.*, 44-45.

<sup>26</sup> See Kahn, *op. cit.*, 89.

enhanced when they are read together.<sup>27</sup> For this reason, most translators have opted to re-order the fragments, although there is little agreement as to what the proper order of them should be.

### 1.3 PROTAGORAS OF ABDERA (C. 490 – C. 420 BCE) ON CONFLICTING APPEARANCES: EPISTEMOLOGICAL RELATIVISM (RELATIVISM OF TRUTH)<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> In the Chinese tradition, where historically no sharp distinction was drawn between philosophy and literature, many of these linguistic features are also to be found. Word play of various sorts is common in Chinese based on the homophonous nature of the language and the graphic similarity of characters involving both semantic and phonetic content. The practice of paronomastic definition defines lexical items in terms of associations they have with other characters that share a similar semantic or phonetic structure. For example, ‘*dao* 道’ (way, path, course; to lead, to guide, to speak, etc.) is defined as ‘*dao* 蹈’ (treading, stepping, stamping; following, to pursuing), based on its identical sound. See Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998) 28-29, and Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, trans., *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001) 17 for more examples of paronomasia. Another closely related linguistic feature of the Chinese presentation of philosophical ideas is that of linguistic clustering where one philosophical term is explained in relation to other closely related philosophical terms thus enhancing the reader’s understanding of the text in its tradition. For this reason, it is common pedagogical practice to read certain passages of a Chinese philosophical text together with other thematically related passages.

<sup>28</sup> Little is known about the life of Protagoras. He was a native of Abdera in Thrace, though there is a connection to Teos also recorded. According to Plato, Protagoras lived seventy years and spent the last forty years of his life in the profession of teaching for a profit. It is said that his father was one of the wealthiest citizens of Abdera and that he entertained Xerxes in 480 BCE on his invasion of Greece in return for Protagoras being instructed by the Magi (scholar-priests) who accompanied Xerxes. Philostratus suggested that this instruction was the root of Protagoras’ agnosticism. What is interesting about this story is that it shows the Persian influence on ancient Greek philosophy, an influence which is often overlooked. I am indebted to Tamara Albertini, an expert in ancient philosophy, Islamic philosophy, and Renaissance philosophy, for this information.

Another contradictory story is that Protagoras was a wood carrier in the early part of his life who so impressed Democritus with his ability to bind sticks, that Democritus provided him with instruction in philosophy. But it is widely believed that Democritus was not born until Protagoras was thirty, which calls this story into question. On the possible link between Democritus and Protagoras, James Warren writes, “[...] the linking of Democritus’ epistemology and its metaphysical basis to the Protagorean position occurs quite early. Aristotle is happy to include Democritus alongside Protagoras in his discussion of those who use a ‘no more’ or ‘indifference’ (οὐ μᾶλλον [*ou mallon*]) argument to generate sceptical conclusions (*Met.* 1009b11 ff.)” See James Warren, *Epicurus and Democritean Ethics: An Archaeology of Ataraxia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 17.

As it is, nothing is known for certain of Protagoras’ early life or of his interactions with other scholars and philosophers in Abdera. He set himself up as a teacher at about age thirty and charged high fees, which a student could refuse to pay if he felt the instruction was not worth the money. He accumulated a great degree of wealth from his teaching. He made at least two or three trips to Athens, where he discussed legal matters with Pericles (died 430 BCE) and gave lectures at the home of Euripides (c. 485/480 – 406 BCE) and at the Lyceum. He may also have stayed at the house of Callias, a prominent politician in Athens in the fifth century BCE, during his later visits. He also visited Sicily where he was held in high regard when Hippias (second half of the fifth century BCE) was a young man. Protagoras wrote several books, none of which has survived to the present day: *Truth (Refutatory Arguments)*, *On the Gods*, *Great Logos*, *On Being*, *Contradictory Arguments*, and *On Mathematics*. There are, as well, a number of other titles that probably refer to excerpts from his other works: *On Wrestling and the Other Arts*,

The Sophist, Protagoras, expanding on Heraclitus in some measure, opened his no longer extant book, *Truth (or Refutatory Arguments)* with the following sentence: “Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not.”<sup>29</sup> This sentence, commonly referred to as the *homo-mensura* doctrine in the literature, is rather vague out of context, but has widely been regarded as the *locus classicus* of a theory of epistemological relativism or relativism of truth in Western philosophy. Relativism of truth is the doctrine that there is no such thing as truth *simpliciter*, but rather truth is relative to individual perceivers. Let us return to Plato’s example of the wind. If Socrates perceives a wind to be cold, then we say, ‘it is true for Socrates that the wind is cold.’ But if Theaetetus perceives the same wind to be warm, we also say, ‘it is true for Theaetetus that the wind is warm.’ According to this view, there is no way to determine the actual temperature or quality of the wind in itself, if it even makes sense to talk of the wind in this way.<sup>30</sup>

---

*On the Original Social Structure, On Ambition, On Virtues, On Human Errors, Exhortation, On Constitution, Trial Concerning Fees, and The Art of Eristics.* He is also credited with a work entitled *On the Underworld*.

<sup>29</sup> *Pantōn chrēmātōn metron anthropon einai, tōn men ontōn, hōs esti, tōn de mē ontōn, hōs ouk estin.* Quoted at *Theaetetus*, 152a. Greek text from Harold North Fowler, *Plato II: Theaetetus, Sophist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1921) 40. English translation from M.J. Levett, trans., “The *Theaetetus* of Plato” in Myles Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1990) 272. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I.216, Sextus Empiricus quotes this sentence as follows: *Pantōn chrēmātōn einai metron ton anthropon, tōn men ontōn hōs estin, tōn de ouk ontōn hōs ouk estin.* Although there are a few textual variations, the meaning of the sentence is not significantly altered. See Bury, *op. cit.*, I, 130.

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted, however, that not all commentators agree upon a relativistic interpretation of Protagoras’ ‘man is the measure’ doctrine. For example, during the Renaissance, the word, ‘*anthropos*’ (man) was understood as “mankind”, with the result that Protagoras was not construed as a relativist. Nicholas of Cusa (Nicholas Cusanus, Nicholas Kryfts [1401-1464]) is a prime example of this trend. See Jasper Hopkins, trans., *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985). See also J.E. Tiles, *Moral Measures: An Introduction to Ethics West and East* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 102-125. According to M.F. Burnyeat, Plato interpreted the *homo-mensura* doctrine of Protagoras as a theory of relativism of truth, whereas later commentators such as Aristotle and Sextus Empiricus understood it as a form of what Burnyeat calls ‘subjectivism’ and what Gail Fine calls ‘infallibilism.’ Infallibilism understands the idea of ‘true for *x*’ not as a relativist theory of truth, but rather as equivalent to ‘(absolutely) true in *x*’s view’ or ‘believed by *x*.’ On this account, something is true if and only if somebody believes it. Fine claims this is not a theory of

M.F. Burnyeat contrasts the responses of Heraclitus and Protagoras to the problem of conflicting appearances as follows:

His [Protagoras'] doctrine that man is the measure of all things recommends a relativistic account of truth which allows the honey to be both sweet and bitter, subject to the qualification that it is sweet *for* (in relation to) some palates and bitter *for* others. By relativizing the attributions of sweet and bitter Protagoras avoids the contradictions embraced by Heraclitus.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, although Protagoras was probably following Heraclitus to some extent, the responses of these two philosophers to the problem of conflicting appearances are subtly but significantly distinct.

It is important to examine the context of the quotation of the man is the measure doctrine in Plato's *Theaetetus*. The *Theaetetus* is an investigation and discussion of the question, "What is knowledge (*epistēmē*)?" Socratic questions of the form, "What is *x*?" are requests for definitions. Therefore, it is a definition of knowledge that is being sought in the *Theaetetus*. In the dialogue, the mathematician, Theaetetus suggests, in succession, three different definitions of knowledge: 1) knowledge is perception (*aisthēsis*), 2) knowledge is true judgment, and 3) knowledge is true judgment with a *logos* (account). The character of Socrates immediately takes Theaetetus' first definition of knowledge as

---

truth, but an account of the conditions under which statements are true: that is, they are true if and only if believed. Unlike Burnyeat, Fine believes that Plato, like Aristotle and Sextus, also interpreted Protagoras as an infallibilist, and that it is highly likely that the historical Protagoras was actually a proponent of an infallibilist epistemology rather than a relativist theory of truth. According to Fine, Plato's arguments in the *Theaetetus* do not seem to succeed in refuting relativism, but they do far better in refuting infallibilism. She wants to interpret the *Theaetetus* in such a way that Plato comes across as more logically astute than the relativist interpretation of the Protagorean doctrine seems to allow. See M.F. Burnyeat, "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Plato's *Theaetetus*" in *The Philosophical Review*, Volume LXXXV, Number 2, April 1976, 172-195, and "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Later Greek Philosophy" in *The Philosophical Review*, Volume LXXXV, Number 1, January 1976, 44-69. See also Gail Fine, "Protagorean Relativisms" in J.J. Cleary and W. Wians, eds., *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium on Ancient Philosophy*, Volume 11, 1995, 211-243 and "Conflicting Appearances: *Theaetetus* 153d-154b" in C. Gill and M. McCabe, eds., *Form and Argument in Late Plato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 105-133.

equivalent to the *homo-mensura* doctrine. Immediately after introducing the connection between Theaetetus' first definition of knowledge as perception and a Protagorean epistemology<sup>32</sup>, Socrates suggests that Protagoras taught a "secret doctrine." This "secret doctrine" is described as follows:

...there is nothing which in itself is just one thing... What is really true, is this: the things of which we naturally say that they 'are', are in process of coming to be, as the result of movement and change and blending with one another. We are wrong when we say they 'are', since nothing ever is, but everything is coming to be.<sup>33</sup>

While there is no evidence one way or the other as to whether Protagoras actually taught a "secret doctrine," there is general agreement among scholars today that this was a dialectical device invented by Plato for pedagogical purposes. In any case, the "secret doctrine" of Protagoras, as Socrates postulates it, seems to be virtually identical to the Heraclitean ontology of flux discussed above.

While Heraclitus' theory of the interconnectedness of opposites is logically distinct from Protagoras' theory of epistemological relativism, Plato construed both of these views as supporting and best supported by a flux ontology, despite the fact that the continuity entailed by a flux ontology precludes discrete relativist positions. At the end of the day, Protagoras' theory of epistemological relativism does not decide the issue of whose perspective is to be granted authority in the light of conflicting appearances any more than does the interconnectedness of opposites articulated by Heraclitus, although it

---

<sup>31</sup> Burnyeat, *op. cit.* As argued above, interpreting Heraclitus as violating the law of non-contradiction is somewhat uncharitable, but this is an understandable concern because the unqualified way in which many of his assertions are written appears to violate that logical law blatantly.

<sup>32</sup> It is arguable that Plato in the *Theaetetus* supplies Protagoras' doctrine with this epistemological dimension, which the historical Protagoras may or may not have intended.

<sup>33</sup> ...*hōs ara hen men auto kath' hauto ouden estin... ek de dē phoras te kai kinēseōs kai kraseōs pros allēla gignetai panta ha dē phamen einai, ouk orthōs prosagoreuontes esti men gar oudepot' ouden, aei de gignetai.*

may be the case that either or both of these philosophers wanted to conclude that the issue could not be decided.

#### 1.4 DEMOCRITUS OF ABDERA (C. 460 – C. 380 BCE) ON CONFLICTING APPEARANCES: DENYING THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE SENSES

Democritus is known for his interest in the epistemological basis and consequences of atomism.<sup>34</sup> He is also known for holding that the senses cannot be ascribed any positive role in epistemology. For example, Sextus Empiricus in *Against the Mathematicians*, 7.135 writes:

Democritus sometimes does away with what appears to the senses, and says that none of these appears according to truth but only according to opinion: the truth in real things is that there are atoms and void. ‘By convention sweet’, he says, ‘by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention colour: but in reality atoms and void.’<sup>35</sup>

---

Plato, *Theaetetus*, 152d 2-3. Greek text from Fowler, *op. cit.*, 42. English translation from Levett, *op. cit.*, 272-273.

<sup>34</sup> The most widely accepted account of Democritus’ life suggests that he was a younger contemporary of Protagoras. Like Protagoras, he came from Abdera in Thrace. Although there is one reference to his having been born in Miletus, this belongs to the less accepted tradition that dates his birth to 494 BCE. He is said to have been educated as a child by Chaldean Magi, who were left behind by Xerxes at his father’s house in 480 BCE during the Persian retreat from Greece. However, it is doubted that those who accompanied Xerxes were Magi and that they stayed long enough to give Democritus instruction. Since Abdera was a resting-place for the Persians on their retreat, it is likely that Democritus heard about Babylonian learning. He was among the most widely traveled of early Greek philosophers, having traveled to Babylon as an adult to learn from Chaldean Magi, to Egypt to learn from the priests, and according to some accounts, to India to learn from the *sannyāsins* (naked sages), as well as to Ethiopia. Although there is no firm evidence that Democritus traveled to India, this account of his journey there calls to mind the story that Pyrrho went there with Alexander the Great, which is somewhat better supported. See Chapter 2 for more on Pyrrho and his trip to India. It is also believed that he visited Athens briefly, but was not known to anyone, as he wrote, “I came to Athens, but no one knew me.” See Kathleen Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Companion to Diels*, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959, 1966) 290.

Democritus spent his life teaching and writing. By some accounts, he held an office at Abdera, but it is more likely that he devoted himself to research. However, he was credited with saving Abdera from famine by predicting a severe rainstorm and with writing a detailed treatise on politics. His interest in apparitions may have led him to spend time in the tombs, and his attitude of amusement at the foolishness of human beings earned him the epithet, *Gelasinos* (‘Laughter’). His pupils are said to be Hippocrates, Diagoras of Melos, and Nessas of Chios (late fifth to early fourth century BCE), who either studied with or more likely taught Metrodorus of Chios (mid-fourth century BCE). See Chapter 2 for the role Metrodorus of Chios played as a precursor to the Greek tradition of skepticism.

<sup>35</sup> *Dēmokritos de hote men anairei ta phainomena tais aisthēsesi kai toutōn legei mēden phainesthai kat’ alētheian, alla monon kata doxan, alēthes de en tois ousin huparchein to atomous einai kai kenon* ‘nomōi gar phēsi ‘gluku, [kai] nomōi pikron, nomōi thermon, nomōi psuchron, nomōi chroiē, etēi de atoma kai kenon’.

Aristotle observes that Democritus took up this critique of the reliability of sense perception in light of the same kind of consideration that motivated Protagoras to postulate his theory of relative truth, wherein *both* of a pair of conflicting appearances are true for the person to whom they appear.<sup>36</sup> However, unlike Protagoras, Democritus was unwilling to relinquish a notion of objective truth, and so determined that *neither* of the conflicting appearances can be true. The quotation above shows that Democritus was committed to a negative dogmatism<sup>37</sup> about the senses if not about the possibility of knowledge of any kind. Like Heraclitus and Protagoras, Democritus does not provide us with any definitive way of assigning authority to the perspective of one observer over that of another; he denies truth to any of the conflicting accounts of a given phenomenon.

Let us take stock of the three positions surveyed thus far, by quoting Sextus again on Heraclitus and Democritus and then triangulating these two perspectives with that of Protagoras. Sextus writes, “Democritus, as we know, on the basis that honey appears bitter to some people and sweet to others, said that it is neither sweet nor bitter, while Heraclitus said that it is both.”<sup>38</sup> Heraclitus claimed that honey is bitter from the perspective of the one who perceives it to be so and sweet from the perspective of the

---

Greek text and English translation from G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957, 1983) 410. See also R.G. Bury, trans., *Sextus Empiricus II: Against the Logicians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1935) 74-75.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Γ, Chapter 5, 1009<sup>b</sup>38. See Kirwan, *op. cit.*, 17.

<sup>37</sup> See below for further information on the distinction between modern skepticism (negative dogmatism) and ancient skepticism (non-dogmatic or aporetic skepticism). In Chapter 2, I analyze the limitations of understanding skepticism solely as an extreme, negative, dogmatic, and anti-intellectual philosophical *position* (negative dogmatism). In Chapter 3, I examine the virtues of construing skepticism more broadly so as to understand its primary expression as a positive, non-dogmatic philosophical *attitude*.

<sup>38</sup> *Amelei goun ek tou to meli toisde men pikron toisde de gluky phainesthai ho men Dēmokritos ephē mēte gluky auto einai mēte pikron, ho de Hērakleitos amphotera.*

Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 2.6.63. Greek text from R.G. Bury, trans., *Sextus Empiricus I: Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 190. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 135.



person to whom it appears (*phainesthai*) sweet. He makes these contradictory attributions to one thing based on his theory of the interconnectedness of opposites and his flux ontology, whereby a thing transforms from having one property to having its contrary. Forced to give his position a label, we might settle for ‘perspectivalism,’ to distinguish it from epistemological relativism. Protagoras developed Heraclitus’ perspectivalism, without *necessarily* adopting a flux ontology, by postulating a theory of relative truth, where it could be true *for* (or in relation to) one person that honey tastes bitter and true *for* another that honey tastes sweet. Democritus, by contrast, was unwilling to give up a notion of objective truth, and thus took the problem of conflicting appearances as an example of the unreliability or irrelevance of sense perception, concluding that neither of the contradictory properties could apply to the object under scrutiny. Thus, his strong version of realism is diametrically opposed to the perspectivalism of Heraclitus and the relativism of Protagoras.

#### 1.5 SEXTUS EMPIRICUS (C. 160 – C. 210 CE) AND THE PYRRHONISTS ON CONFLICTING APPEARANCES: *EPOCHĒ* (WITHHOLDING ASSENT)

According to Sextus Empiricus<sup>39</sup>, there appears to be no certainty to be had in terms of determining which of a pair of conflicting appearances is to be granted authority. Like his Pyrrhonist predecessors, Sextus observes that people of talent initially thought they would be able to attain tranquility by participating in the search for truth.<sup>40</sup> In order to discover the truth, these people investigated a variety of proposals concerning reality. However, what they discovered was not the truth but a series of conflicting accounts of various phenomena. They further realized that the conflicting arguments proposed by

---

<sup>39</sup> For a brief biography of Sextus, see the preface. For a historical survey of the early Pyrrhonists and the Hellenistic revival of Pyrrhonism, see Chapters 2 and 3, respectively.

various philosophers and *physikoi* involved in each particular debate were equally compelling. Being unable to decide among these conflicting accounts, these thinkers were led to suspend judgment or withhold assent (*epochē*), whereupon freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*) followed by chance from the suspension of judgment like a shadow:

...the Skeptics were hoping to achieve *ataraxia* by resolving the anomaly of phenomena and noumena, and, being unable to do this, they suspended judgment. But then, by chance as it were, when they were suspending judgment the *ataraxia* followed, as a shadow follows the body.<sup>41</sup>

It is for this reason that the Pyrrhonists including Sextus recommend that we suspend our judgment in the light of conflicting appearances such as the case of honey appearing sweet to one observer and bitter to another. Thus, the attitude of Pyrrhonism is to affirm the appearance without affirming that it *is* of such a kind. We can see from this brief account of Sextus' response to the problem of conflicting appearances that it is a response distinct from those of Heraclitus, Protagoras, and Democritus.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

The philosophical positions or attitudes represented by Heraclitus, Protagoras, Democritus, and Sextus Empiricus are logically independent from one another. Heraclitus allows that both of the conflicting accounts of a single phenomenon can be accepted from different perspectives. I gave this view the tentative label of 'perspectivalism' and indicated that it is linked both to Heraclitus' ontology wherein

---

<sup>40</sup> See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.6.12.

<sup>41</sup> *Kai hoi skeptikoi oun ēlpizon men tēn ataraxian analēpsēsthai dia tou tēn anōmalian tōn phainomenōn te kai nooumenōn epikrinai, mē dunēthentes de poiēsai touto epeschon' epischousi de autois hoion tuchikōs hē ataraxia parēkolouthēsen hōs skia sōmati.*

Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.12.29. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, I, 20. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 93. Benson Mates points out that we are given very little specific information about the mechanics of how *epochē* leads to peace of mind. See Mates, 62.

things continually change into their opposites, such as night becoming day and vice versa, and his epistemological theory of the interconnectedness of opposites. Protagoras develops Heraclitus' theory by relativizing the attributions of the opposing properties such that honey is sweet *for* some people and bitter *for* others. In so doing, he develops a theory of relative truth, wherein truth is relative to the way in which individual perceivers experience a phenomenon. Heraclitus and Protagoras are very close, but subtly different, in their strategy toward this problem. Both of these philosophers want to retain the acceptability of the conflicting experiences of a given appearance. On the other hand, Democritus approached this problem very differently. He believed that since only atoms and the void exist none of our conflicting sensory experiences of an appearance could be true. He took this even further by denying the senses any significant, positive role in epistemology.<sup>42</sup> Rather than either attempting to retain the acceptability of the conflicting appearances, as Heraclitus and Protagoras tended to do in slightly different ways, or deny them, as Democritus did, Sextus opted to suspend judgment on the matter, making no determination one way or the other.

As stated above, Protagoras is widely considered to be the precedent for later versions of epistemological relativism. Similarly, many classicists and other scholars have considered Sextus and the Pyrrhonist tradition on which he reports to be the quintessential expression of philosophical skepticism. However, there is a contemporary understanding of 'skepticism,' which I, following R.J. Hankinson, prefer to call 'negative

---

<sup>42</sup> In addition to Sextus Empiricus, I anticipate that Heraclitus and Protagoras will have a further role to play in the exposition that follows, having as they do some significant points in common (as well as some important differences) with the Chinese philosophical tradition. However, it seems unlikely to be fruitful to deal with Democritus further, since his thought pre-supposes a sharp reality-appearance distinction, which, it has been argued, was not an important element in classical Chinese thought. Since there is nothing in

dogmatism.’<sup>43</sup> Extreme negative dogmatism is a negative *thesis* about all epistemic attainments, the claim that knowledge as such is impossible. When skepticism is understood as a non-assertive, non-dogmatic, open-minded, unopinionated *attitude*, it is neither logically equivalent to nor logically contradictory with epistemological relativism. That is to say, there is no *necessary* logical connection between them. One could be a (non-dogmatic) skeptic and not a relativist, a relativist and not a skeptic, or both a relativist and a skeptic. Only ‘skepticism’ construed as negative dogmatism conflicts with relativism of truth. However, Jonathan Barnes in his paper, “Scepticism and Relativity” has pointed out some examples of places where Sextus seems to conflate aporetic skepticism and relativism.<sup>44</sup> According to Barnes, this is “a fearful mistake” because:

[...] there is an absolutely fundamental distinction to be made between philosophical scepticism (the philosophy which Sextus and the ancient Pyrrhonists adopt and commend) and philosophical relativism (the attitude which the ancient Protagoreans adopt and commend).

\* \* \* \* \*

In general, a sceptic says this: “x appears F in circumstances C and x appears F\* in circumstances C\*. Now x cannot really be both F and F\*; and I cannot possibly tell whether I should prefer the appearance in C to the appearance in C\* or *vice versa*. So I cannot tell how x really is — I cannot make the leap from appearance to reality. And therefore I suspend judgement.” In general, a relativist says this: “x appears F in circumstances C and x appears F\* in circumstances C\*. Now x can really be both F and F\*; for it can be precisely F in C and yet F\* in C\*. So I can tell how x really is — it is really F in C and really F\* in C\*. There is nothing more to know about how x really is— and so I have nothing to suspend judgement about.”

Relativism, in short, is a form of Dogmatism, and as such is inconsistent with skepticism. No doubt there are subtle connexions to be discovered between certain relativistic positions or arguments and certain sceptical positions or arguments. But relativism itself is not a form of scepticism and the relativist is not the sceptic’s ally.<sup>45</sup>

---

Chinese thought with which to compare the philosophy of Democritus, he shall not feature in the later discussion.

<sup>43</sup> R.J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 318-319, n. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Barnes, “Scepticism and Relativity” in *Philosophical Studies*, Volume XXXII (1988-90), 2-4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

Barnes' distinction between skepticism and relativism is useful in establishing that these two responses to conflicting appearances are distinct. And although he takes the additional step of declaring that skepticism and relativism conflict *in general*, he observes that "there are subtle connexions to be discovered between certain relativistic positions or arguments and certain sceptical positions or arguments". And this observation supports my point that there is no *necessary* logical connection between skepticism and relativism.

Despite the logical independence of these philosophical responses to the problem of conflicting appearances, the drive to conflate them is understandable because they are quite similar in a number of ways. For instance, Protagorean relativism and Pyrrhonian skepticism are similar to the extent that they are both negative responses to intellectual authority.<sup>46</sup> Whereas the relativist claims that every judgment is as good as any other judgment, the skeptic suggests that no judgment is superior to any other.<sup>47</sup> The non-assertive way in which the skeptic recommends suspension of judgment indicates the way in which skepticism is more stable than relativism. The relativist claim, unless carefully qualified or limited in some way, leads easily to the charge of self-refutation, whereas the non-assertive variety of skepticism *practiced* by the Pyrrhonists does not. Now that my survey of these four philosophically distinct Greek responses to the problem of conflicting appearances is complete, in the next chapter, I will turn to an in-depth discussion of a topic that was only briefly alluded to here: the liabilities of interpreting 'skepticism' as limited to negative dogmatism.

---

<sup>46</sup> The positions of Heraclitus and Democritus also seem to undermine intellectual authority. James Tiles has described Protagorean relativism and Pyrrhonian skepticism as "intellectually anarchistic". See Tiles, *op. cit.*, 113.

<sup>47</sup> Tiles, echoing a point made by Burnyeat in "Conflicting Appearances", writes, "Relativism claims that no view may be treated as superior to any other, because all are *equally* good; skepticism claims that no view may be treated as superior to any other because none *is able to show* its superiority." *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2  
THE LIMITATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING SKEPTICISM AS A PHILOSOPHICAL  
POSITION OF NEGATIVE DOGMATISM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter surveys the definitions given to ‘skepticism’ by two prominent contemporary epistemologists at the University of Arizona, Alvin I. Goldman and Keith Lehrer. The definitions they give to this term show that contemporary epistemology and classical Greek epistemology are engaged in two radically different projects. Whereas the Greeks were self-consciously looking to the study of epistemology as part of the larger project of how to live a good life, modern epistemologists in general do not look to their subject matter as a source for guidance on this ethical question. Goldman and Lehrer’s definitions fail to account for skepticism, as it was understood in the world of classical Greece, and thus overlook an interesting way of understanding skepticism. On account of this oversight, Goldman and Lehrer’s characterizations of skepticism are impoverished to the extent that they take skepticism as equivalent to an anti-intellectual philosophical *position* of negative dogmatism. To elaborate on this point, I quote Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede who write: “...skepticism is one of the few things that every philosopher thinks they know a good deal about. But the scepticism they know about—scepticism as it is discussed in modern philosophy—is in many ways a pale and impoverished version of the ancient original.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede, eds., *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) ix.

According to the ancient skeptics<sup>2</sup>, negative dogmatism is no more skeptical than is positive dogmatism. For example, a positive dogmatist might assert, “Human beings can attain knowledge of *x*.” There should be no question that this assertion states a dogma, that is, a doctrine or teaching about the possibility of human beings attaining knowledge of a certain kind. A negative dogmatist might respond to this assertion by claiming the contrary, “Human beings cannot attain knowledge of *x*.” This assertion, no less than its contrary, states a dogma (doctrine or teaching) about the impossibility of human beings attaining knowledge of the same kind. From the perspective of ancient skepticism, it can be seen that contemporary epistemology only addresses itself to dogmatism of various kinds and leaves skepticism (as it was construed by the ancients) out of the equation. R.J. Hankinson refers to the ancient characterization of skepticism, which usually involves the recommendation of a practice of withholding assent or suspending judgment (*epochē*) as ‘genuine skepticism’ while Burnyeat and Frede use the adjective ‘original’ to describe the ancient skeptics, perhaps to clarify the fact that for the ancients, negative dogmatism is no more skeptical than is positive dogmatism.<sup>3</sup> Although

---

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the modern understanding of skepticism reflects a change in meaning of the term, ‘skepticism’. The word, ‘skeptical’ comes from the Greek verb ‘*skopein*’ (‘*skeptesthai*’ in the middle/passive form) which means ‘to look, to examine’. The modern understanding of skepticism as negative dogmatism is clearly a deviation from this ‘original’ meaning of looking and inquiring.

<sup>3</sup> According to Hankinson, positive dogmatists claim that truth exists, or that knowledge is attainable, while negative dogmatists claim that truth does not exist, or that knowledge is not attainable. Genuine skepticism is not committed to either of these views. See R.J. Hankinson, *op. cit.*, 318-319, n. 6. Michael Frede refers to ‘negative dogmatism’ as ‘dogmatic skepticism’ and to ‘genuine skepticism’ as ‘classical skepticism’, because in modern times negative dogmatism has often been confused with genuine skepticism. See “The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge” in Michael Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 201, reprinted as “The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge” in Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede, eds., *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*, 127-151. Gisela Striker refers to negative dogmatism as ‘skepticism as a thesis’ (the thesis that nothing can be known) and to the idea that one should suspend judgment (assent or belief) on all matters as ‘skepticism as a recommendation’. See Gisela Striker, “Sceptical Strategies” in Malcolm Schofield, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 54. For Burnyeat and Frede’s use of ‘original sceptics’, see *The Original Sceptics*, xi.

I am sympathetic to Hankinson in referring to ancient skepticism as genuine skepticism, on the principle of charity and for the sake of clarity it is better to label it ‘ancient skepticism’, ‘non-dogmatic skepticism’, or ‘aporetic skepticism’ so as to distinguish it clearly from modern skepticism (negative dogmatism).<sup>4</sup> In Chapter 3 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, “The Nomenclature of the Skeptic Way”, Sextus Empiricus provides a series of useful terms for characterizing non-dogmatic skepticism:

The skeptic way is called Zetetic [“questioning”] from its activity in questioning and inquiring, Ephectic [“suspensive”] from the *pathos* [feeling, affect, state (of the soul [or mind])] that arises concerning the subject of inquiry, Aporetic [“inclined to *aporiai*”<sup>5</sup>] either, as some say, from its being puzzled and questioning about everything or from its being at a loss as to whether to assent or dissent, and Pyrrhonian because it appears to us that Pyrrho applied himself to Skepticism more vigorously and conspicuously than his predecessors did.<sup>6</sup>

See Figure 1 below for a taxonomy of the various positions or attitudes discussed in this paragraph including the various labels given to them by different thinkers.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Kjellberg refers to non-dogmatic skepticism as ‘aporetic skepticism’. Paul Kjellberg, “The End of Skepticism” (unpublished paper, 1998). In general, for purposes of clarity of expression, I will refer to aporetic or non-dogmatic skepticism as ‘skepticism’ and modern skepticism as ‘negative dogmatism’.

<sup>5</sup> The word, ‘*aporia*’ (pl. ‘*aporiai*’) is an alpha-privative + ‘*poros*’ (a passage, a way through), suggesting literally an inability to penetrate an anomaly or conundrum. The term has come to be understood as indicating a sense of lacking resources and inconclusiveness. See Mates, *op. cit.*, 32. Benson Mates has distinguished a condition of *aporia* from doubt, which he considers to be a more modern notion: “Modern commentators on Sextus have almost inevitably tended to project some of the features of modern skepticism onto the form of skepticism he describes. [...] One case in point, in which this tendency is especially obvious and has led to misunderstanding, is the presumption that the characteristic attitude of a Pyrrhonian skeptic is one of doubt. It is an interesting fact, with important philosophical consequences, that in his account of Pyrrhonism Sextus never speaks of doubt. The Greek language is not short of verbs to express that condition (e.g., *endoiazō*, *distazō*), but he never makes use of any of them. Instead, for the Pyrrhonist’s characteristic attitude Sextus uses the verbs *aporō* and *amēchanō*, which mean “to be at a loss.” See *ibid.*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Hē skeptikē toinun agōgē kaleitai men kai zētētikē apo energeias tēs kata to zētein kai skeptesthai, kai ephētikē apo tou meta tēn zētēsēn peri ton skeptomenon ginomenou pathous, kai aporetikē ētoi apo tou peri pantos aporein kai zētein, hōs enioi phasin, ē apo tou amēchanein pros sunkatathēsēn ē arnēsēn, kai Purrōneios apo tou phainesthai hēmin ton Purrōna sōmatikōteron kai epiphanesteron tōn pro autou proselēluthenai tēi skepsei.*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.3.7. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 4, 6. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 89. See also Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosopher in Ten Books* 9.11.70, R.D.



Position/Attitude	Characteristic Perspective
(Positive) Dogmatism	Human beings can attain knowledge of <i>x</i> .
Negative Dogmatism (Hankinson) Dogmatic Skepticism (Frede) Skepticism as a Thesis (Striker) Modern Skepticism	Human beings cannot attain knowledge of <i>x</i> .
Genuine Skepticism (Hankinson) Classical Skepticism (Frede) Skepticism as a Recommendation (Striker) Ancient Skepticism Non-Dogmatic or Aporetic Skepticism	Suspension of judgment as to whether human beings can attain knowledge of <i>x</i> .

Figure 1. A Taxonomy of Positive and Negative Dogmatism and Non-Dogmatic Skepticism

The contemporary understanding of skepticism considers skepticism as an anti-intellectual project, wherein the negative dogmatist is attempting to demonstrate that the epistemologist's access to knowledge is illusory. Furthermore, this reading tends to mislead scholars into believing that all versions of negative dogmatism are of the most extreme possible scope and that negative dogmatism categorically denies the possibility that human beings can attain knowledge as such. On this basis, it also leads one to conflate skepticism (understood as negative dogmatism of the greatest possible scope) with a thoroughgoing, pernicious, and anti-intellectual version of "anything goes" relativism. When understood in this way, skepticism is easy to refute, since the most extreme version of negative dogmatism is self-refuting. It also limits skepticism to its epistemological dimensions and leaves out any of its ethical implications. On this point, Burnyeat and Frede write: "Scepticism is a philosophy for the whole of life. Consequently, a proper understanding of scepticism must include an understanding of the life it offers, as well as the arguments. That makes for a richer conception of what scepticism is than modern philosophers are used to."<sup>7</sup>

---

Hicks, trans., *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Volume II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1925) 482-483.

<sup>7</sup> Burnyeat and Frede, *op. cit.*, x.

## 2.2 DEFINITIONS OF 'SKEPTICISM' IN CONTEMPORARY EPISTEMOLOGY

Alvin I. Goldman in his book, *Epistemology and Cognition* defines skepticism as follows: "In contemporary epistemology, as well as much of its history, skepticism is primarily some sort of negative thesis about epistemic attainments."<sup>8</sup> Just prior to this quotation, Goldman briefly mentions the Academics and the Pyrrhonists and explains that his definition does not cover the Pyrrhonists. Goldman's definition of narrow historical scope is not comprehensive, in so far as it self-consciously omits Pyrrhonism, arguably an important development in the history of skepticism, from its scope.

In similar fashion, Keith Lehrer characterizes skepticism as follows:

Skepticism comes in different depths. Shallow forms deny that we know the few things we claim to, and the deepest form denies that we know anything at all. [...] The philosophical skeptic, inclined to question when others are drawn to dogmatic tranquillity<sup>9</sup>, discovers the risk of error in our most trusted convictions. On this discovery, she constructs an *agnoiology*, a theory of ignorance.<sup>10</sup>

Lehrer is even more self-consciously ahistorical than Goldman is in characterizing skepticism. He equates skepticism with negative dogmatism without making any reference in his entire book to either the Academic or Pyrrhonist traditions.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Goldman insists on describing skepticism as a *thesis*, Lehrer argues that the skeptic constructs an agnoiology, a *formal* theory of ignorance, on the foundation of the discovery of the risk of error in our knowledge-claims. Nowhere in either of these accounts is there any sustained discussion of the suspension of judgment (*epochē*)

---

<sup>8</sup> Alvin I. Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) 29.

<sup>9</sup> Proponents of negative epistemological dogmatism of the sort described here seem to disagree with non-dogmatic skeptics about what is to be the source of tranquillity (*ataraxia*).

<sup>10</sup> Keith Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990) 176.

<sup>11</sup> It would appear that the ahistorical approach of the analytic tradition of philosophy is one of its inherent limitations. Professor Tom Kasulis of The Ohio State University has also pointed out to me that analytic philosophy is a scholasticism. Later scholars inherit and frequently accept the taxonomies of their

recommended and practiced by both the Pyrrhonists and the Academics from Arcesilaus to Clitomachus. A further problem with the modern conception of skepticism as negative dogmatism is that one is hard-pressed to find proponents of such a view, which does not seem to be seriously endorsed or instantiated in all of philosophical literature.

### 2.3 PRECURSORS TO THE GREEK SKEPTICAL TRADITION, THE EARLY PYRRHONISTS, AND PLATO'S ACADEMY FROM ARCESILAUS OF PITANE TO CLITOMACHUS OF CARTHAGE

There is something interesting in ancient philosophy that contemporary epistemology has lost sight of; it first occurs in Plato's Academy under Arcesilaus. After a brief survey of Arcesilaus' skeptical precursors and the early Pyrrhonists, an examination of the philosophy of Plato's Academy from c. 270 – c. 110 BCE offers some of the historical details glossed over by Goldman and omitted by Lehrer. One of the conclusions Goldman has drawn is that his definition of (modern) skepticism is consistent with how the term was understood in historical epistemology. In partial support of this claim, he writes:

The Academics, such as Arcesilaus and Carneades, maintained that no assertions about what is going on beyond our immediate experience are certain. The Pyrrhonians did not endorse the negative conclusions of the Academics, in that they did not *deny* that knowledge of the nonevident was possible.<sup>12</sup>

The aim here is to investigate the extent to which the modern definition of skepticism (negative dogmatism) can be sustained as having a historical basis in what is frequently referred to as the skeptical Academy.

#### 2.3.1 *Precursors to the Greek Skeptical Tradition*

There are a number of very early Greek thinkers who expressed different versions of theories that might be classified in varying ways as skeptical. Xenophanes of

---

predecessors, even when it would be more suitable to create new taxonomies and theoretical distinctions (personal conversation, May 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Goldman, *op. cit.*, 28.

Colophon (c. 580 - c. 480/470 BCE) is the earliest known example of someone in the Western philosophical tradition who explicitly doubted the ability of human beings to attain knowledge in general:

No man knows, or ever will know, the truth about the gods and about everything I speak of; for even if one chanced to say the complete truth, yet oneself knows it not; but seeming is wrought over all things [*or fancy is wrought in the case of all men*].<sup>13</sup>

Anacharsis of Scythia (flourished c. 600 BCE) expressed a limited form of skepticism concerning the question of what constitutes consummate skill or expertise. Somewhat skeptical moods have been attributed to many of the early Greek philosophers: Heraclitus and Parmenides (? c. 520 – c. 550 BCE) on the senses, and Parmenides' followers, Zeno of Elea (? c. 490 – c. 420 BCE) and Melissus of Samos (fifth century BCE). Even Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (c. 500 – c. 428 BCE) and Empedocles of Acragas (c. 495 – c. 435 BCE) have been somewhat erroneously treated as skeptics, but they merely suggested the need for epistemological caution.<sup>14</sup>

Democritus has often been considered another precursor to the skeptics. However, although his epistemology has been characterized as skeptical, it must be noted that his skepticism is not the aporetic or non-dogmatic variety. In being unwilling to give up a notion of objective truth and denying both of a pair of conflicting appearances, Democritus was a realist about the irrelevance of sense perception to the reality of atoms

---

<sup>13</sup> *Kai to men oun saphes outis anēr iden oude tis estai  
eidōs amphi theōn te kai hassa legō peri pantōn  
ei gar kai ta malista tuchoi tetelesmenon eipōn,  
autos homōs ouk oide dokos d' epī pasi tetuktai.*

Xenophanes, Fragment 34. Greek text and English translation from Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Second Edition, 179.

<sup>14</sup> See David Sedley, "The Protagonists" in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, 10, Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 31-51, and Edwyn Bevan, "The Sceptics" in Edwyn Bevan, *Stoics & Sceptics* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1913) 122, for treatments of these various thinkers as skeptical precursors.

and the void. His followers seem to have developed this idea with more of a skeptical spirit, which they kept alive during the fourth-century BCE. Metrodorus of Chios (mid-fourth century BCE), especially, is noted for this, since his work, *On Nature* begins: “None of us knows anything—not even whether we know anything or not.”<sup>15</sup> It is said that Metrodorus, Anaxarchus of Abdera (c. 388/380 – c. 320 BCE), another atomist who expanded upon Democritus’ denial of the trustworthiness of the senses<sup>16</sup>, and Monimus, a Cynic with skeptical inclinations, abandoned the criterion of truth. As observed in the preface, there is a direct lineage from Metrodorus to Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360 – c. 270 BCE).<sup>17</sup> Metrodorus was the teacher of Diogenes of Smyrna, Diogenes taught Anaxarchus, and Anaxarchus was Pyrrho’s teacher. This crossing of the lineage of Democritean atomism with that of early Pyrrhonism gives support to my claim in the previous chapter that (early) Greek philosophy was characterized by a sense of continuity among the members of the educated elite. Without more data, it is impossible to draw any detailed conclusions about the skeptical spirit that seems to pervade the writings of many early Greek philosophers. Suffice it to say that there is significant evidence for the presence of a skeptical spirit in the philosophy of the early Greeks.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ouden ismen, oud’ auto touto ismen hoti ouden ismen.*

Metrodorus of Chios, Fragment 25. Greek text from A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Volume 2: *Greek and Latin Texts with Notes and Bibliography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 4. English translation from Sedley, *op. cit.* Alternative translation: ‘We know nothing, nor do we even know just this, that we know nothing.’ See A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Volume 1: *Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 14.

<sup>16</sup> Anaxarchus allegedly accompanied Alexander the Great on his campaigns to India and is attributed with the virtues of impassivity (*apatheia*) and contentment. He was known as *ho eudaimonikos* (the happy man). See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.10.58-60, Hicks, trans., *op. cit.*, Volume II, 470-473.

<sup>17</sup> Metrodorus and probably Anaxarchus were willing to make use of atomism as an explanatory hypothesis, whereas Pyrrho was unwilling to entertain such speculation.

### 2.3.2 *The Early Pyrrhonists: Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360 – c. 270 BCE) and Timon of Phlius (c. 320 – c. 230 BCE)*

The early Pyrrhonists include Pyrrho himself (c. 360 – c. 270 BCE), his pupil, Timon of Phlius (c. 320 – c. 230 BCE), and a few other disciples.<sup>18</sup> Since Pyrrho wrote nothing, what we know about him comes from later sources, most prominently from the fragmentary transmission of his thought by Timon, and thus should be interpreted in a tentative, rather than decisive, manner. For example, in recent scholarship, it has been suggested that we consider Timon not only as a reporter of Pyrrho's philosophy, but also as a philosopher who had his own interpretation of Pyrrho's thought.<sup>19</sup> In any case, according to the various sources, Pyrrho's practice of philosophy emphasized non-cognition (*akatalēpsia*) and the withholding of assent (*epochē*). It is important to note that withholding assent or suspension of judgment does not require the Pyrrhonist to abandon all convention in his responses to various appearances. He suggested that nothing exists in truth, and that convention (*nomōi*) and habit are the basis of all of the actions of humankind. Pyrrho claimed that there was no need to inquire into things other

---

<sup>18</sup> Pyrrho was initially a painter and then studied with Bryson the son of Stilpo (or Bryson or Stilpo). However, this story is unlikely for chronological reasons. On the other hand, the evidence for his studying with the atomist, Anaxarchus is more certain. It is said that Pyrrho gave up painting when he became a skeptic, for if the world is objectively indifferent, painting images of one's perceptions of it implies that the world is as we perceive it to be. See Warren, *op. cit.*, 95. Pyrrho, probably along with Anaxarchus, traveled to India with Alexander the Great where he encountered the naked philosophers (*sannyāsins*) and Magi. To what extent Pyrrho may have been influenced by the *sannyāsins* is impossible to say. However, it is worth noting that Indian thought of this period had produced a variety of skepticism about phenomena, which was apparently linked to a concern over the desirability of equanimity. Professor Steve Odin, an expert in Japanese philosophy at the University of Hawai'i, has pointed out to me that there are passages in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*The Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*) (early second-century CE) that are virtually identical to passages in the writings of Sextus Empiricus. However, one must use extreme caution in suggesting that Indian thought influenced Pyrrho or vice versa, since the evidence for it is very tentative. Pyrrho's followers are said to have included Hecataeus of Abdera (late fourth to early third centuries BCE), Nausiphanes of Teos, and Numenius. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.11.70 and 9.11.102. Numenius has also been listed as a disciple of Pyrrho's. See Warren, *op. cit.*, 103.

than knowledge since we are constituted so as to know nothing. According to Pyrrho, the world is indeterminable, and truth or falsehood cannot be ascribed to any of our sensations or opinions.

Timon, unlike Pyrrho, was a member of the Hellenistic intelligentsia.<sup>20</sup> In the fragments of his work that remain, he displays a detailed knowledge of many philosophers, both his predecessors and his contemporaries. These fragments also show that he was an accomplished literary artist. Timon probably saw little in common between the Academic practice of arguing against every thesis, initiated by Arcesilaus, as the basis for suspension of judgment and Pyrrho's tranquil indifference. Thus, the newly emergent Academic skepticism was criticized just as harshly as the other Hellenistic schools of philosophy in his writings. In applying existing philosophies, Timon favorably referred to Democritus for the background his thought provided to Pyrrhonism, to the Eleatic tradition (Parmenides, Zeno, and Melissus), and to Protagoras for his skepticism about the gods.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> See Warren, *op. cit.*, 97-103. Timon's record of Pyrrho's life and thought was probably the primary source used by the Hellenistic biographers as the basis for the revival of Pyrrhonism under Aenesidemus of Cnossus (flourished c. 80 BCE).

<sup>20</sup> Timon was acquainted with Lacydes, Arcesilaus' successor as head of the Academy from c. 242 – 216 BCE in Athens.

<sup>21</sup> The following sentence, quoted in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.8.52, attributed to Protagoras and probably from his work, *On the Gods* (*Peri Theōn*), displays his agnosticism:

*peri men theōn ouk echō eidenai, outh' hōs eisin outh' hōs ouk eisin outh' hopoioi tines idean polla gar ta kōluonta eidenai hē t' adēlotēs kai brachus ōn ho bios tou anthrōpou.*

About the gods, I am not able to know whether they exist or do not exist, nor what they are like in form; for the factors preventing knowledge are many: the obscurity of the subject, and the shortness of human life.

Protagoras, Fragment 4. Greek text from Diels-Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* II, 265. English translation from Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels*, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948, 1952) 126. See also Hicks, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Volume II, 464-465.

Timon claimed (and probably attributed to Pyrrho) that anyone who wanted to live a good and successful life (*eudaimonēsein*) would be concerned with the following three questions:

- 1) How are things by nature?
- 2) What attitude should we adopt toward them?
- 3) What will be the outcome for those who hold this attitude?

Since neither our sensations nor our opinions yield truths or falsehoods, Timon suggested an unopinionated, uncommitted, and unshaken attitude. On this basis, a formula of *ouden mallon* (no more this than that) was recommended. Thus, Timon concludes that each individual thing no more is than is not, both is and is not, and neither is nor is not.<sup>22</sup>

James Warren elaborates on the function of this formula as follows:

If there are two conflicting opinions or perceptions and there is ‘no more’ reason for one rather than another to be true, or ‘no more’ reason to prefer one to the other, then any acceptance of one rather than the other cannot be justified. We must suspend judgement on the question or reject both.<sup>23</sup>

According to Timon, the outcome for those who adopt this attitude of *ouden mallon* will be first speechlessness or an absence of assertion (*aphasia*) and then freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*).<sup>24</sup> In his work, *On Sensations (Peri Aisthēseōn)*, Timon wrote: “That honey is sweet I do not affirm, but I agree that it appears so.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, the attitude of Pyrrhonism is to affirm the appearance without affirming that it *is* of such a kind.

---

<sup>22</sup> This formula need not be interpreted as violating the principle of non-contradiction, since “[...] X is both F and not-F, but not ‘simultaneously and in the same respect’.” See Warren, *op. cit.*, 108, n. 65.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting the subtle differences between Timon and Sextus on the result of suspending judgment. Whereas Sextus said the immediate result is *ataraxia*, Timon wrote that first comes *aphasia* and then *ataraxia*. In a subtle variation of this theme, the founder of the Hellenistic revival of Pyrrhonism, Aenesidemus of Cnossus (flourished c. 80 BCE), who chronologically postdated Timon and antedated Sextus, said that the outcome of adopting an unopinionated attitude was pleasure (*hēdonē*).

<sup>25</sup> *To meli hoti esti gluku ou tithēmi, to d' hoti phainetai homologō.*

Greek text from Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Volume 2, 7. English translation from Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Volume 1, 15.



According to Pyrrho, a wise person is unaware of or indifferent to good and bad. This condition is called ‘*apatheia*’ (lack of emotion, impassivity).<sup>26</sup> The attitude of acknowledging no differences of value is called ‘*adiaphoria*.’ The recommendation seems to be one of non-attachment to things, and the outcome of this tranquility was to put Pyrrho beyond all philosophical controversy and desire. “[...] Pyrrho says that living and dying ‘do not differ’ (μηδὲν διαφέρειν [*mēden diapherein*]). This surely cannot mean that being alive and being dead cannot be distinguished by the senses, but rather that there is no intrinsic value either to being alive or being dead.”<sup>27</sup>

Timon wrote: “Desire is absolutely the first of all bad things.”<sup>28</sup> This assertion, in making a negative value judgment about desire, is clearly not skeptical in the non-dogmatic sense. Therefore, Timon, despite having some sympathies with the school of thought that later took Pyrrho’s name, was not an aporetic skeptic. It is probable that Pyrrho himself was also not an aporetic skeptic, as Warren observes, “Pyrrho was not a Pyrrhonist. Even the Pyrrhonists say (it appears) so.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, Pyrrho was remembered as a strict moralist until after the Pyrrhonist revival in the first century BCE. His main contribution to later skepticism was his idea of *epochē*, which Arcesilaus developed further in his effort to bring the Academy in the direction of ‘suspending judgment about everything.’

<sup>26</sup> By the time of Cicero, ‘*apatheia*’ (the absence of all emotional attachment) could be used interchangeably with ‘*ataraxia*’ (freedom from disquiet). See Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 2, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Warren, *op. cit.*, 93. This idea resonates significantly with the *Zhuangzi* 莊子’s attitudes toward life and death:

古之真人。不知說生。不知惡死。(15/6/7-8)

The authentic persons of old did not understand delighting in life or resenting death.

Compare with Graham, *op. cit.*, 85 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 78

<sup>28</sup> *Pantōn men prōtista kakōn epithumia esti.*

Greek text from Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 2, 13. English translation from Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 1, 20.

### 2.3.3 *Plato's Academy from Arcesilaus of Pitane (c. 318/315 – 242/240 BCE) to Clitomachus of Carthage (c. 187 – c. 110 BCE)*

The skeptical approaches and methods of many of the precursors to the Hellenistic skeptical tradition had become somewhat marginalized during the fourth-century BCE.<sup>30</sup> After Plato and Aristotle had died, however, a version of skepticism began to flourish in Plato's Academy. Arcesilaus of Pitane (c. 318/315 – 242/240 BCE)<sup>31</sup>, Plato's fifth successor as head of the Academy, is widely considered to be the founder of a version of Academic skepticism.<sup>32</sup> Arcesilaus was dissatisfied with the direction in which some of his predecessors had taken the Academy, notably the effort to create a rigorous philosophical system out of Plato's dialogues by Speusippus and Xenocrates. He wished to return the Academy to what he took to be its roots by modeling its debating practices on the early Platonic dialogues. Arcesilaus was especially impressed with the character of Socrates as he is portrayed in these dialogues, since Socrates regularly admitted his own ignorance. Arcesilaus believed that the new dogmatism that he perceived to be arising in Athens in his day was antithetical to the philosophical techniques employed in Plato's early dialogues.

On this basis, he denied that anything could be known, even the knowledge that he knew nothing. Since it would be rash to accept something false or non-cognitive, Arcesilaus claimed no one should assert anything or give assent to anything. Self-

---

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, 86. See also *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.3.7, quoted above.

<sup>30</sup> During this period, the Democritean atomists (especially Metrodorus of Chios) continued to employ skeptical approaches to philosophical questions.

<sup>31</sup> Arcesilaus was a younger contemporary of Pyrrho and was contemporary with Timon. He was born to an aristocratic family in Pitane, Asia Minor. He began his studies with mathematics but turned to philosophy in the 290's, when he began by studying with Theophrastus (371-287 BCE), Aristotle's immediate successor, before joining the Academy. Sometime in the 270's he was appointed head of the Academy.

consciously emulating Pyrrho and developing his thought, Arcesilaus believed that suspending judgment (*epochē*) was more desirable than dogmatic commitment to a particular position.<sup>33</sup> Using the dialectical techniques of Diodorus Cronus (died c. 284 BCE), Arcesilaus ‘argued against every thesis.’ He required his interlocutor to state his own opinion and then would use that opinion as the basis for an *elenchus* (examination, cross-examination, refutation, scrutiny, audit) of the sort found in the early Socratic dialogues.<sup>34</sup> In these dialogues, Socrates would begin with questions of the form, “What is *x*?” or “Is *x y*?” and then propose a number of subsidiary theses to which he expects his philosophical opponent to assent. He then attempts to show that holding both the initial proposal and the subsidiary theses that the interlocutor agrees are consistent with it, results in an absurdity or contradiction. The opponent then must either revise his answer to the question or the subsidiary theses. The *elenchus* is a negative method and requires no positive views of those who employ it, except a belief in the need for consistency. Socrates never subjected his own views, whatever they might have been, to the *elenchus* in Plato’s early dialogues, but valued the negative function of the *elenchus* as a means of removing false pretensions to knowledge and exposing the opponent’s ignorance.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> The heads of the Academy between Plato and Arcesilaus were Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, and Crates.

<sup>33</sup> Timon of Phlius and the Stoic, Ariston [Aristo] of Chios (c. 320 – 250 BCE), both pointed out the influence of Pyrrho on Arcesilaus. However, Warren notes Timon’s possible personal investment in doing so: “When Timon moved to Athens some time in the 260s BC the current hot debate was the epistemological discussion between Arcesilaus and the Stoics. Timon seems to have entered this debate, perhaps claiming Pyrrho as the originator of his own brand of scepticism in a move designed to undercut the Academy’s claim to the mantle of ‘original sceptics’.” See Warren, *op. cit.*, 97-98.

<sup>34</sup> Socrates/Plato, Pyrrho, and Diodorus are the three figures that are believed to have most influenced Arcesilaus. Arcesilaus was directly associated with Theophrastus, Crantor, Polemo, and Crates, and was on excellent terms with them to the point that the last three of these at least encouraged him to question the effort of reading Plato as a dogmatic philosopher in the manner of Xenocrates.

<sup>35</sup> Terence Irwin has pointed out that even if an interlocutor survives an *elenchus* with his initial proposal intact, all that is established is the internal consistency of his beliefs, not their truth. Socrates did not allow

Diogenes Laertius (early third-century CE) suggests that Arcesilaus was the first to argue pro and contra.<sup>36</sup> Since that practice goes back at least as far as Protagoras, perhaps the original development that Diogenes attributes to Arcesilaus is the practice of arguing on both sides of a question with the idea that neither side would end up looking preferable. According to Arcesilaus, the person of wisdom never believes anything firmly and saves himself from error by withholding his judgment. In an effort to instill an open-minded approach to philosophical debate, he encourages his pupils to attend the lectures of the other philosophical schools in Athens, particularly those of the Stoics. In this vein, Diogenes claims that Arcesilaus is the first to change traditional Platonic discourse to make it more of a debating contest.<sup>37</sup>

In response to the Stoic criticism that the natural result of suspending judgment is the impossibility of purposive action (*apraxia*), Arcesilaus claims that one who suspends judgment about everything will guide choice, action, and avoidance of action by ‘the reasonable thing worthy for the purpose’ (*ton eulogon axiōma*). One who attends to ‘the reasonable’ (*ton eulogon*) will be happy since right action, defined as any action that once completed has a justification, brings about prudence, in which happiness lies.<sup>38</sup> Although ‘the reasonable’ is an appropriation of a Stoic concept, it was not forced upon Arcesilaus as a means of linking his theory of skepticism to daily life as his Stoic opponents tended

---

this kind of defense, but it is an open question as to whether he was justified in eschewing it. See Terence Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 41.

<sup>36</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 4.6.28. See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Volume 1, 439, and Volume 2, 434, and R.D. Hicks, trans., *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Volume I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1925) 404-405.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* 7.158 (*Against the Logicians* 1.158). See *Ibid.*, 450-451. See R.G. Bury, *Sextus Empiricus*, Volume II: *Against the Logicians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935) I.158, 86-87.

to suggest.<sup>39</sup> Arcesilaus doubted any doctrines about how to live one's life with the possible exception of the need to suspend judgment itself.<sup>40</sup>

Arcesilaus' philosophy was not widely accepted at first, but Lacydes of Cyrene (who flourished mid-third century BCE), Arcesilaus' successor as head of Plato's Academy (from c. 242 – 216 BCE), kept the tradition alive, and it continued under Carneades of Cyrene (c. 214/213 – 149/129 BCE), who became head of the Academy after Lacydes. Carneades practiced arguing with equal strength on either side of a given debate as a philosophical method.<sup>41</sup> For example, in 156 – 155 BCE at the hearing of Galba and Cato the Censor, he gave a speech in which he marshaled arguments in favor of justice. On the following day, he overturned the previous day's discourse with a speech in which he supported the opposite side, namely the disparagement of justice.<sup>42</sup> This was a rhetorical exercise designed to show that defenders of the concept justice had no certain or firm arguments for it rather than a preliminary attempt to determine which side was better supported. Carneades argued contra Antipater that it is inconsistent for someone who asserts that nothing is cognitive to hold that the statement of this point of view is itself cognitive. This attitude confirms that Carneades was interested in avoiding self-referential inconsistency in his philosophical theories.

Carneades adopted 'the convincing'/'the persuasive' (*to pithanon*), which like Arcesilaus' 'reasonable' was adopted from the Stoics, as a practical criterion for living

---

<sup>39</sup> Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, 457

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Carneades' practice of taking opposite sides on the same subject can be traced back to Plato's *Meno* and *Theaetetus*, wherein the character of Socrates is portrayed as first developing and then attacking the same thesis. Sextus calls this practice, '*isostheneia*,' though there is no record of Carneades having applied this term. See Richard Bett, *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 200, n. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 5.14.3-5 and *Epitome* 50.8. See Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, 442.

one's life. This criterion is subjective in so far as an apparently false impression may be true and an apparently true impression false. The impression that appears true with 'intensity' is what is convincing and draws people toward assent.<sup>43</sup> And yet, since 'the convincing' only contends with what subjectively *appears* to be true, it is open with respect to questions of truth and falsity. In this respect, the criterion of 'the convincing' is quite similar to a theory of probabilism since convincing impressions, according to Carneades, turn out true 'for the most part'.<sup>44</sup>

Carneades was attempting to dislodge the Stoic notion of the cognitive impression (*katalēptikē phantasia*). In his view, once this was seen to, no criterion of truth would remain. It was Carneades' point that 'the convincing' would serve the Stoics better than the unattainable certainty upon which they insisted.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Carneades developed a weak form of suspension of judgment, which involves a weak form of assent in which one affirms convincing impressions and disaffirms unconvincing ones but responds to these impressions only in terms of what *appears* to be true. This strategy is sufficient for him to respond effectively to the same sorts of criticisms about the impossibility of practical action that were leveled against Arcesilaus.

Carneades' student and successor as head of the Academy, Clitomachus of Carthage (c. 187 – c. 110 BCE) was the most conservative transmitter of Carneades' thought.<sup>46</sup> Philo of Larissa (c. 160 – c. 83 BCE) who was Clitomachus' immediate

---

<sup>43</sup> Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, 457.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>46</sup> Clitomachus (originally named Hasdrubal/Hasdrubel) was a Semite from Carthage. He was an accomplished writer, who wrote in both Greek and Punic. He was appointed head of the Academy in c. 129/128 BCE and was its head until his death in c. 110 BCE. The fact that, as a non-Greek, he was able to become head of the Academy underscores the important influence of attitudes that might amount to implicit cosmopolitanism on the philosophy of the Hellenistic Age (323 – 30 BCE).

successor in the Academy replaced skepticism with a modest position of fallibilism which he believed to be based on Carneades' criterion of 'the convincing'. According to fallibilism, the philosopher is committed to any of a wide range of opinions, subject to the recognition that any of them might be mistaken. Philo passed on his controversial reading of Carneades' thought in which Carneades' arguments on either side are taken as leading to his own opinion on the matter, to Metrodorus of Stratonicia/Stratonicea.<sup>47</sup> And so, under Philo and Metrodorus, the Academy was brought back in the direction of interpreting Plato's dialogues as proffering specific dogmas or teachings.

#### 2.3.4 *Was the Academy from Arcesilaus to Clitomachus Skeptical?*

Even among the ancient commentators, there was general disagreement as to whether the Academy from Arcesilaus to Clitomachus can be properly called 'skeptical'.<sup>48</sup> Numenius is reported in Eusebius' *Evangelical Preparation* to have claimed that Arcesilaus was not an Academic despite being called one, and that he was a Pyrrhonist in everything but name.<sup>49</sup> Apparently, Mnaseas, Philomelus, and Timon, Pyrrho's disciple and transmitter, whom Numenius refers to as 'the Skeptics', called Arcesilaus a skeptic.<sup>50</sup> Thus, according to Numenius, it is appropriate to regard the

---

<sup>47</sup> Incidentally, Philo's doctrines may have led Aenesidemus of Cnossus (flourished c. 80 BCE) to disassociate himself with the Academy, which he characterized as 'Stoics fighting Stoics,' and to re-establish skepticism under the name of Pyrrho. If this is the case, then it is safe to assert that the later revival of Pyrrhonism was influenced by the Academy to the extent that Aenesidemus started out as an Academic who was responding to the philosophy of Philo. There was another figure who broke off from the Academy because he was dissatisfied with the Academy from Arcesilaus to Philo. Antiochus of Ascalon (flourished c. 100 BCE) formed the 'Old' Academy in 89/87 BCE and portrayed Plato as a dogmatist whose theory of knowledge was best understood as or by reference to the Stoic doctrine of cognitive certainty. See Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 1, 449.

<sup>48</sup> Since neither Arcesilaus nor Carneades wrote anything and since the writings of figures like Clitomachus are no longer extant, the best we can do is to consider what their commentators say. It should be thus kept in mind that any conclusions developed here or elsewhere are rather tentative.

<sup>49</sup> Numenius (Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 14.6.4-6). *Ibid.*, Volume 1, 440 and Volume 2, 435.

<sup>50</sup> Mnaseas might have been the same as the Methodist doctor who lived at the time of Nero and to whom Galen (129 – c. 200 CE) referred and Philomelus is otherwise completely unknown.

Academy during this period as skeptical. However, Sextus Empiricus claimed that

Arcesilaus:

[...] says that individual cases of suspension are good and that individual cases of assent are bad. One might note, however, that while we [Pyrrhonists] say these things in accord with what is apparent to us, and we do not firmly maintain them, he says [*sic*] them as holding in nature, so as to mean that the suspension itself *is* good and the assent *is* bad.<sup>51</sup>

Consequently, according to Sextus, Arcesilaus gave the outward appearance of being a Pyrrhonist, but was in fact a dogmatist.<sup>52</sup> So according to Sextus, the Academy from Arcesilaus to Clitomachus is not properly regarded as skeptical.

A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley point out that the Academics never acknowledged Pyrrho, whose philosophy was actually a dogmatic position, and that it is anachronistic to refer to Arcesilaus as a ‘skeptic’ since that label was “retrojected from later Pyrrhonism.”<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the most accurate way to refer to Arcesilaus and his followers is ‘those who suspend judgment about everything’ (*hoi peri pantōn epechontes*), which as a

---

<sup>51</sup> [...] *agatha men einai tas kata meros epochas, kaka de tas kata meros sunkatatheseis. [ētoi] plēn ei mē legoi tis hoti hēmeis men kata to phainomenon hēmin tauta legomen kai ou diabebaiōtikōs, ekeinos de hōs pros tēn phusin, hōste kai agathon men einai autēn legein tēn epochēn, kakon de tēn sunkatathesin.*

Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.33.232-234. Greek text from Bury, *Sextus Empiricus I*, 142. English translation from Mates, 122. In Book 1 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus comes across as very conservative in terms of whom he considers to be a skeptic of the Pyrrhonist sort and is frequently in disagreement with his predecessors, at least some of whom he considers to qualify as Pyrrhonists. For example, in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.29.210-212 (Mates, 118-119), he is to be found disagreeing with Aenesidemus about the relationship between the Heraclitean philosophy and the skeptic way.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.33.233-234.

<sup>53</sup> Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, 446. Sedley has also written, “Curiously, although this blunt approach [of Pyrrho’s simply holding the thesis that nothing can be known] has less in common with Hellenistic skepticism than the open-ended doubt of Metrodorus [of Chios], it was Pyrrho, not Metrodorus, who was to become the figurehead of the later skeptical movement.” See “The Protagonists” in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, 10. Warren proposes a reason for this: “Later sceptics continued to use Pyrrho and not Metrodorus, say, as their ‘founding father’ because of the moral basis of Pyrrho’s image. Pyrrhonist scepticism — at least in Sextus Empiricus’ presentation — is a means to the end of dispelling worries generated by dogmatism (SE PH 1.12). In Pyrrho, Aenesidemus could find a model of an ethical and practical ideal of tranquillity perfect for his own philosophical motivation.” See Warren, *op. cit.*, 112-113.



quotation from the Stoic, Chrysippus, was the way they were generally known.<sup>54</sup>

However, it is worth noting that Pyrrho, despite not being thoroughly skeptical, exhibited tendencies toward skepticism. And while it may be anachronistic to apply the label ‘skepticism’ to the thought of the early Pyrrhonists and to that of the Academy from Arcesilaus to Clitomachus, withholding of judgment or suspension of judgment seems to be a significant characteristic of skepticism as the later Pyrrhonists developed it.

Therefore, these thinkers can be described *from a theoretical point of view* as having skeptical tendencies in varying degrees. Since Goldman and Lehrer make no reference at all to suspension of judgment in their contemporary definitions of ‘skepticism,’ their definitions are not based on skepticism as it was understood in the classical world, which leads to the question of when the word ‘skepticism’ was re-interpreted as equivalent to negative dogmatism.

Steve Coutinho, a professor of philosophy at Towson University, has suggested that understanding skepticism as a negative doctrine is not a misconstrual but rather reflects the fact that the meaning of ‘skepticism’ has changed somewhere in its transition from the ancient to the modern worlds. He further suggests that we can make the distinction by capitalizing the name of the ancient school that recommended *epochē*, ‘Skepticism,’ and refer to the negative doctrine as ‘skepticism’ with a lowercase ‘s’.<sup>55</sup>

However, I prefer to understand suspension of judgment as an essential quality of skepticism, and to recover the original etymology of the word, ‘skeptic’ as someone who

---

<sup>54</sup> As further evidence of the claim that the schools of ancient Greek philosophy are closely interconnected, it is worth pointing out that Arcesilaus was the first teacher of Chrysippus (c. 280 – c. 205 BCE), who later became the third head of the Stoic school. In similar fashion, Carneades studied under Diogenes of Babylon (mid-second century BCE), who was himself a disciple of Chrysippus and a later head of the Stoic school. Therefore, there was a close relationship between Stoicism and the later Academy that consisted of ‘those who suspend judgment about everything’.

looks or examines.<sup>56</sup> The term ‘negative dogmatism’ can then be reserved for what it more accurately describes. Of course, the capital ‘S’ can be retained when talking about Skepticism as a school of thought in contrast with Epicureanism, Stoicism, and so on, without committing one to the position that ‘skepticism’ with a lowercase ‘s’ necessarily entails understanding skepticism as equivalent to negative dogmatism.

We need to clarify the distinction between skepticism and dogmatism.<sup>57</sup> Baldly stated, dogmatism has two forms, positive dogmatism and negative dogmatism. Positive epistemological dogmatists assert that human beings can and do have knowledge; negative epistemological dogmatists assert the contrary, namely that it is impossible for humans to attain knowledge. On this account, skepticism contrasts with dogmatism in that the skeptic asserts no dogma or doctrine and thus holds no fixed philosophical position. Goldman and Lehrer, along with most other contemporary epistemologists, have not accepted this distinction between skepticism and (positive and negative) dogmatism. Instead they favor a taxonomy wherein (positive) dogmatism is contrasted with skepticism, which they take to be negative dogmatism.<sup>58</sup> See Table 1 above. Whether or not Goldman is right that skepticism has been construed as negative dogmatism throughout much of its history and in contemporary times, I suggest that neither Goldman nor Lehrer has defined or characterized ‘skepticism’ comprehensively.

---

<sup>55</sup> Steve Coutinho (personal communication, May 11, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 3 for a more detailed analysis of the word, ‘skeptic’.

<sup>57</sup> It is important to note that I am using the word, ‘dogmatism’ in a neutral sense along the lines of its meaning in the original Greek: a dogmatist is simply someone who ascribes to dogmas or doctrines. I am consciously avoiding understanding this word in light of the negative overtones that have come to be associated with it in modern times.

<sup>58</sup> J.L. Mackie amplifies this approach in asserting that “There are no objective values,” and regarding this negative *existential* claim as the fundamental tenet of his position, which he labels “moral scepticism”. See J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin Books, 1977) 15. Hankinson refers to this version of moral anti-realism as negative ontological dogmatism. See Hankinson, *op. cit.*, 14-15.

Hereafter, I will use the word, 'skepticism' to identify theories that recommend the suspension of judgment as a philosophical attitude, method, technique, and practice.

#### 2.4 THE MOST EXTREME VARIETY OF NEGATIVE DOGMATISM IS SELF-REFUTING

Another good reason for refusing to equate skepticism with negative dogmatism is that the variety of epistemological negative dogmatism that is most extreme in scope, which claims that knowledge as such is impossible, is self-refuting. If an extreme negative dogmatist were to invoke the concept of knowledge in denying that all knowledge is attainable, his doctrine would rest on the very thing it denied the possibility of, and would thus be self-refuting.<sup>59</sup> The epistemological status of the assertion that human beings cannot have knowledge is that of a knowledge-claim. If human beings are incapable of knowing anything, then one cannot claim to have knowledge of the impossibility of knowing. On this basis, the most extreme version of negative dogmatism is incoherent and untenable. If skepticism is understood as equivalent to the most extreme variety of negative dogmatism, then it becomes a straw man that is easy to knock down.

The negative dogmatist could defend his position against the charge that it is self-refuting in at least two ways: by stating his thesis without relying on the concept of knowledge at all, or by restricting the scope of his thesis in some way. If he stated his idea that all knowledge is unattainable in some way that does not involve resting on the knowledge that he perceives there not to be, the epistemological status of his thesis would be very weak, and probably not very interesting philosophically. Perhaps, restricting his

---

<sup>59</sup> This is the kind of logical mistake that Carneades was trying to avoid in arguing against Antipater. It should be noted that not all versions of negative dogmatism are self-refuting. One could restrict one's negative dogmatism to certain domains. For example, it would be quite reasonable for one to purport to

thoroughgoing negative dogmatism to knowledge within certain domains would both save the theory from the charge of self-refutation and be of greater philosophical interest. That is, a negative dogmatist could claim to know that knowledge of the future, for example, is unavailable to human beings, provided that his knowledge-claim invokes some form of knowledge other than knowledge of the future that he accepts the existence of. Many philosophers would assent to weak forms of negative dogmatism in limited domains. The assent may be so slight that it fails to warrant the label of ‘negative dogmatism’. It is worth pointing out that not all forms of negative dogmatism are inherently self-refuting.

## 2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SKEPTICISM AND RELATIVISM

In the previous chapter, I argued that aporetic skepticism and epistemological relativism of the sort that has been attributed to Protagoras are logically independent, although there clearly are specific formulations of the two that conflict, as Jonathan Barnes has pointed out. Here I intend to develop this claim further by pointing to the confusion created by not giving due attention to the critical distinction between non-dogmatic skepticism and negative dogmatism (modern skepticism). This confusion has brought about further confusion as to the relationship between skepticism and epistemological relativism.

### 2.5.1 *The Conflation of Extreme Negative Dogmatism and a Thoroughgoing Relativism*

Perhaps because the most extreme variety of negative dogmatism is self-refuting, as illustrated above, it has been conflated with the most extreme version of relativism, which is also self-refuting. As with all other instances of self-referential inconsistency,

---

have knowledge, or at least to believe strongly, that there is no knowledge to be had *with respect to* the

the problem arises when the theory of relativism is applied to the statement that expresses that theory. The extreme relativist claim, “Everything is relative” is self-refuting because it is an absolutist assertion, which relies on the possibility of absolutism and consequently undermines the theory of relativism it is trying to establish.

Many scholars have conflated negative dogmatism (modern skepticism) and relativism. For example, the philosopher Harvey Siegel characterizes epistemological relativism as a negative dogmatism: “...the *epistemological* relativist must deny that one can *know* the way the world is, independent of statements and W’s [where W is a person, a set of leading principles, a worldview, or a situation].”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, he clearly believes that the two positions are consistent; in fact, he thinks that epistemological relativism *entails* a form of dogmatic skepticism. The philosopher and interpreter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, Robert E. Allinson also equates relativism with modern skepticism (negative dogmatism): “If one takes the thesis of thoroughgoing relativism seriously, one must be a skeptic. One is therefore not even in a position to advocate one’s relativism.”<sup>61</sup> This is perhaps the most extreme conflation of the philosophical positions of relativism and negative dogmatism.

### 2.5.2 *The Separation of Extreme Negative Dogmatism and a Thoroughgoing Relativism*

There are also scholars who hold the opposite point of view; namely that negative dogmatism (modern skepticism) and relativism are logically contradictory. For example, Jack W. Meiland and Michael Krausz write:

---

future.

<sup>60</sup> Harvey Siegel, *Relativism Refuted: A Critique of Contemporary Epistemological Relativism* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987) 172, n. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Robert E. Allinson, *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation: An Analysis of the Inner Chapters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) 111.

The skeptic holds either that there is no truth or that the truth cannot be known by human beings. Relativism is very often taken to be either identical to, or else a form of or a pathway to, skepticism. And it is easy to understand why skepticism and relativism are so often confused with one another in this way. Relativism, like skepticism, gives up the pursuit of a single truth which is the same for everyone—which is objective, absolute, and knowable. But relativism, unlike skepticism, does not conclude that there is no such thing as truth or that truth is not knowable. Instead, the relativist maintains that truth may be and often is different for each society or each methodological approach or even each individual.<sup>62</sup>

It is apparent from the first sentence of this quotation that Meiland and Krausz are construing skepticism as negative dogmatism. That is, they understand skepticism as deriving a specific conclusion, namely that either truth does not exist, or that truth is not knowable, and they claim that the relativist draws a contradictory conclusion, namely that truth may vary according to one's culture or framework. James E. Bayley is another philosopher who thinks that skepticism is usually distinct from relativism, though he too considers skepticism as negative dogmatism: "Skepticism holds that knowledge is not possible. At best, we have only belief. Cognitive relativism, as usually argued, holds that knowledge is possible, although what counts as knowledge in one context may not count as knowledge in another."<sup>63</sup> Bryan W. Van Norden defines 'skepticism' as follows: "*Skepticism*, as a philosophic position [read 'negative dogmatism'], is the doctrine that one cannot have knowledge."<sup>64</sup> This leads him to the view that modern skepticism (negative dogmatism) and relativism are logically contradictory: "Ethical skepticism, for example, is inconsistent with the view that ethical truths are relative to each individual person's point of view, because it cannot be true both that ethical truths are dependent upon my own opinions

---

<sup>62</sup> Jack W. Meiland and Michael Krausz, eds., *Relativism: Cognitive and Moral* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982) 2.

<sup>63</sup> James E. Bayley, *Aspects of Relativism: Moral, Cognitive, and Literary* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1992) 3.

<sup>64</sup> Bryan W. Van Norden, "Competing Interpretations of the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 46, Number 2, April 1996, 248.

(relativism) and that I know no ethical truths (skepticism).”<sup>65</sup> The confusion that skepticism *simpliciter* is equivalent to negative dogmatism, and the cacophony of contradictory opinions about its relationship to relativism, is demonstrably widespread.

### 2.5.3 *The Logical Independence of Non-Dogmatic Skepticism and Relativism*

The view that skepticism is logically equivalent with relativism is confused. In like manner, the position that these two theories are contradictory is misguided. One source of this confusion is that, consistent with its being read as negative dogmatism, the philosophical term, ‘skepticism’ has taken on a pejorative connotation in modern times that is not completely consistent with its roots in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition.<sup>66</sup> Thus, most of the thinkers who have suggested either that the two collapse into one another or that the two are contradictory, have understood skepticism in its modern formulation as negative dogmatism. I agree with Burnyeat in holding that skepticism as it is presented by Sextus Empiricus and relativism as it is presented by the sources on Protagoras are logically independent.<sup>67</sup> That is to say, there is no *necessary* logical connection between them. One could be a non-dogmatic skeptic and not a relativist, a relativist and not a skeptic, or both a relativist and a skeptic.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

It would seem that contemporary epistemology has for the most part treated skepticism as negative dogmatism without a significant historical precedent in the ‘skeptical’ Academy as is often supposed. This chapter has surveyed a number of the limitations of this ahistorical reductionism by way of a historical investigation into the

---

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

foundations of ‘those who suspend judgment about everything’ in the Later Academy.

Furthermore, since the most extreme version of negative epistemological dogmatism is self-refuting, this philosophical position is easy to refute logically.

Negative dogmatists, in order to maintain their position without contradiction, either have to state their belief that human beings cannot have knowledge in a very weak way or restrict the scope of such a belief to knowledge only in certain domains but not in others. A negative dogmatist of this latter sort can assert the impossibility of human beings to attain other varieties of knowledge such as knowledge about the future from the standpoint of a sort of knowledge to which he believes we can attain. Otherwise, negative dogmatism is self-refuting. Consequently, there appear to be three distinct possibilities for negative dogmatism. It is: 1) self-refuting, if stated extremely; 2) not very interesting philosophically, if stated weakly; or 3) trivially true and hence something that would be widely endorsed even by the staunchest of epistemologists, if restricted to certain domains such as knowledge of the future. Thus, the interpretation of skepticism as equivalent to negative dogmatism is a convenient way for contemporary epistemologists such as Goldman and Lehrer to place skepticism outside the scope of their versions of contemporary epistemology.

Another problem with equating skepticism and negative dogmatism is the confusion it has produced among respected scholars as evidenced in the literature. One form of confusion is the tendency to consider negative dogmatism only in its most extreme form. Possibly on the basis of this confusion, there is also the tendency to conflate skepticism understood as extreme negative dogmatism and a thoroughgoing relativism, which is also

---

<sup>66</sup> As early as the seventeenth-century, ‘skepticism’ acquired some of its pejorative connotations when not to profess belief invited suspicion that one might be dangerous. I am indebted to Professor James Tiles of the University of Hawai‘i for pointing this out to me (personal communication, May 7, 2001).



subject to the criticism that it is self-refuting. Another confusion emerges when philosophers take the opposite point of view, namely that skepticism (negative dogmatism in its most extreme sense) in denying truth, is logically inconsistent with relativism, which suggests that there is a plurality of truths, each dependent on the point of view, perspective, or context, from which it is articulated. In the next chapter, I will argue for a superior interpretation of skepticism that is not subject to the limitations discussed here.

---

<sup>67</sup> M.F. Burnyeat, "Conflicting Appearances", 70-71.

CHAPTER 3  
THE VIRTUES OF UNDERSTANDING SKEPTICISM AS A PHILOSOPHICAL  
ATTITUDE OF OPEN-MINDEDNESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Although skepticism has been equated with negative dogmatism in modern times, there is an earlier understanding of skepticism that is quite distinct from dogmatism of any sort. The ancient skeptic holds no doctrines or dogmas but instead withholds assent on questions that involve conflicting appearances. This takes significant effort at first but gradually becomes easier over time since the ancient skeptics acknowledged a natural propensity among human beings to believe. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the ancient skeptics were significantly different from their modern counterparts, in that they were centrally concerned with the question of how to live a good and successful life (*eudaimonia*)<sup>1</sup>. They looked to their epistemological theories for guidance on this ethical and psychological question. In this respect, ancient skepticism can be situated at the intersection of ethics and moral psychology on the one hand and epistemology on the other. Thus, the ancient skeptics recommended a philosophical practice, attitude, technique, and method of open-mindedness. This practice of withholding assent or suspending judgment (*epochē*) was not an assertion made to contribute to a philosophical position, but had the linguistic status of a suggestion of or recommendation for a way to cope with life. Sextus Empiricus claimed that the goal of the skeptic way (*hē skeptikē agōgē*<sup>2</sup>) as regards belief is *ataraxia*, which he defines as “an untroubled and tranquil

---

<sup>1</sup> In *Against the Mathematicians* 11.4.110-140 and 11.5.141-167 [*Against the Ethicists* 4.110-140 and 5.141-167], it is argued that the skeptic’s goal of *ataraxia* is equivalent to *eudaimonia*. See Bury, *Sextus Empiricus III*, 438-465.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth pointing out the similarities between the expression, ‘*hē skeptikē agōgē*’ (the skeptic way, as in way of life) and the Chinese word ‘*dao* 道’. The word, ‘*agōgē*’ (literally, “a carrying away, carriage” or “a leading towards a point, guiding”) is etymologically related to the verb, ‘*agein*’ (to lead). In similar

condition of the soul [or mind],” and with respect to unavoidable things to have moderate *pathē* (feelings, affect, states of the soul or mind).<sup>3</sup> Thus, the ancient skeptics did not endorse a hard and fast distinction between theory and practice.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter offers a history of the Pyrrhonist revival during the Hellenistic Age (323 – 30 BCE) initiated by Ptolemy of Cyrene and ending with Sextus Empiricus, whose writings are one of the primary sources for the entire Greek skeptical tradition. Since the extant sources on Pyrrhonism are few, the survey will concentrate on the various tropes or modes of *epochē* suggested by Aenesidemus of Cnossus (c. 85 – 65 BCE) and Agrippa (c. 40 – 70 CE) as well as the tropes against causal explanations, which are attributed to Aenesidemus. These tropes give what the skeptic considers to be good reasons for suspending judgment, upon which, according to Sextus, tranquility follows “as a shadow follows the body”.<sup>5</sup> Both the theoretical aspects of non-dogmatic skepticism as an epistemology and the pragmatic, practical aspects of skepticism as an optimum way of human life are then examined.

### 3.2 THE HELLENISTIC REVIVAL OF PYRRHONISM

#### 3.2.1 *Aenesidemus of Cnossus (c. 85 – 65 BCE)*

As discussed in Chapter 2, Plato’s Academy enjoyed a period of skepticism from Arcesilaus to Clitomachus. Philo of Larissa, Clitomachus’ immediate successor in the

---

fashion, ‘*dao*’ is etymologically related to, and at times used interchangeably with its cognate, ‘*dao* 導’ (to lead forth), and is frequently rendered into English as ‘way,’ understood as a way, path, or course of and through life. See Chapter 4 for more on the etymology of ‘*dao*’.

<sup>3</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.4.10, 1.12.25. Mates, *op. cit.*, 90, 92. It is worth noting that the word ‘*psychē*’, here translated as “soul” also means “mind”, so Sextus’ definition of *ataraxia* may also be read as “an untroubled and tranquil condition of the mind”. *Ataraxia* is freedom from *tarachē* (mental disturbance).

<sup>4</sup> The Neo-Confucian philosopher, Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529), described the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition as embodying the continuity or unity of knowledge and action, knowing and doing (*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一, *zhi xing wei yi* 知行爲一).

<sup>5</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.12.29. Mates, *op. cit.*, 93.

Academy and philosophers such as Metrodorus of Stratonicea began to “extract positive doctrines” from Clitomachus’ records of Carneades’ arguments, a move which Clitomachus did not support, using Philo’s controversial understanding of Carneades’ thought as justification for doing so.<sup>6</sup> This return toward construing Platonic philosophy as espousing dogmas or doctrines probably played a role in bringing about two distinct rifts. The first of these rifts was initiated by Antiochus of Ascalon (flourished c. 100 BCE), who was dissatisfied with the Academy from Arcesilaus to Philo. He founded the ‘Old’ Academy in 89/87 BCE and argued that Plato’s epistemology was best understood as akin to the Stoic theory of cognitive certainty.

The second of these rifts was initiated by Aenesidemus of Cnossus (c. 85 – 65 BCE)<sup>7</sup>. Aenesidemus broke off from the Academy and developed Pyrrhonism as a school of thought. According to the traditional account, Ptolemy of Cyrene was most likely the one who identified Pyrrho as the founder of the school known as Pyrrhonism and drew up an official line of succession.<sup>8</sup> It was in the time of Aenesidemus, however, that Pyrrhonism became well known.<sup>9</sup> With Aenesidemus began a new period lasting into the first two centuries of the Roman Empire wherein the Pyrrhonist variety of

---

<sup>6</sup> David Sedley, “The Protagonists” in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> An association with Aegae is recorded in Photius’ *Library (Bibliothèque or Myriobiblion)*. See Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 1, 470. His teacher was the Pyrrhonist, Heraclides of Tarent. It is believed that Aenesidemus was a teacher, probably of philosophy and rhetoric, who lived and wrote in Alexandria. He was a friend of Lucius Tubero, who was in turn, a friend of Cicero. Other than these few details, nothing is known of Aenesidemus’ life. See Mary Mills Patrick, *The Greek Sceptics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929) 212-213.

<sup>8</sup> Ptolemy of Cyrene was probably a first-century BCE Empiricist.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth underscoring that Aenesidemus began his career as a philosopher in Plato’s Academy. The evidence for this is Photius, who states that Aenesidemus dedicated his work, *Pyrrhonist Discourses* to Lucius Tubero, a Roman Academic and companion of Aenesidemus’ in the Academy. See Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 1, 469, Volume 2, 459, and Patrick, *op. cit.*, 215. For this reason, the Academy played a significant role in the development of Greek skepticism, since it was Arcesilaus who first adopted Pyrrho’s practice of suspension of judgment.

skepticism in connection with the Empiric school of medicine, flourished. It is recorded that Aenesidemus produced at least three works, the eight *Pyrrhonist Discourses* (*Pyrrōniōn Logoi*), *Against Wisdom* (*Kata Sophias*), and *On Inquiry* (*Peri Zētēseōs*). Works with the titles, *Pyrrhonic Sketches* (*Pyrrōneiai Hupotupōseis*) and *The First Introduction to Principles* are also ascribed to him. None of these texts has survived to the present day. However, Photius in his *Library* (*Bibliothēke* or *Myriobiblion*), a work written “to supply his brother with summaries of books he had not been able to read”, gives a detailed summary of the first book.<sup>10</sup>

(1) I read Aenesidemus’ eight *Pyrrhonist discourses*. The overall aim of the book is to establish that there is no firm basis for cognition, either through sense perception, or indeed through thought. (2) Consequently, he says, neither the Pyrrhonists nor the others know the truth in things; but the philosophers of other persuasions, as well as being ignorant in general, and wearing themselves out uselessly and expending themselves in ceaseless torments, are also ignorant of the very fact that they have cognition of none of the things of which they think they have gained cognition. (3) But he who philosophizes after the fashion of Pyrrho is happy not only in general, but also, and especially, in the wisdom of knowing that he has firm cognition of nothing. And even with regard to what he knows, he has the propriety to assent no more to its affirmation than to its denial. [...] (5) In the first discourse he differentiates between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics in almost precisely the following words. He says that the Academics are doctrinaire: they posit some things with confidence and unambiguously deny others. (6) The Pyrrhonists on the other hand, are aporetic and free of all doctrine. Not one of them has said either that all things are incognitive, or that they are sometimes of this kind, sometimes not, or that for one person they are of this kind, for another person not of this kind, and for another person not even existent at all. Nor do they say that all things in general, or some things, are accessible to us, or not accessible to us, but that they are no more accessible to us than not, or that they are sometimes accessible to us, sometimes not, or that they are accessible to one person but not to another. (7) Nor indeed, do they say that there is true or false, convincing or unconvincing, existent or non-existent; or sometimes the one, sometimes the other; or of such a kind for one person but not for another. (8) For the Pyrrhonist determines absolutely nothing, not even this very claim that nothing is determined. (We put it this way, he says, for lack of a way to express the thought.) [...] (10) Thus the followers of Pyrrho, in determining nothing, remain absolutely above reproach, whereas the Academics, he says, incur a scrutiny similar to that faced by the other philosophers. (11) Above all, the Pyrrhonists, by entertaining doubts about every thesis, maintain consistency and do not conflict with themselves, whereas the Academics

---

<sup>10</sup> Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 2, 460.

are unaware that they are conflicting with themselves. For to make unambiguous assertions and denials, at the same time as stating as a generalization that no things are cognitive, introduces an undeniable conflict: how is it possible to recognize that this is true, this false, yet still entertain perplexity and doubt, and not make a clear choice of the one and avoidance of the other?<sup>11</sup>

It is worth pointing out that Photius seems to be insufficiently circumspect in his initial characterization of Pyrrhonism. He seems to claim that the Pyrrhonists assert both their own and others' ignorance as a knowledge-claim. However, this implicit dogmatism seems to fade away as he begins his summary of Aenesidemus' first discourse.

Photius also gives shorter accounts of the remaining seven discourses.<sup>12</sup> The second to fifth discourses offer a critique of the dogmatists, especially the Stoics, in terms of logic, physics, and metaphysics. "In the fourth discourse he says that signs, in the sense in which we call apparent things signs of the non-apparent, do not exist at all

---

<sup>11</sup> (1) *anegnōsthē Ainēsidēmou Pyrrōniōn logoi ē. hē men holē prothesis tou bibliou bebaiōsai hoti ouden bebaion eis katalēpsin, oute di' aisthēseōs, all' oute mēn dia noēseōs. (2) dio oute tous Pyrrōnious oute tous allous eidenai tēn en tois ousin alētheian, alla tous men kata allēn hairesin philosophountas agnoein te talla kai heautos matēn katatribein kai dapanan sunechesin aniais, kai auto de touto agnoein, hoti ouden autois tōn doxantōn eis katalēpsin elēluthenai kateilēptai. (3) ho de kata Pyrrōna philosophōn ta te alla eudaimonei, kai sophos esti tou malista eidenai hoti ouden autōi bebaiōs kateilēptai ha de kai eideiē, ouden mallon autōn tēi kataphasei ē tēi apophasei gennaios esti sugkatatithesthai. [...] (5) en men oun tōi prōtōi logōi diaphoran tōn te Pyrrōniōn kai tōn Akadēmaikōn eisagōn mikrou glōssēi autēi tauta phēsin, hōs hoi men apo tēs Akadēmias dogmatikoi te eisi kai ta men tithentai adistaktōs, ta de airousin anamphibolōs, (6) hoi d' apo Pyrrōnos aporetikoi te eisi kai pantos apolelumenoi dogmatos, kai oudeis autōn to parapan oute akatalēpta panta eirēken oute katalēpta, all' ouden mallon toiade ē toiade, ē tote men toia tote de ou toia, ē hōi men toiauta hōi de ou toiauta hōi d' oud' holōs ontā oude mēn ephikta panta koinōs ē tina toutōn ē ouk ephikta, all' ouden mallon ephikta ē ouk ephikta, ē tote men ephikta tote d' ouketi, ē tōi men ephikta tōi d' ou. (7) kai mēn oud' alēthinon oude pseudos, oude pithanon oud' apithanon, oud' on oude mē on, alla to auto hōs eipein ou mallon alēthes ē pseudos, ē pithanon ē apithanon, ē on ē ouk on, ē tote men toion tote de toion, ē hōi men toiondi hōi de kai ou toiondi. (8) katholou gar ouden ho Pyrrōnios horizei, all' oude auto touto, hoti ouden diorizetai all' ouk echontes, phēsin, hoplōs to nooumenon eklalēsōmen, houtō phrazomen. [...] (10) dio hoi men apo Pyrrōnos en tōi mēden horizein anepilēptoi to parapan diamenousin, hoi d' ex Akadēmias, phēsin, homoias tas euthunas tois allois philosophois hupechousi. (11) to de megiston, hoi men peri pantos tou protethentos diaporountes to te sustoichon diatērousi kai heautois ou machontai, hoi de machomenoi heautois ou sunisasi to gar hama tithenai to kai airein anamphibolōs, hama te phanai koinōs <mē> huparchein katalēpta, machēn homologoumenēn eisagei, epei pōs hoion te ginōskonta tode men einai alēthes tode de pseudos eti diaporein kai distasai, kai ou saphōs to men helesthai to de peristēnai;*

Photius, *Bibliothēke*, 169b18-170b3. Greek text from Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 2, 459-460. English translation from Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 1, 468-469.

<sup>12</sup> Photius, *Bibliothēke*, 170b3-35. See Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 1, 483-484 and Volume 2, 473.

[...].”<sup>13</sup> In the fifth discourse Aenesidemus presents the tropes against aetiology (causal explanations). The sixth to eighth discourses concern preferences, ethical doctrines of the virtues, and an attack on the notion of a final end (*telos*).<sup>14</sup> Once again, Photius in his summary of the second through eighth of the *Pyrrhonist Discourses* suggests that Aenesidemus held several dogmatic positions about the non-existence of signs and of the end. He even goes so far as to claim that Aenesidemus *asserted* the non-existence of the end celebrated by other philosophers.<sup>15</sup> In the *Pyrrhonic Sketches*, Aenesidemus presented his own arrangement of the tropes (or modes) of *epochē* (withholding assent or suspension of judgment).<sup>16</sup> From the limited evidence available to us, we can tentatively conclude that Aenesidemus made at least three important contributions to Greek skepticism. They were his theory of the ten *tropoi* (tropes or modes) of *epochē*, his theory of the eight tropes against aetiology, and his work relating Pyrrhonism to the philosophy of Heraclitus.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.2.2 *The Ten Tropoi of Epochē*

The ten *tropoi* (tropes or modes) of *epochē* are a systematization and arrangement of Pyrrhonist theories from earlier in the tradition.<sup>18</sup> Aenesidemus refers to them as the

<sup>13</sup> *en de tōi d' sēmeia men hōsper ta phanera phamen tōn aphanōn, oud' holōs einai phēsin [...]. Ibid.* Greek text from Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 2, 473. English translation from Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, Volume 1, 483.

<sup>14</sup> See also Patrick, *op. cit.*, 219. Sextus Empiricus, perhaps in a deviation from Aenesidemus, considers *ataraxia* as a *telos*. See section 3.4 below.

<sup>15</sup> It is impossible to be certain whether the contradictory attribution of versions of negative ontological dogmatism to Aenesidemus is a product of Photius' confusion or whether the problem stemmed from Aenesidemus himself. I am inclined to think that the problem lies in Photius' summary.

<sup>16</sup> Aenesidemus' *Pyrrhonist Discourses* are believed to have been a significant source for Sextus Empiricus. However, it is worth noting that Sextus did not follow Aenesidemus in all respects.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> The word 'tropos' (plural, 'tropoi') means 'a turn, direction, course, way', 'a way, manner, fashion', 'of persons, a way of life, habit, custom'. See H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889, 1997) 821.

“tropes of Pyrrhonism,” which implies that they existed prior to him, but he was the first to formulate them into ten.<sup>19</sup>

By the name *topos* or *tropos*, the Sceptic understood a manner of thought, or form of argument, or standpoint of judgment.<sup>20</sup> [...] Stephanus and Fabricius translate it by the Latin word *modus*, and *tropos* is often used interchangeably with *logos* by Sextus, Diogenes Laertius, and others; sometimes also as synonymous with *topos* and *tupos*, as found in the oldest edition of Sextus. Diogenes defines the word as the standpoint, or manner of argument, by which the Sceptics arrived at the condition of doubt, in consequence of the equality of probabilities [...].<sup>21</sup>

The ten modes are preserved in Book 1 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* by Sextus Empiricus and in *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers in Ten Books* by Diogenes Laertius and in a few other sources as well.<sup>22</sup> They are ways of argument that are capable of refuting any opinion, even the skeptic’s own, and give virtually all of the grounds for suspending judgment. Sextus gives the ten tropes as follows:

- 1) Disagreement based upon the variety of animals.
- 2) Disagreement based upon the differences among human beings.
- 3) Disagreement based upon the differences in constitution of the sense organs [of one individual].
- 4) Disagreement based upon the circumstances.
- 5) Disagreement based upon positions, distances, and locations.
- 6) Disagreement based upon admixtures.
- 7) Disagreement based upon the quantity and constitution of the external objects.
- 8) Disagreement based upon relation (relativity) [*tou pros ti*].
- 9) Disagreement based upon the frequency or infrequency of occurrence.
- 10) Disagreement based upon ways of life, customs and laws, mythic beliefs, and dogmatic opinions.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Patrick, *op. cit.*, 220.

<sup>20</sup> The word, ‘*topos*’ means ‘place, *locus*, position, topic, occasion, opportunity’ and was occasionally employed instead of ‘*tropos*’ in describing the various modes of skepticism. See *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 813.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick, *op. cit.*, 221.

<sup>22</sup> See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14, 36-163 and *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.11.79-9.11.88. Sextus’ account is longer and more detailed, whereas Diogenes’ appears to be more of a summary.

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from Benson Mates, trans., *The Skeptic Way*, 94.



Diogenes Laertius uses a slightly different vocabulary in listing the modes and presents them in a different order.<sup>24</sup> However, it is clear that both Sextus and Diogenes are reporting on a single source.

The first mode concerns the fact that there are a variety of animal species in nature whose conditions of birth and life are different. For instance, some are produced through sexual intercourse while others are not.

By this it is inferred that they do not receive the same impressions from the same things, with the result that such a conflict necessarily leads to suspension of judgement. [...] It is natural that if the senses, e.g. eyes, of animals differ, so also will the impressions produced upon them; [...]<sup>25</sup>

This observation calls to mind Heraclitus' point that seawater is life-sustaining for fish but undrinkable for people or that donkeys, contrary to human beings, prefer garbage to gold.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Diogenes in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.11.79-9.11.88 gives the ten modes in the following order:

- 1) Disagreement based upon the variety of animals.
- 2) Disagreement based upon the differences among human beings.
- 3) Disagreement based upon the differences in constitution of the sense organs [of one individual].
- 4) Disagreement based upon the circumstances.
- 5) Disagreement based upon ways of life, customs and laws, mythic beliefs, and dogmatic opinions.
- 6) Disagreement based upon admixtures.
- 7) Disagreement based upon positions, distances, and locations.
- 8) Disagreement based upon the quantity and constitution of the external objects.
- 9) Disagreement based upon the frequency or infrequency of occurrence.
- 10) Disagreement based upon relation (relativity).

See R.D. Hicks, trans., *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Volume II, 492-499.

<sup>25</sup> *sunagetai de di' autou to mē tas autas apo tōn autōn prospiptein phantasias kai to dioti tēi toiautēi machēi akolouthei to epechein [...] eulogon oun tois diaphorois tous ophthalmous diaphora kai ta phantasmata prospiptein [...]*

*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.11.79-80. Greek text and English translation from Hicks, *op. cit.*, Volume II, 492-493.

<sup>26</sup> Zhuangzi 莊子 similarly observes:

民溼寢則腰疾偏死。螻然乎哉。木處則惴慄恟懼。猿猴然乎哉。三者孰知正處。民食芻豢。麋鹿食藿。螻蛆甘帶。鴟鴞耆鼠。四者孰知正味。猿。獼狙以爲雌。麋與鹿交。魚與魚游。毛嬙麗姬。人之所美也。魚見之深入。鳥見之高飛。麋鹿見之決驟。四者孰知天下之正色哉。(6/2/67-70)

When people sleep in a wet location, they have discomfort in their loins and are paralyzed on one side, but is this so of the loach? When they stay in the trees, they are fearful, trembling, careful, and afraid, but is this so of apes and monkeys? Of the three, which knows the proper place to live? People eat grass-fed cows and sheep and grain-fed pigs and dogs, deer eat grass, centipedes enjoy small snakes, owls and crows

The second mode pertains to differences among individual human beings. Sextus points out that human beings are composed of two elements, body and soul, and differ from one another in respect to both of them. Several examples of differences among individual human beings are pointed out: Demophon shivered in the sun but felt warm in the shade and Andron of Argos crossed the Libyan desert without drinking (whereas most people would require vast quantities of water).<sup>27</sup> Sextus reports that a Scythian's body is different from that of an Indian.<sup>28</sup> Since the body is a kind of image or expression of the soul, human beings also differ from one another in regard to the soul. One person takes pleasure in a certain activity and another person finds the very same activity a source of displeasure. The same things produce different affects in different people. Diogenes Laertius observes that different people prefer and are suited to different professions. According to the Pyrrhonists, the recommendation to withhold assent follows from all this.

The third mode pertains to differences among the sense organs and their corresponding senses. Sight and touch perceive different qualities so that honey may seem pleasing to one's taste but not pleasing to one's eye. So it is impossible to say without qualification whether honey is pleasant or unpleasant in its own nature.<sup>29</sup> Sextus cautions us to recall that from an apple's appearing smooth, fragrant, sweet, and yellow, it is not clear that it has only these qualities. It may have just one quality that appears

---

like rats. Of the four, which knows the proper flavor? Baboons take apes as their female mates, tailed deer and deer are friends, loaches are friendly with fish. Mao Qiang 毛嫱 and Lady Li 麗, people regarded as beautiful, but when the fishes saw them they dived deep and when the birds saw them they flew high, and when the deer saw them they broke into a run. Of the four, which knows the proper beauty in the world? Compare with Graham, trans., *op. cit.*, 58 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 45-46.

<sup>27</sup> These two examples are reported in both *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.82 and 1.14.84 and *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.11.81.

<sup>28</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14.80. Mates, *op. cit.*, 99.

differently when it is apprehended by the different sense organs. Or it may have several other qualities beyond those that are apparent which do not affect us.<sup>30</sup> Since the same object may appear differently to us depending on the particular sense with which we perceive it or the condition of our entire body (e.g., healthy or ill, in motion or at rest, etc.), it follows that what appears is no more such than something other.<sup>31</sup>

Differences in circumstance, by which is meant conditions or dispositions (*diatheseis*), and changes in general, comprise the fourth mode of *epochē*. Diogenes gives the following examples of these changing circumstances, conditions, or dispositions: health and illness, sleep and waking, joy and sorrow, youth and old age, courage and fear, want (emptiness) and fullness, hate and love, heat and cold, and breathing freely as opposed to having the passages obstructed.<sup>32</sup> Sextus' list of examples also includes predispositions (*prodiatheseis*), drunkenness and soberness, motion and rest, and natural and unnatural.<sup>33</sup> Diogenes writes: "The impressions received thus appear to vary according to the nature of the conditions."<sup>34</sup> Sextus notes: "[...] the same honey appears sweet to me but bitter to the jaundiced."<sup>35</sup> Sextus writes further:

Different *phantasiai* [impressions] come about, too, depending on whether we are asleep or awake. For when we are awake we do not imagine [*ou phantozometha*] what we imagine when we are asleep, nor when we are asleep, do we imagine what we imagine when we are awake, so that whether the *phantasiai* are the case or not the case is not absolute but relative, that is, relative to being asleep or awake. It is fair to say, then, that when asleep we see things that are not the case in the waking state, though not absolutely

---

<sup>29</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.92. Mates, *op. cit.*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.14.94-1.14.96.

<sup>31</sup> *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.11.81. Hicks, *op. cit.*, 493.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.11.82. Hicks, *op. cit.*, 495.

<sup>33</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14.100. Mates, *op. cit.*, 102.

<sup>34</sup> *alloia oun phainetai ta prospiptonta para tas toias diatheseis.*

*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.11.82. Greek text and English translation from Hicks, *op. cit.*, 494-495.

<sup>35</sup> *[...] to auto meli emoi men phainetai glukou, tois de ikterikois pikron.*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14.101. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, Volume I, 60. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*

not the case. For they are the case in our sleep, just as what we see in our waking state is the case, though not in our sleep.<sup>36</sup>

The fifth mode for Sextus (and the seventh for Diogenes) concerns differences in position, distance, and location. Depending on each of these factors, the same things appear different. An image varies according to its position, as, for example, the same painting appears differently when it is suspended perpendicular to the ground or when it is tilted. The same tower may appear round from afar but square up close, and the same light from a lamp appears dim in the sun and bright in the dark. Sextus writes:

Therefore, since everything apparent is viewed in some location and from some distance, and in some position, each of which produces a great deal of variation in the *phantasiai*, as we have remarked above, we shall be forced also by this mode to have recourse to suspension of judgment. And anyone wishing to give preference to some of these *phantasiai* will be attempting the impossible. For if he makes his assertion simply and without proof, he will not be credible; whereas, supposing that he wishes to use a proof, if he says that the proof is false he will confute himself, while if he says that it is true he will need a proof of its being true, and again a proof of that, since it too must be true, and so on ad infinitum. But it is impossible to produce infinitely many proofs; and so he will not be able by means of proof to give one *phantasia* preference over another. And if one cannot decide about the aforementioned *phantasiai* either with or without a proof,

---

<sup>36</sup> *Para de to hupnōn ē egrēgorenai diaphoroi ginontai phantasiai, epei hōs kath' hupnōn phantozametha, ou phantozometha egrēgorotes, oude hōs phantozometha egrēgorotes, kai kata tous hupnōn phantozometha, hōste <to> einai autais ē mē einai ginetai ouch haplōs alla pros ti pros gar to kath' hupnōn ē pros egrēgorsin. eikotōs oun kath' hupnōn horōmen tauta ha estin en tōi egrēgorenai anuparkta, ouk en tōi kathapax anuparkta ontā esti gar kath' hupnōn, hōsper ta hupar estin, kan mē ēi kath' hupnōn.*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14.104. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, Volume I, 62. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 103. This approach to waking and dreaming, in eschewing a reality-appearance-distinction, calls to mind a famous passage from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子:

昔者莊周夢爲胡蝶。栩栩然胡蝶也。自喻適志與。不知周也。俄然覺。則蘧蘧然周也。不知周之夢爲胡蝶與。胡蝶之夢爲周與。周與胡蝶則必有分矣。此之謂物化。(7/2/94-96)

At night, Zhuang Zhou 莊周 dreamed he was a butterfly; in a pleased and glad manner he was a butterfly, happy with himself and going along with his wishes! He was not aware of Zhou. Suddenly he awoke, and in a pleasantly surprised manner was Zhou. He did not know if he was Zhou having dreamed he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhou. Between Zhou and the butterfly, there is certainly a dividing. This is called transforming with things-and-events (*wu hua* 物化).

Compare with Graham, *op. cit.*, 61 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 49. It is important to note, however, that the *Zhuangzi* passage celebrates the notion of process and transformation in so far as a butterfly metamorphoses from something ugly, a cocoon, into something colorful and free. So, although the passage from *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* avoids endorsing a distinction between reality and appearance, as does the *Zhuangzi* passage, the passage from the *Zhuangzi* goes further by expressing creatively the positive nature of transformation (*hua* 化).

suspension of judgment results; for, I suppose, of any given thing we are able to say of what sort, relative to its particular position, distance, and place, it appears to be, but for the above reasons we cannot state of what sort it is in its nature.<sup>37</sup>

Diogenes claims: “Since, then, it is not possible to observe these things apart from places and positions, their real nature is unknowable [*agnoeitai*].”<sup>38</sup> The Greek word ‘*agnoeitai*’ is the third person present middle/passive form of ‘*agnoein*’ (‘*not to perceive or know*’).<sup>39</sup> In the passive voice, this verb means ‘*not to be known*’.<sup>40</sup> A more careful translation of this passage from Diogenes would render the last clause as “[...] their real nature is unknown.” The use of ‘unknowable’ in this context is inconsistent with the aporetic version of skepticism that is being expounded here in so far as it is assertively pronouncing the unknowability of these things in their real nature.

The sixth mode concerns admixtures. Since none of the real objects affects our senses in itself but always in combination with one or more additional things, we will not be able to say with certainty what is the nature of external reality itself. For example, a person’s complexion appears differently in cold air than it does in warm air, so we cannot

---

<sup>37</sup> *Epei oun panta ta phainomena en tini theōreitai kai apo tinos diastēmatos ē kata tina thesin, hōn hekaston pollēn poiei parallagēn peri tas phantasias, hōs hupemnēsamen, anagkasthēsometha kai dia toutou tou tropou katantan eis epochēn. kai gar ho boulomenos toutōn tōn phantasiōn prokrinein tinas adunatois epicheirēsei. ei men gar haplōs kai aneu apodeixeōs poiēsetai tēn apophasin, apistos estai ei de apodeixei boulēsetai chrēsasthai, ei men pseudē lexei tēn apodeixin einai, heauton peritrepsei, alēthē de legōn einai tēn apodeixin aitēthēsetai apodeixin tou alēthē autēn einai, kakeinēs allēn, epei kai autēn alēthē einai dei, kai mechris apeirou. adunaton de estin apeirous apodeixeis parastēsai oukouōn oude meta apodeixeōs dunēsetai prokrinein phantasian phantasias. ei de mēte aneu apodeixeōs mēte meta apodeixeōs dunatos estai tis ekrinein tas proeirēmenas phantasias, sunagetai hē epochē, hopoion men phainetai hekaston kata tēnde tēn thesin ē kata tode to diastēma ē hen tōide eipein isōs dunamenōn hēmōn, hopoion de estin hōs pros tēn phusin adunatountōn apophainesthai dia ta proeirēmena.* *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.121-1.14.123. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 70, 72. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>38</sup> *Epei oun ouk eni exō topōn kai theseōn tauta katanoēsai agnoeitai hē phusis autōn.*

*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.11.86. Greek text and English translation from Hicks, *op. cit.*, 498-499.

<sup>39</sup> The middle voice in Greek usually indicates that the subject performs the action of the verb on, to, or for him or herself. There is also a causative use of the middle voice, which indicates that “the subject has something done by another for himself”. See Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, revised by Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920, 1956) 107 (356a) and 392 (1725).

<sup>40</sup> *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 6.

say how one's complexion is in itself but always how it appears in conjunction with these two varieties of air. In addition, there are substances in the ears (earwax), mouth (saliva), and nose (mucous) with which organs we perceive sound, taste, and smell. In each instance, what we perceive is mixed with these and is consequently not perceived in itself.<sup>41</sup> The intellect also fails to perceive things as they are in their own nature because the senses, which guide it, can go awry and it too may contribute its own admixture to the internal reports of the senses. This resulting inability to say anything about apparently external objects induces us to suspend judgment on the question.<sup>42</sup>

The seventh mode for Sextus (and the eighth for Diogenes) pertains to the quantities, qualities, and constitution (that is, combination) of things. For example, wine taken in moderation strengthens the body but when taken in excess, disables the body. Likewise, certain foods in excessive quantities bring about indigestion and diarrhea, whereas moderate quantities of the same food have an invigorating effect.<sup>43</sup> The same applies for medicines, which when mixed appropriately are beneficial but which can be harmful if taken in excess or if their proportions are mixed incorrectly. In these cases we can make relative statements about the wine, the food, and the medicine, but we cannot state their absolute nature because the impressions received depend upon combination with other things, in this case the quantity.<sup>44</sup>

About the eighth mode for Sextus (and the tenth for Diogenes), Sextus writes:

The eighth mode is the one based on relativity, where we conclude that, since everything is relative to something, we shall suspend judgment as to what things are in themselves

---

<sup>41</sup> Diogenes provides different but related examples of admixtures involved in the perception of seemingly external objects. See *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.11.84-9.11.85. Hicks, *op. cit.*, 496-497.

<sup>42</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.124-1.14.128. Mates, *op. cit.*, 105-106.

<sup>43</sup> Diogenes also reports the examples of the differing effects of varying quantities of wine and food. See *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.11.86. Hicks, *op. cit.*, 498-499.

<sup>44</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.129, 1.14.131-1.14.133. Mates, *op. cit.*, 106.

and in their nature. But it must be noted that here, as elsewhere, we use “are” for “appear to be,” saying in effect “everything appears in relation to something.” But this statement has two senses: first, as implying relation to what does the judging, and second, as implying relation to the things observed together with it [...].<sup>45</sup>

From his observation that “all things are relative” (*panta esti pros ti*)<sup>46</sup>, Sextus concludes that we cannot state how a seemingly external object is in its own nature and absolutely, but only how it appears to be in relation to something else. Like the other modes, this one compels us to suspend judgment.

The ninth mode concerns constancy or infrequency of occurrence.<sup>47</sup> For example, the person who sees the sea for the first time finds it marvelous, while those accustomed to experiencing it, think of it as commonplace. Those who experience earthquakes for the first time regard them differently than those who have experienced them regularly. The beauty of a human body excites us more on first view than it does when it becomes a customary visual experience. “Things that are rare seem precious, but things that are familiar and easy to get do not.”<sup>48</sup> We think of gold as precious precisely because it is not scattered around on the ground in great quantity. If it were, people would not find it worth hoarding.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, we are once again in a position where we cannot say

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ogdoos esti tropos ho apo tou pros ti, kath' hon sunagomen hoti epei panta esti pros ti, peri tou tina estin apolutos kai hos pros ten phusin ephexomen. ekeino de chre ginoskein hoti entautha, hosper kai en allois, toi esti katachrōmetha anti tou phainetai, dunamei touto legontes “pros ti panta phainetai.” touto de dichos legetai, hapax men hos pros to krinon (to gar ekto hupokeimenon kai krinomenon pros to krinon phainetai), kath' heteron de tropon pros ta suntheōroumena [...].*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.135. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 78, 80. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 107.

<sup>46</sup> In accordance with the above passage, this sentence must be understood as “all things appear relative.”

<sup>47</sup> In describing the ninth mode, Diogenes points out that Sextus and Aenesidemus list it as the tenth mode while Favorinus had it as the eighth mode of *epochē*. However, in the version of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* that we have today it is listed as the ninth mode just as it is in Diogenes' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. See *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.11.87. Hicks, *op. cit.*, 498-499.

<sup>48</sup> *kai ta men stania timia einai dokei, ta de suntropha hēmin kai eupora oudamōs.*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.143. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 84. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 108.

<sup>49</sup> Compare the following line from Chapter 12 of the *Laozi* 老子 (*Daodejing* 道德經), which seems to reflect a similar attitude about rare things that are regarded as precious:

with certainty what nature belongs absolutely to each of the seemingly external objects. Once again, we are led to withhold assent regarding this question.<sup>50</sup>

The tenth and final mode of *epochē*, which Diogenes lists as the fifth mode, concerns differences in ways of life, customs, laws, mythic beliefs, and dogmatic suppositions. According to Sextus, some of the Ethiopians tattoo their children, while the Greeks do not, and the Indians have intercourse with women in public, whereas most others consider this shameful. The Greeks are forbidden by law to marry their sisters, but this is a common custom among the Egyptians. He gives several further examples that call to mind the contemporary anthropological discussion of cultural relativism.<sup>51</sup>

At any rate, since by this mode too, so much anomaly in “the facts” has been shown, we shall not be able to say how any external object or state of affairs is in its nature, but only how it appears in relation to a given way of life or law or custom, and so forth.<sup>52</sup>

The result of this mode, along with the other nine, is that we are induced to suspend judgment or withhold assent on all of these matters.

### 3.2.3 *The Eight Tropoi Against Aetiology*

Aenesidemus is credited with devising the eight tropes (or modes) against aetiology, which are fallacies committed by dogmatic philosophers in giving causal explanations for phenomena. Sextus writes: “Aenesidemus, indeed, hands down eight

---

難得之貨令人妨。

Goods that are difficult to come by cause human conduct to be obstructed.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.14.141-1.14.144. Mates, *op. cit.*, 107-108.

<sup>51</sup> In similar fashion, Zhuangzi 莊子 observes:

宋人資章甫而適諸越。越人斷髮文身无所用之。(2/1/34)

There was a person from Song 宋 who sold ceremonial hats and went to Yue 越. The people of Yue cut their hair and tattooed their bodies and had no use for them.

Compare Graham, *op. cit.*, 46 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 34.

<sup>52</sup> *plēn tosautēs anōmalias pragmatōn kai dia toutou tou tropou deiknumenēs, hōpion men esti to hupokeimenon kata tēn phusin ouch hexomen legein, hōpion de phainetai pros tēnde tēn agōgēn ē pros tonde ton nomon ē pros tode to ēthos kai tōn allōn hekaston.*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14.163. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 92. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 110.



modes by means of which he thinks to refute and expose as unsound every dogmatic causal explanation.”<sup>53</sup>

According to Mary Mills Patrick,

In addition to the ten Tropes of *epochê*, Aenesidemus gave to the world eight Tropes against aetiology, or the philosophy of cause, eight reasons why there can be no sure connection between the world of phenomena, of which we are an inextricable part, and a possible world of reality. These Tropes are critical in character, and decidedly differ, both in style and method of reasoning, from the Tropes of *epochê*. They furnish an added proof that Aenesidemus was the compiler only, and not the originator of the Tropes of *epochê*. In the eight Tropes against aetiology, we find a keen dialectician and a critical Academician. They do not reveal an empirical Pyrrhonist whose illustrations are taken from scientific and medical sources, or an author whose thought ranges over subjects of varied interest, with many quotations from writers of all classes. The Tropes against aetiology show us another side of the real Aenesidemus. In these, he displays his natural gifts, and seems a different man from the one who speaks in the Tropes of *epochê*. In the Tropes against aetiology we find the stamp of his deep thought.<sup>54</sup>

The eight tropes against aetiology are as follows:

- 1) The mode according to which causal explanations, concerning the nonevident, receive no reliable confirmation from the appearances.
- 2) The mode according to which some people give a causal explanation in only one way for what is in question, despite their being a plurality of ways of giving such an explanation.
- 3) The mode according to which the aetiologists “refer orderly things to causes that exhibit no order.”
- 4) The mode according to which the aetiologists “when they have apprehended how the appearances come about, they think they have apprehended how the things that are not appearances come about, whereas although it is possible that these latter come about similarly to the appearances, it is also possible that they come about not similarly, but in a way peculiar to themselves.”
- 5) The mode according to which aetiologists almost without exception give theoretical accounts that are based on their own hypotheses rather than on generally agreed upon approaches.
- 6) The mode according to which they often accept what coheres with their own hypotheses and reject what does not cohere with them.
- 7) The mode according to which aetiologists assign causes that conflict both with the appearances and their own hypotheses.

---

<sup>53</sup> *kai dē Ainēsidēmos oktō tropous paradidōsi kath’ hous oietai pasan dogmatikēn aitiologian hōs mochthēran elenchōn apophēnasthai [...]*

*Ibid.*, 1.17.180-1.181. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 102. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 112.

<sup>54</sup> Patrick, *op. cit.*, 228-229.

8) The mode according to which, when “the things under investigation and the things seemingly apparent are equally puzzling, they construct their doctrine about the equally puzzling on the equally puzzling.”<sup>55</sup>

According to Sextus, adopting causal explanations leads to infinite regress, and taking a stand on a causal explanation requires understanding a phenomenon “in relation to” something that went before rather than “in nature”.<sup>56</sup> In explaining the eight tropes against aetiology, Patrick writes,

Reality is an abstraction of which perceptions, as they are only relative, give us no conception. [...] We find, therefore, the conclusion drawn from these Tropes to be the same as that from the Tropes of *epochê*, i.e., the relativity of all things, and the fact that a criterion of knowledge has not been found. Nothing is in itself a cause or an effect, and each of the two is such only in reference to the other.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.2.4 Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus on Pyrrhonism, Heracliteanism, and Protagoreanism

Perhaps the most significant difference between Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus is their differing attitudes concerning the relationship of the philosophy of Heraclitus to skepticism. Sextus claims that the philosophy of Heraclitus differs from the skeptic way (*hē skeptikē agōgē*), since Heraclitus makes dogmatic statements about many nonevident things. But he points out that:

It is true that Aenesidemus and his followers used to say that the Skeptic Way was a road to the Heraclitean philosophy, since opposites appearing to be the case about the same thing leads into opposites being the case about the same thing, and the Skeptics say that opposites appear to be the case about the same thing, while the Heracliteans move from this to their being the case. But we reply to them that opposites’ appearing to be the case about the same thing is not a dogma of the Skeptics but a matter occurring not only to the Skeptics but also to the other philosophers, and indeed, to all mankind. [...] Indeed, not only does the Skeptic Way not promote acceptance of the Heraclitean philosophy, but it actually works against it, for the Skeptic rejects all Heraclitus’ dogmatic assertions as precipitate pronouncements [...].<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.17.181-184. Mates, *op. cit.*, 112-113.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.17.186. Mates, *op. cit.*, 113.

<sup>57</sup> Patrick, *op. cit.*, 231.

<sup>58</sup> *epei de hoi peri ton Aīnēsīdēmon elegon hodon einai tēn skeptikēn agōgēn epi tēn Hērakleiteion philosophian, dioti proēgeitai tou tanantia peri to auto huparchein to tanantia peri to auto phainesthai, kai*

Sextus argues contra Aenesidemus that skepticism and Heracliteanism are distinct, on the grounds that Heraclitus was dogmatically committed to the view that a single object was both F and not-F, based on his theory of flux. Sextus argued that the skeptic only claims that such an object *appears* to have diametrically opposed properties. For example, a tower may appear cylindrical from afar, but to have right angles up close. A Heraclitean might claim that the same tower is both cylindrical and has right angles on the basis of his theory that everything is constantly changing. According to Sextus, this contradictory sensory experience is a function of human perception in general. Thus, skepticism, no more than any other philosophy can be regarded as a step toward Heracliteanism.

Plato pointed out in his *Theaetetus* that the Heraclitean doctrine of flux would make the only sensible language a language of becoming (*gignesthai*), as opposed to a language of being (*einai*). For every instance of the verb, ‘to be’, the Heraclitean would have to replace it with ‘to become’ or ‘to flow’ or something like that. Plato argues that this is incoherent, by mocking what Heraclitean language must necessarily be like since it is deprived of the verb, ‘to be’:

Now if they [all things] were only moving through space and not altering, we should presumably be able to say *what* the moving things flow? Or how do we express it? [...]. But since not even this abides, that what flows flows white; [...]<sup>59</sup>

---

*hoi men skeptikoi phainesthai, legousi ta enantia peri to auto, hoi de Hērakleiteioi apo toutou kai epi to huparchein auta meterchontai, phamen pros toutous hoti to ta enantia peri to auto phainesthai ou dogma esti tōn skeptikōn alla pragma ou monon tois skeptikois alla kai tois allois philosophois kai pasin anthrōpois hupopipton [...].*

*Mēpote de ou monon ou sunergei pros tēn gnōsin tēs Hērakleiteiou philosophias hē skeptikē agōgē, alla kai aposunergei, eige ho skeptikos panta ta hupo tou Hērakleitou dogmatizometha hōs propētōs legomena diaballei [...].*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.29.210-1.212. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 124, 126. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 118.

<sup>59</sup> *Ei men toinun ephereto monon, ēlloiouto de mē, eichomen an pou eipein hoia atta rei ta pheromena ē pōs legōmen; [...]. Epeidē de oude touto menei, to leukon rein to reon [...]*

Plato, *Theaetetus*, 182cd. Greek text from Fowler, *op. cit.*, 150. English translation from Levett, *op. cit.*, 312.

Plato's argument that Heracliteanism leads to the conclusion that language is impossible seems to rest on an assumption that since human beings are largely successful in conveying their thought in language, the Heraclitean doctrine of flux cannot be right. Assuming that his reasoning is impeccable, the most that Plato has shown is that the Heraclitean is reduced to some sort of anti-language position or attitude, such as mysticism or linguistic skepticism.<sup>60</sup> That is to say, the Heraclitean might accept Plato's conclusion that language is impossible, and agree with him that accepting the doctrine of flux is tantamount to accepting the impossibility of language. In this case, it would seem that Plato's argument that Heracliteanism is committed to the impossibility of meaningful discourse, would fail to count as a refutation even if his reasoning is flawless. Because it seems that the Heraclitean has a choice with respect to what anti-language attitude or position to adopt, I am inclined to agree with both Aenesidemus and with Sextus on the relationship between skepticism and the Heraclitean philosophy. The Heraclitean could either become a mystic or a linguistic skeptic.<sup>61</sup> To the extent that, as a mystic, he dogmatically held that language is incapable of depicting reality, he would be a dogmatist.<sup>62</sup> Alternatively, the Heraclitean could merely express doubt in the ability of language to depict reality. This would be a version of linguistic skepticism that would be non-dogmatic, and therefore, consistent with ancient skepticism of the Pyrrhonist variety. Perhaps, the disagreement between Aenesidemus and Sextus on this point is a result of

---

<sup>60</sup> Another alternative is that Plato misunderstood the relationship between language and the world.

<sup>61</sup> There may be other choices apart from these two, but these seem to be the most obvious ones.

<sup>62</sup> He might also opt to be non-dogmatic in expressing his mysticism, in which case his non-dogmatic mysticism would be the same as (or almost the same as) non-dogmatic language skepticism.

the fact that Aenesidemus assumed the Heraclitean would opt for linguistic skepticism, and that Sextus assumed that he would dogmatically accept a version of mysticism.<sup>63</sup>

In his paper, “Scepticism and Relativity”, Jonathan Barnes seems to favor Sextus’ approach to Heracliteanism. He points out that in Book 1 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus claims that while Protagoras was not a skeptic, he “[...] seems to have something in common with the Pyrrhoneans.”<sup>64</sup> He writes:

[...] this surely suggests — though of course it does not imply — that Sextus agreed that there *was* a *koinōnia* [*koinōnia*] between the two philosophies; indeed, it suggests — though once again of course does not imply — that he thought the relativism of Protagoras was that common feature. For the way in which Sextus argues will surely suggest the following idea: if we could simply ignore the quasi-scientific theory allegedly underlying Protagorean relativism<sup>65</sup>, then what we should have left — the ‘pure’ philosophical relativism — would indeed be a form of scepticism.

Now it is clear, I hope, that Sextus *ought* not to have had any such thought. [...] What *should* Sextus have said? Well, he should have pointed out that, although Protagoras starts from observations about the relativity of appearances, just as the Pyrrhonists do, he ends up at quite a different place: he ends up with a Dogmatism, not with a scepticism. Sextus’ remarks about Protagoras should, in other words, have paralleled his earlier remarks about Heraclitus at *PH* [*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*] I 210-211. [...]

Sextus did not say what he should have said [...]. And this can only strengthen the suspicion that Sextus did not realize what he should have said, and that he mistakenly supposed that relativism, its quasi-scientific grounding apart, was a sort of scepticism.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> To the extent that Zhuangzi 莊子’s philosophy can be regarded as embodying non-dogmatic skepticism, he appears to opt for linguistic skepticism. He suggests a cosmology of transformation and change, which is similar to Heraclitus’ flux ontology. See the butterfly dream passage, quoted above in note 35, where the transformation of things-and-events (*wu hua* 物化) is described. Thus, it can perhaps be speculated that Zhuangzi would be more inclined to follow Aenesidemus in his intuitions on the relationship between a skeptical epistemology and a flux ontology. See also the next chapter for a fuller discussion of this question.

<sup>64</sup> [...] *dokei koinōnian echein pros tous Pyrrōneious*. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.32.217. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 130. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 119.

<sup>65</sup> This refers to Sextus’ description of Protagoras as accepting the ontological view that “matter is in flux” (*Phēsin oun ho anēr tēn hulēn rheustēn einai*) and the following theory of perception: “people apprehend different things at different times depending on the different conditions they are in” (*allote allōn antilambanesthai para tas diaphorous autōn diatheseis*). *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.32.218. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 130, 132. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 120. See also Jonathan Barnes, “Scepticism and Relativity”, 6.

<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Barnes, “Scepticism and Relativity”, 7-8.

Barnes is correct in pointing out an inconsistency in Sextus' accounts of Heracliteanism and Protagoreanism. However, he does not address the fact that Aenesidemus differed from Sextus on the extent to which Heracliteanism can be seen as related to Pyrrhonism. The idea that Protagorean relativism divested of its ontological commitments and its doctrine of the nature of perception would be a form of aporetic skepticism, which Barnes dismisses here, would probably be consistent with Aenesidemus' approach to skepticism, since according to Sextus, Aenesidemus and his followers claimed an affinity between the skeptic way and *the perspectival aspects of Heracliteanism*. If we accept this conjecture for the moment, Sextus seems inconsistently to support Aenesidemus' alleged support for an affinity between Protagoreanism (ignoring its quasi-scientific theory) while disagreeing with Aenesidemus on the status of the perspectivalism of the Heracliteans.

### 3.2.5 *The Five Tropoi of Epochē According to Agrippa (c. 40 – 70 CE)*

In addition to the ten tropes of *epochē* and the eight tropes against aetiology, Sextus reports on an additional five tropes (or modes) of *epochē*. Diogenes Laertius attributes these to a figure called Agrippa (c. 40 – 70 CE), about whom almost nothing is known.<sup>67</sup> Patrick writes.

The five Tropes of Agrippa are not a reduction of the Tropes of Aenesidemus, but are written from a wholly different point of view. The former furnish objective proofs of the

---

<sup>67</sup> What little we know about Agrippa and a few other skeptics, such as the Empiric doctor and medical theorist, Menodotus of Nicomedia (70 – 150 CE), Favorinus the Academic (80 – 150/160 CE), Theodas of Laodicea (c. 150 CE), and Herodotus of Tarsus, the teacher of Sextus, about whom we know almost nothing, is attributable to Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius, and Galen (129 – c. 200 CE). Diogenes gives the following list of leaders of the Pyrrhonist school between Aenesidemus and Sextus: Zeuxippus the citizen, Zeuxis Goniopus, Antiochus of Laodicea, Menodotus, Theodas, Herodotus, Sextus, and Saturninus (Cythenas). See *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.12.116. Hicks, *op. cit.*, 526-527. According to Patrick, we might suppose that Diogenes left Agrippa and Apellas, who wrote a book called *Agrippa*, off his list of leaders of the Pyrrhonist school. This would explain the chronology more satisfactorily. See Patrick, *op. cit.*, 256-257.

foundation theories of Pyrrhonism, while the latter are rules of thought leading to logical proof, or laws for the ten earlier Tropes. [...] The ten Tropes of Aenesidemus were used for the contents of knowledge, and the five Tropes of Agrippa apply more directly to form and method.<sup>68</sup>

Agrippa's five tropes are given as follows:

- 1) Disagreement
- 2) Infinite Regress
- 3) Relativity
- 4) Hypothesis
- 5) Circularity

It will be noticed that the first and third of these tropes overlap with the list of ten tropes. The three new tropes concern methods of reasoning rather than the question of perception (*aisthēsis*), whereas the ten, with the exception of the tenth, concerned perception. In regard to a given topic, an unresolvable impasse is arrived at, wherein we are unable to choose something or reject it. This is the trope of disagreement. The trope of infinite regress concerns the issue of what is given in support of a certain thesis is in need of support itself and so on, ad infinitum. The trope of relativity addresses the issue of seemingly external objects appearing this way or that way in relation to a judging subject and the same things being judged. The mode based on hypothesis comes into play when dogmatists involved in an infinite regress begin their inquiry with something that they consider worthy of acceptance without question or demonstration. The mode based on circularity arises when one uses something from the matter of inquiry as the evidence for that very matter.<sup>69</sup> The five modes of Agrippa, like the ten of Aenesidemus, induce us to withhold assent.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Patrick, *op. cit.*, 249.

<sup>69</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.15.164-1.15.169.

<sup>70</sup> Sextus notes that the mode of relation (relativity) is the most generic and the ten modes are subordinate. See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.14.39. Mates, *op. cit.*, 94.

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

#### 3.3.1 *Early Skepticism: Epistemological Issues*

The English word ‘skepticism’ is derived from the Ancient Greek ‘*skeptikos*,’ which literally means, “someone who looks, or examines (*skopein, skeptesthai*)”.<sup>71</sup> It is usually contrasted with ‘dogmatism,’ which simply meant “subscription to dogmas, or doctrines”.<sup>72</sup> Unlike the dogmatist, who quits the philosophical inquiry once he has accepted particular doctrines, the skeptic continues the search. It is important to note that the skeptic almost never begins his inquiry with the intention of becoming a skeptic. Rather, like any philosopher, he starts out his inquiry with the hope that he will be able to locate some truths to which he can give his assent. In support of this observation, Otávio Bueno writes, “Before becoming skeptics, ‘men of talent’ initially think that by *searching for the truth*, they could attain tranquility.”<sup>73</sup> Even the most open-minded philosopher, before he has become a skeptic, starts out holding some dogmas, at the very least, the dogma that philosophical inquiry is valuable in some sense of the word.

---

<sup>71</sup> Hankinson, *op. cit.*, 13. The noun, ‘*skepsis*’ means “inquiry, examination”. The usage of ‘*skeptikos*’ as a synonym for ‘Pyrrhonist’ does not predate Aenesidemus and David Sedley supposes that this usage came about in the second century CE Favorinus may have been the first to use ‘Skepticism’ as a title for the Pyrrhonist school. See David Sedley, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism” in Myles Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1983) 20, 28 n. 62. Another word that is sometimes associated with the Greek skeptical tradition is ‘*zētein*’ (to seek; to enquire for, to ask about; to search after, search out; to search or inquire into, to investigate), and skeptics occasionally refer to themselves as ‘*zētetikoi*’ (“searchers”). See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.3.7, quoted in Chapter 2.

<sup>72</sup> Hankinson, *op. cit.*, 318, n. 2. The word ‘*dogma*’ was equivalent to “teachings” or “doctrines” but also included in its definition the notion of “tenets” or “principles.” Significantly, it lacked the negative overtones that have come to be associated with ‘dogmatism’ in contemporary times. M.F. Burnyeat claims that ‘*dogma*’ originally meant “belief”. See M.F. Burnyeat, “Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?” in Malcolm Schofield, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 26. Reprinted as “Can the Skeptic Live his Skepticism?” in Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition*, 117-148, and as “Can the Sceptic Live His Skepticism?” in Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede, eds., *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*, 25-57.

<sup>73</sup> Otávio Bueno, “How to Be a Pyrrhonist about Empirical Knowledge” (paper presented in the “Society for Skeptical Studies” panel at The American Philosophical Association Eastern Division One Hundredth Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., December 27, 2003) 1. In this passage, Bueno is paraphrasing *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.6.12. See Bury, *op. cit.*, Volume I, 8-9 and Mates, *op. cit.*, 90.



When the dogmatist investigates a hypothesis and fails to ascertain its truth, he believes that a negative conclusion is justifiable. However, the skeptic does not believe a negative conclusion is warranted, and so suspends judgment on the matter. That is to say, he sustains the inquiry so as not to commit himself to holding beliefs (*doxai*), which leads to disturbance (*tarachē*). Bueno claims, “The consequence of this style of inquiry is that the skeptic is condemned to investigate the issues *endlessly*. The skeptical inquiry is *continuous* and *never-ending*.”<sup>74</sup> For example, if someone hypothesizes that a table made from wood is solid and hard, the dogmatist is comfortable with claiming that this is the case after he has had an opportunity to investigate the situation empirically. If he finds that he cannot penetrate the table easily with his hand and that slapping the table forcefully leaves no mark on the table but merely causes his hand to sting, he is content to conclude that the table is solid and hard. By contrast, the skeptic is inclined to carry the investigation further and is not content so quickly to declare the table as having these properties in fact, so he withholds his assent about this question.<sup>75</sup> As a result, what the

---

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> This tendency not to judge too quickly calls to mind a story from the “*Ren Jian* 人間” chapter (scroll 18) of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子.

近塞上之人有善述者，馬無故亡而入胡，人皆弔之。其父曰：此何遽不能為福乎！居數月，其馬將胡駿馬而歸，人皆賀之。其父曰：此何遽不能為禍乎！家福良馬，其子好騎，墮而折髀，人皆弔之。其父曰：此何遽不能為福乎！居一年，胡人大入塞，丁壯者引弦而戰，近塞之人，死者十九，此獨以跛之故，父子相保。故福之為禍，禍之為福，化不可極，深不可測也。（卷一八：人間）

Among those who live close to the pass, there was one who was proficient at magical techniques. His horses without reason ran off and were lost in the Hu 胡 territory. People all mourned the event. The family's father said, “How can this so quickly not be considered good fortune?” After several months, his horses led several of Hu's fine horses and returned. People all congratulated it. The family's father said, “How can this so quickly not be considered misfortune?” The family was rich in fine horses and the son loved to ride them. One day he fell and broke his femur. People all mourned it. His father said, “How can this so quickly not be considered good fortune?” After a year, the Hu people entered the pass in great numbers, and able-bodied men went to draw the bowstring and fight. Of the people who lived near the pass, nine in ten died. Only on account of being lame, father and son were able to care for each other. Therefore, as for misfortune's becoming good fortune and good fortune's becoming misfortune, we cannot exhaust this transformation, and we cannot fathom its profundity.

skeptic discovers is that the arguments are equally balanced on both sides of any given debate (*isostheneia*). It is at this stage, where he cannot decide between two contrary arguments, that he suspends his judgment. When the skeptic is confronted with conflicting appearances and cannot decide which among them should be given his assent, he is compelled by the ‘equal force’ or equipollence of contradictory propositions (*isostheneia*) to suspend his judgment.<sup>76</sup> *Isostheneia*, then, is the motivation for the skeptic’s recommendation of *epochē*.<sup>77</sup>

It is necessary to investigate the notion of belief in order to comprehend fully what is involved in the practice of *epochē*, which is usually translated as “suspending judgment” or “withholding assent.”<sup>78</sup> M.F. Burnyeat has pointed out that in contemporary discussions, although knowledge has typically been seen as the key concern of the skeptic, it is important to recognize that very little of philosophical interest emerges from this approach unless one also considers the problem of reasonable belief.<sup>79</sup> David Sedley in his paper, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism” offers some useful reflections on the notion of belief.

---

Chinese text from Xiong Lihui 熊禮匯 and Hou Naihui 侯迺慧, eds., *Xinyi Huainanzi* 新譯淮南子 [*New Annotated Huainanzi*], Volume Two (Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1997) 965.

<sup>76</sup> Burnyeat observes that it is implicitly understood (and occasionally stated explicitly) that conflicting appearances cannot both be equally true or real. See Burnyeat, “Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?”, 24.

<sup>77</sup> *Isostheneia*, as a philosophical method, is the practice of arguing both for a particular conclusion and for its contrary, which results in the absurdity that both *p* and not-*p* are true. As such, it can also be used to refute the conclusions of the skeptic’s philosophical opponents. For example, if a Stoic philosopher gave a philosophical argument for *p*, the skeptic would accept the Stoic’s reasoning for that conclusion, but would then proceed to give an equally compelling argument for not-*p*. The conclusion that *p* and not-*p*, a violation of the Principle of Non-Contradiction, is a logical absurdity that neither the skeptic nor his Stoic opponent would be prepared to accept. Thus, the skeptic could use the method of *isostheneia* to dislodge the dogmatic conclusions of his philosophical opponents.

<sup>78</sup> Benson Mates argues that “withholding assent” is a better translation for *epochē* than is “suspending judgment”: “[...] one can withhold assent from an assertion without granting that it makes sense, whereas ‘suspension of judgment’ suggests, at least to me, that one knows what the issue is but has not yet made up one’s mind as to which of the opposing views is correct.” See Mates, *op. cit.*, 32.

<sup>79</sup> Burnyeat, *op. cit.*, 22.

I have assumed the equation of suspension of assent with avoidance of belief [...] *epochē* is, by origin, the “withholding” or “suspension” of *synkatathesis*. It is well recognized that the terminology of skepticism arose directly out of Stoicism, and “*synkatathesis*,” “assent” was established by Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, as the term for accepting as true any impression, *phantasia*, about the world. Merely to have a *phantasia* is not yet to believe anything, but to entertain an idea which you are still at liberty to believe or disbelieve. Belief is located in the three varieties of assent, the three ways in which you can accept an impression as true: (1) “opinion” (*doxa*), weak or fallible belief; (2) “cognition” (*katalēpsis*), infallible belief; and (3) “understanding” (*epistēmē*), the wise man’s brand of cognition, irreversible even by reason.<sup>80</sup>

In similar fashion, Burnyeat interprets belief as a form of assent that concerns what is true of a real objective world in contrast to a world of appearance.<sup>81</sup> Among different skeptical philosophers, there were differing conceptions of how much judgment is to be suspended. According to Sextus, the Pyrrhonist assents to appearances, so *epochē* according to later Pyrrhonism is more suspension of judgment (opinion, or belief in the sense of *doxa*) about appearances than it is suspension of assent to all things.

Michael Frede draws a distinction between two kinds of assent associated respectively with having a view and taking a position or making a claim. The assent involved in having a view is a form of passive acceptance, whereas the assent involved in taking a position or making a claim is active acceptance of a proposition as true. It is the latter form of assent, the one associated with active acceptance that the skeptic withholds.<sup>82</sup>

[...] in what sense could the skeptic have the view that one always ought to withhold assent without involving himself in immediate contradiction? If to have a view is to give assent a skeptic cannot heed his own precept without violating it. Thus we must assume

---

<sup>80</sup> David Sedley, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism” in Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition*, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Burnyeat, *op. cit.*, 25, 27. While this reading undoubtedly has some relevance for interpreting at least some ancient Greek epistemological stances regarding belief, it is worth noting its irrelevance to traditional Chinese thinking.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Frede, “The Skeptic’s Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge” in Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 201-222, reprinted as “The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge” in Burnyeat and Frede, eds., *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*, 127-151.

that there is a kind of assent, namely the kind of assent the skeptic will withhold, such that having a view in itself does not involve that kind of assent, if we also want to assume that the skeptic does think that one ought to withhold assent and that he does not thereby involve himself in contradiction. [...] the reason why he does not feel like making a claim, let alone a claim to knowledge, is that he thinks there is a philosophical practice of making claims, and in particular a practice of making claims to knowledge, and that to engage in this practice is to subject oneself to certain canons, and that he has the impression that, given these canons, one ought to withhold assent.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, one kind of assent is an act of approval and another is simply “acquiescence in the impression one is left with, without taking the step to accept the impression positively by thinking the further thought that the impression is true.”<sup>84</sup> According to Frede, a skeptic can articulate the views, which guide his behavior by giving an autobiographical report without taking a position on the truth of these views.<sup>85</sup>

The dogmatic, in taking a position, has made a deliberate choice, a *hairesis*, for which he is accountable. But because so much is at stake for him, he no longer is in a position openly to consider alternatives, to realize and accept the weight of objections; he has become dogmatic in his attitude.<sup>86</sup>

According to Bueno, “It is possible to articulate a positive description of empirical knowledge within the constraints of a pyrrhonist [*sic*] attitude [...]”<sup>87</sup> Such an attitude about empirical knowledge would have the following four features:

1. *Knowledge without truth*: Knowledge doesn’t require truth for the skeptic. It may require a different norm, something akin, but not necessarily equivalent, to empirical adequacy, namely to save the appearances (or the phenomena).
2. *Knowledge without justification*: For the skeptic, knowledge doesn’t require justification—in the sense of *conclusive* justification. In any case, it’s unclear whether any such justification could ever be achieved. Of course, the skeptic could provide reasons for his or her claims about the appearances, describing the way things appear to be the case. On this reading, empirical knowledge is a sort of *conjectural knowledge* [...].
3. *Knowledge without belief*: For the skeptic, knowledge is an attitude, a practice, not a particular state of mind (requiring appropriate beliefs). Even though there

---

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-206.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-208.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>87</sup> Bueno, “How to Be a Pyrrhonist about Empirical Knowledge”, 3.

might be a state of mind corresponding to knowledge, the skeptic would challenge that one could know that this is the case. For the skeptic, this style of subjectivist epistemology—according to which knowledge is a particular state of mind, demanding a certain sort of belief—is just another dogmatic account subject to skeptical scrutiny. This doctrine wouldn't be something the skeptic would endorse. Given the skeptical attitude, knowledge need not require belief.

4. *Knowledge as a practice*: For the skeptic, knowledge is a *process* that emerges from a given *attitude* of investigation. By contrasting rival accounts of the phenomena, and assessing their strengths and weaknesses, the skeptic gains *understanding* of the world, at least how the world *could be*.<sup>88</sup>

These points, especially the last, segue nicely into the next section.

### 3.3.2 *Early Skepticism: A Way of Living*

An important theme that emerges from an analysis of Greek skepticism in general and the Pyrrhonian skepticism of the Hellenistic Age in particular, is that skepticism is as much a way of living an optimum human life as it is an epistemology. That skepticism was conceived as a way of living a life can, in part, be attested to by the fact that Pyrrho

[...] preached, and practiced, a way of life consistent with his theory—a life with no positive beliefs or assertions, but only dispassionate acquiescence in appearances and social conventions. Through his total lack of commitment Pyrrho was said to have achieved an enviable state of equanimity, described by the negative term, “*ataraxia*,” “imperturbability” or “freedom from disquiet.”<sup>89</sup>

Further, Pyrrho's mental disposition was described as one of “detachment from worldly matters” (*apragmosynē*).<sup>90</sup>

As has been previously stated, the tendency in the literature has been very much to concentrate on the epistemological dimensions of ancient skepticism rather than its ethical implications. Tad Brennan observes,

[...] the one tenet of Skepticism that might be taken as an injunction about how one ought to live, namely that one should suspend belief, has been taken primarily as an

---

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Sedley, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism” in Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition*, 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

epistemological, rather than an ethical tenet. And its predicted effects on the conduct of life are studied, not for themselves, but for their epistemological consequences.<sup>91</sup>

Still, the authors who have primarily treated of the epistemological considerations of ancient skepticism have regularly observed that one of the unique qualities of ancient skepticism is its fascination with the practical concerns of ethics and moral psychology. For example, Sedley writes, “What above all characterizes Hellenistic skepticism is, I would claim, its abandonment of that desire [the desire for knowledge]—its radical conviction that to suspend assent and to resign oneself to ignorance is not a bleak expedient but, on the contrary, a highly desirable intellectual achievement.”<sup>92</sup> In similar fashion, Burnyeat writes, “Pyrrhonism is the only serious attempt in Western thought to carry scepticism to its furthest limits and to live by the result [...]”<sup>93</sup> And Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes observe:

‘Philosophical’ doubt<sup>94</sup> is thus essentially idle: it cannot, by definition, have any bearing on action. It is easy to think that it is also a sham. [...] the ancient sceptics had no interest in philosophical doubt. The doubt they expected to induce was ordinary, non-philosophical doubt; it excluded beliefs, and it was therefore a practical doubt. Indeed, it was precisely by reference to the practical corollaries of their doubt that they used to recommend their philosophy: scepticism, they claimed, by relieving us of our ordinary beliefs, would remove the worry from our lives and ensure our happiness.<sup>95</sup>

Brennan correctly points out that Sextus does not claim to get rid of our ordinary beliefs, but only those that pertain to *dogmata*: “The skeptic’s end, after all, is not merely tranquillity; it is tranquillity in respect of *dogmata* (i.e. so far as anxiety induced by

---

<sup>91</sup> Tad Brennan, *Ethics and Epistemology in Sextus Empiricus* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999) 75.

<sup>92</sup> Sedley, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism” in Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition*, 10. It would also be a moral achievement.

<sup>93</sup> Burnyeat, “Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?”, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Philosophical doubt in this context is the doubt of the modern skeptic.

<sup>95</sup> Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 8-9.

philosophical belief goes), and moderate affections in everything else. Skepticism cannot rid us of ordinary worries and sufferings [...].”<sup>96</sup>

Whereas Aenesidemus had posited a relationship between *epochē* and *ataraxia* (freedom from disquiet, imperturbability), it was *epochē* that he considered the *telos* (goal) of skepticism.<sup>99</sup> Sextus, in contrast to this understanding, construed suspension of judgment as a causal condition for and a means toward achieving *ataraxia*, which he considered to be the skeptic’s goal (*telos*). Sedley underscores the significance of this difference:

A man’s *telos* is the ultimate focus of all his desires and intentions, and there is a world of difference between aiming from the outset for *epochē*, which only a skeptic would contemplate doing, and aiming for so nonsectarian a goal as freedom from disquiet. The former option might be *stated* undogmatically as a description of the way things appear [...], but it is hard to see how it could be *defended* undogmatically—without, that is, appealing to some further doctrine or doctrines about what sort of thing should be aimed for. The latter opinion scarcely needs defense, since the Skeptic supposes freedom from disquiet to be already a common, nonpartisan philosophical goal.<sup>100</sup>

What is significant here is that talk of an end or goal (*telos*) is central to ancient (and even early modern) discussions of ethics. “[...] Aristotle’s ethics takes as its first and fundamental notion that of an end, and [...] to Cicero it seemed obvious that the central topic of ethics, and the one from which all other distinctions between schools ultimately flowed, was that of the final end [...].”<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, the literature on ancient

---

<sup>96</sup> Brennan, *op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>99</sup> Aenesidemus shared this view of *epochē* as the *telos* of skepticism with Arcesilaus and Carneades. See Hankinson, *op. cit.*, 29.

<sup>100</sup> Sedley, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism” in Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition*, 21-22.

<sup>101</sup> Brennan, *op. cit.*, 83.

skepticism tends to pay little attention to the skeptic's *telos*.<sup>102</sup> Perhaps this is a result of concern regarding the very idea of skepticism having and making use of a *telos*. On this point, Martha C. Nussbaum writes:

To have a *telos* or goal in the usual way—to strain the bow of one's life toward it as a target—is a recipe for disturbance. What the Skeptic has done is not so much to introduce a rival account of *telos* as to undermine the whole notion of reaching for a *telos*. What is the end of human life? Oh, just life, the way it actually goes on—if you don't mess up its flow by introducing beliefs.<sup>103</sup>

Nussbaum's observation that aporetic skepticism seems to undermine the notion of goal-directed activity that is entailed by the notion of a *telos* is well-taken. Furthermore, the idea of a *telos* contradicts what Sextus says about *ataraxia* following, simply by chance (*tuchikōs*), suspension of judgment just as a shadow follows the body. For this reason, it may be worth considering what the skeptic's ethical attitudes might have looked like without any dependence on such a notion.

For Sextus, the sequence by which one is led to become a skeptic is conflict, undecidability, equal strength (*isostheneia*), suspension of judgment (*epochē*), and then *ataraxia* (freedom from disquiet, imperturbability). When Sextus shifts the *telos* of skepticism from *epochē* itself to *ataraxia*, the skeptical way of living becomes still more apparent. Burnyeat observes that according to Sextus, the skeptic “does give up his beliefs in response to the sceptical arguments; and out of this continuing resignation of belief he proposes to make a way of life.”<sup>104</sup> Sedley writes, “Withholding belief, like learning to walk a tightrope, is easier when you do not try too hard.”<sup>105</sup> Frede employs a

---

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>103</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 290-291.

<sup>104</sup> Burnyeat, *op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> Sedley, *op. cit.*, 23. The parallel with the Daoist notion of *wu wei* 無爲, which Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall translate as “nonassertive or noncoercive action” is inescapable. See for example, Hall and



similar example to illustrate the idea of a skill that is easier to perform effortlessly and without conscious awareness of one's philosophical theories during the performance:

An expert craftsman is still acting on his expert beliefs, even though he is not actually thinking of what he is doing when he is acting on them. Indeed thinking of them might interfere with his activity. But having finished his work he might well explain to us which views guided his activity. And for some of these views it might be true that this would be the first time he ever formulated them, either to himself or to somebody else. Nevertheless he could properly claim to have acted on them.<sup>106</sup>

---

Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 52, and Ames and Hall, trans., *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant": A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003) 38-39, 44-45, 67.

<sup>106</sup> Frede, *op. cit.*, 209. The parallel with the story of Butcher Ding (Pao Ding 庖丁) from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 is notable:

庖丁爲文惠君解牛。手之所觸。肩之所倚。足之所履。膝之所踣。砉然騞然。奏刀騞然。莫不中音。合於桑林之舞。乃中經首之會。文惠君曰。譔。善哉。技蓋至此乎。庖丁釋刀對曰。臣之所好者道也。進乎技矣。始臣之解牛之時。所見无非牛者。三年之後。未嘗見全牛也。方今之時。臣以神遇。而不以目視。官止而神欲行。依乎天理。批大郤。導大窾。因其固然。技經肯綮之未嘗。而況大軀乎。良庖歲更刀。割也。族庖月更刀。折也。今臣之刀十九年矣。所解數千牛矣。而刀刃若新發於硎。彼節者有閒。而刀刃者无厚。以无厚入有閒。恢恢乎其於遊刃必有餘地矣。是以十九年而刀刃若新發於硎。雖然。每至於族。吾見其難也。怵然爲戒。視爲止。行爲遲。動刀甚微。謦然已解。如土委地。提刀而立。爲之四顧。爲之躊躇滿志。善刀而藏之。文惠君曰。善哉。吾聞庖丁之言。得養生焉。(7-8/3/2-12)

A kitchen worker (Butcher Ding 丁) was cutting up an ox for Lord Wenhui 文惠. The touch of his hand, the leaning of his shoulder, the placement of his feet, the support of his knee, hiss! thud! He inserted the knife with a hiss and did not miss the rhythm of the sound. He was in accord with the dance of the Mulberry Grove [a dance of King Tang 湯 of the Shang 商 Dynasty] and hit the sound of the Jingshou 經首 music [the music of Yao 堯]. Lord Wenhui said, "Ah! Excellent! How skill could attain to this!"

Butcher Ding put down his knife and replied, "What your servant appreciates is *dao* 道. I have surpassed skill. In the past, when I was carving oxen, what I saw was nothing but oxen. After three years, I had not yet had the experience of seeing a whole ox. Now, I use my intuitive mind (*shen* 神) to come into contact with it and I do not use my eyes to see. Realization of the sense organs stops and my *shen* wants to move. In accord with the patterns of *tian* 天 (*tianli* 天理), I chop into the vast empty spaces and follow the great hollows as a guide, following its source. The knife would not attempt to pass through places where the tendons and blood vessels are joined together in a coil, how much more so with the large bones. A good butcher changes his knife once a year because he hacks. An ordinary butcher changes his knife once a month because he breaks bones with it. Now my knife is nineteen years old and has carved several thousand oxen, and its blade is as if it was newly issued from the grindstone. The joints of the ox have empty spaces and the knife blade has almost no thickness. When I use what has virtually no thickness and insert it into a place where there is empty space, I move the knife blade about liberally in an area that is certainly abundant in empty space. For this reason, my knife is nineteen years old and is as if it was newly issued from the grindstone. However, whenever I arrive at a place where the bones come together in a small area, I see it is difficult to do. With trepidation, I am careful, my vision is stopped and my actions slowed down by it. I move the knife very slightly until zoop!, unencumbered I stop and the ox comes apart like earth falling to the ground. I raise my knife and stand upright, look all around and on behalf of the task feel with some hesitance exceedingly satisfied in my purposes. I wipe my knife off well and put it away." Lord Wenhui said, "Excellent! I heard the words of Butcher Ding and attained to nurturing life."

Compare with Graham, *op. cit.*, 63-64 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 50-51.

These several observations give support to Bueno's idea, quoted above, that the Pyrrhonist construes empirical knowledge as both an open-ended practice and a process.<sup>107</sup>

Nussbaum develops the idea of skepticism as a way of living further when she writes:

What creature escapes being wrecked in a tempest? The creature who goes through life as natural instinct prompts it, without ambitious enterprises, without oppositional structure: the fish swimming with the current, or the land creature who never ventures out beyond the land to take up a hopeful dangerous form of life.

\* \* \* \*

Perhaps [one] will do better [...] living a life that is more truly according to nature—a life in which a fixed oppositional structure of belief plays no role at all; a life most like that of the freely swimming fish, who listens only to the promptings of instinct and perception. A life without commitment.<sup>108</sup>

According to Sextus, the skeptic, having given up living a life of assent or judgment, lives according to appearances: the guidance of nature, the bodily drives, the tradition of customs and laws, and instruction in the arts.<sup>109</sup>

Holding to the appearances, then, we live without beliefs but in accord with the ordinary regimen of life, since we cannot be wholly inactive. And this ordinary regimen of life seems to be fourfold: one part has to do with the guidance of nature, another with the compulsion of the *pathē* [feelings, affect, states (of the soul [or mind])], another with the handing down of laws and customs, and a fourth with instruction in arts and crafts. Nature's guidance is that by which we are naturally capable of sensation and thought; compulsion of the *pathē* is that by which hunger drives us to food and thirst makes us drink; the handing down of customs and laws is that by which we accept that piety in the conduct of life is good and impiety bad; and instruction in arts and crafts is that by which

---

<sup>107</sup> Thomas P. Kasulis has observed that what he broadly characterizes as a cultural orientation of intimacy has as one of its key characteristics, a somatic dimension, which involves embodying a praxis learned from a master that does not lend itself to being explained in a discursive way. The variety of knowledge embedded in such an internalized understanding is the practical knowledge of a skill, "knowing how", rather than the propositional knowledge of "knowing that", which tends to be associated with a contrasting cultural orientation that Kasulis refers to as 'integrity'. See Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002) 42-51, 65.

<sup>108</sup> *Op. cit.*, 281. Nussbaum's description of a life without beliefs or commitments, like Sedley's analogy of withholding belief to tightrope walking, seems to correspond quite well to the Daoist notions of *wu wei* and *ziran* 自然 ('so of itself', spontaneity, nature).

<sup>109</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.11.21-1.11.24.

we are not inactive in whichever of these we acquire. And we say all these things without belief.<sup>110</sup>

This passage goes a long way toward explaining the skeptic way of life as Sextus saw it.<sup>111</sup> One common criticism of this version of aporetic skepticism is that its suggestion of *adoxastos* (a life without beliefs or commitments) is impossible. For example, Nussbaum points out that one ethical thesis that is never subjected to the skeptic's antithetical procedures is the idea that *ataraxia* is a worthwhile end.<sup>112</sup> She also notes that the skeptic never violates the principle of non-contradiction and in fact, appears in a number of passages from Sextus to be committed to it.<sup>113</sup> This criticism will be more fully addressed in the conclusion.

### 3.3.3 A Note on Iatric (Therapeutic) Skepticism

It was noted in the preface that Sextus Empiricus draws an analogy between skeptical and medical practice in his writings, and at times resorts to medical imagery to

---

<sup>110</sup> *Tois phainomenois oun prosechontes kata tēn biōtikēn tērēsīn adoxastōs bioumen, epei mē dunametha anenergētoi pantapasin einai. eoike de hautē hē biōtikē tērēsīs tetramerēs einai kai to men ti echein en huphēgēsei phuseōs, to de en anagkēi pathōn, to de en paradosei nomōn te kai ethōn, to de en didaskaliai technōn, huphēgēsei men phusikēi kath' hēn phusikōs aisthētikoi kai noētikoī esmen, pathōn de anagkēi kath' hēn limos men epi prophēn hēmas hodēgei dipsos d' epi poma, ethōn de kai nomōn paradosei kath' hēn to men eusebein paralambanomen biōtikōs hōs agathon to de asebein hōs phaulon, technōn de didaskaliai kath' hēn ouk anenergētoi esmen en hais paralambanomen technais. tauta de panta phamen adoxastōs.*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.11.23-1.11.24. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, Volume I, 16. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 92.

<sup>111</sup> Once again, there are some striking parallels with an important passage from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. 道通唯一。其分也成也。其成也毀也。凡物无成與毀。復通爲一。唯達者知通爲一。爲是不用而寓諸庸。庸也者用也。用也者通也。(4-5/2/35-37)

*Dao* 道 interpenetrates the alternatives and they become one. Their divisions are their creation. Their creation is their destruction. All things-and-events whether undergoing creation and destruction again interpenetrate and become continuous. Only a person of penetrating understanding knows how they interpenetrate and become continuous. Contrived or artificial affirmation (*wei shi* 爲是) he does not use, and lodges them [the alternatives] in the usual. As for the usual, it is useful. As for the useful, it interpenetrates.

Compare with Graham, *op. cit.*, 53-54 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>112</sup> *Op. cit.*, 304, 311.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 307-308, 311.

describe skepticism.<sup>114</sup> Sextus is careful to observe that not all approaches to the practice of medicine seem to be equally consistent with Pyrrhonism. Although his name indicates that he was associated with the Empiric school of medicine, he cautions his readers that medical empiricism “firmly maintains the inapprehensibility of the non-evident (*peri tēs akatalēpsias tōn adēlōn diabebaiotai*)”<sup>115</sup> and is thus a system that the non-dogmatic skeptic would not adopt. There are, however, schools of medicine, such as that of the Methodists, which Sextus thinks, abide by a non-dogmatic approach of “following the appearances”.<sup>116</sup> On this point, Nussbaum writes:

For the Empiricists positively assert that we cannot know what is not evident to the senses, thus taking up a dogmatic position in the theory of knowledge. The Methodists, by contrast, following “the common practice of life” (*ho bios ho koinos*) simply allow themselves to be guided by what they experience, without any commitment to any particular method of procedure or view of knowledge.<sup>117</sup>

The following quotations are two of the most prominent examples in which Sextus employs the analogy to medicine:

And just as cathartic drugs flush themselves out along with the various materials in the body, so these arguments apply to themselves along with the other arguments that are said to be probative. Nor is this nonsense, for even the slogan “Nothing is true” not only denies each of the other statements but negates itself as well.<sup>118</sup>

Because of his love of humanity the Skeptic wishes to cure [*iasthai*] by argument, so far as he can, the conceit and precipitancy of the Dogmatists. Accordingly, just as the doctors who treat physical symptoms have remedies that differ in strength, and prescribe

<sup>114</sup> Nussbaum gives support to the pragmatic idea of ‘knowing how’ as a model for skepticism when she writes: “If Skeptics act as doctors, it is because it just naturally occurs to them to do so; but Skepticism is a knack, and anyone can learn it.” See *ibid.*, 308.

<sup>115</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.34.236. Mates, *op. cit.*, 123.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.34.237.

<sup>117</sup> *Op. cit.*, 295.

<sup>118</sup> *dunantai de hoi logoi kai kathaper ta kathartika pharmaka tais en tōi sōmati hupokeimenais hulais heauta sunexagaei, houtō kai autoi tois allois logois tois apodeiktikois einai legomenois kai heautois sumperigraphēin. touto gar ouk estin apemphainon, epei kai hē phōnē hautē hē “ouden estin alēthes” ou monon tōn allōn hekaston anairei, alla kai heautēn ekeinois sumperitrepei.* *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 2.13.188. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 270, 272. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 157. See also 1.28.206 (Bury, 122-123, Mates, 117) and *Against the Mathematicians* 8.6.480-481 (*Against the Logicians* 2.6.480-481) in Bury, *Sextus Empiricus II*, 486-489.

the severe ones for people with severe symptoms and milder ones for those mildly affected, so too the Skeptic sets forth arguments differing in strength. And in the case of those who are severely afflicted with precipitancy he employs arguments that are weighty and capable of vigorously disposing of the Dogmatists' symptom of conceit, but in the case of those who have this symptom in a superficial and easily curable way, and are capable of being restored to health by milder persuasion, he uses the milder arguments.<sup>119</sup>

This relationship between skepticism and medicine that we find not only in Sextus but in other Hellenistic philosophical texts as well, has led some scholars to use the term, 'therapeutic' to describe not just the Pyrrhonian skepticism that Sextus recommends but also the contemporaneous Epicurean and Stoic schools.<sup>120</sup>

In many respects, the characterization of non-dogmatic skepticism as 'therapeutic' seems appropriate as yet another effective way of drawing the distinction between modern skepticism (negative dogmatism) and ancient skepticism. Despite the fact that there seem to be good reasons for referring to aporetic skepticism as 'therapeutic skepticism', it is important to make a few cautionary observations about this label. The English words, 'therapy' and 'therapeutic' are derived from the Greek, '*therapeia*,' in the sense of "*medical treatment, service done to the sick, tending*," and '*therapeuein*,' in the sense of "*to treat medically, to heal, to cure*," respectively.<sup>121</sup> It is worth noting that the medical meanings of these Greek words are not necessarily the most common ones. In fact, meanings such as "*to be an attendant, to do service*," as well as "*to flatter, wheedle, [...] to conciliate*" and several others are listed in the lexicon prior to the medical use of the terms.

---

<sup>119</sup> *Ho skeptikos dia ta philanthrōpos einai tēn tōn dogmatikōn oiēsīn te kai propeian kata dunamin iasthai logōi bouletai. kathaper oun hoi tōn sōmatikōn pathōn iatroi diaphora kata megethos echousi boēthēmata, kai tois de kouphōs ta kouphotera, kai ho skeptikos houtōs diaphorou erōtai [kai] kata ischun logous, kai tois men embrithesi kai eutonōs anaskeuazein dunamenois to tēs oiēseōs tōn dogmatikōn pathos epi tōn sphodra tēi propeteiai kekakōmenōn chrētai, tois de kouphoterōis epi tōn epipolaion kai euiaion echontōn to tēs oiēseōs pathos kai hupo kouphoterōn pithanotētōn anaskeuazesthai dunamenōn.* *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 3.32.280-281. Greek text from Bury, *op. cit.*, 510, 512. English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 217.

<sup>120</sup> See for example, Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, 13 ff.

It can thus be seen that the Greek terms were not always used with positive connotations.<sup>122</sup>

The fact that Sextus does not use the words ‘*therapeia*’ or ‘*therapeuein*’ in the passages quoted above wherein medical analogies are employed might serve as testament to the negative associations that attend these words. For example, in the second medical passage above, he uses another word meaning “to heal, to cure” (*iasthai*). This word, unlike ‘*therapeuein*’ has no significant additional meanings other than that of healing and curing. For this reason, it is less likely to be misconstrued in a negative fashion.<sup>123</sup>

A further reason to avoid the term, ‘therapeutic’ in describing non-dogmatic skepticism is that, as G.E.R. Lloyd has pointed out, ancient Greek medical theory generally understood therapy as involving certain knowledge:

Reading Plato, one could imagine a confident, united, group of medical practitioners, who knew what they were doing, who agreed about the main principles of therapy, who had a clear enough idea about the principal causes of diseases, and who moved from confident diagnoses to confident treatments with well-based expectations of success.<sup>124</sup>

He writes further, “[...] Galen was eventually to set his sights higher still, not just on knowledge, but on the certainty secured by strict demonstration.”<sup>125</sup> The adjective ‘therapeutic’ as it was widely understood in Greek medical theory seems to contravene the non-dogmatism of the Hellenistic skeptics such as the Pyrrhonists.

For all of these reasons, I would suggest that when one is highlighting the commonalities between non-dogmatic skepticism and medicine, ‘iatric skepticism’ is a

---

<sup>121</sup> See *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 362-363.

<sup>122</sup> And I maintain that some of this negative philological baggage attends the use of the corresponding English terms. As a simple example of this phenomenon, consider the ways in which most people wish to keep their need or desire to seek *psychotherapy* confidential.

<sup>123</sup> It may of course be that there are other passages in the Hellenistic skeptical tradition that employ the terms, ‘*therapeia*’ or ‘*therapeuein*’ in applying medical analogies. However, I have not yet encountered a single instance of this phenomenon.

better term than ‘therapeutic skepticism’. Not only does ‘iatric skepticism’ avoid all of the negative connotations and dogmatic associations of ‘therapeutic skepticism’, but since it is etymologically derived from ‘*iatros*’ (“healer”), which is a noun form of ‘*iasthai*’, it is also directly traceable to the Greek vocabulary in which Sextus framed his medical analogies. However, since it is not exactly clear when the Greek skeptical tradition began to use the medical analogy, as there do not seem to be any reports of Pyrrho, Timon, Arcesilaus, Carneades, Clitomachus, Aenesidemus, or Agrippa using medical imagery in their writings, I prefer in general to refer to the forms of skepticism recommended by these thinkers as non-dogmatic or aporetic. ‘Iatric’ is arguably a derivative label, but is quite useful when one is focusing one’s analysis on the medical analogies employed in various skeptical texts.

---

<sup>124</sup> G.E.R. Lloyd, *Adversaries and Authorities: Investigations into Ancient Greek and Chinese Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 204. It should be noted that Lloyd is quick to point out the divergence of the actual practice of Greek medicine from this kind of theory.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

CHAPTER 4  
FROM NON-DOGMATIC SKEPTICISM TO WAY-MAKING IN THE  
ZHUANGZI 莊子

4.1 INTRODUCTION

It was not until the early 1980's that the term 'skepticism' was appropriated with any frequency by philosophers and other interpreters of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 as a label for the philosophical contribution of that text to classical Chinese philosophy.<sup>1</sup> A.C. Graham, Chad Hansen, Victor H. Mair, Lee Yearley, and Michael Mark Crandell in their contributions to a collection of essays entitled *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu*, edited by Mair, all applied the term, 'skepticism' in a variety of different ways to the philosophy of Zhuangzi.<sup>2</sup> Both Graham and Hansen amplified their descriptions of Zhuangzi's philosophical standpoint as embodying varying kinds of skepticism in their

---

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the Rev. Aubrey Moore in his "Note on the Philosophy of Chuang Tzū" ("Note on the Philosophy of Chaps. i-vii") in Herbert A. Giles, trans. *Chuang Tzū: Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Limited, 1889, 1926) xx, claimed "[...] Chuang Tzū [Zhuangzi 莊子] had nothing of the sceptic in him. He is an idealist and a mystic [...]." Lionel Giles refers to Zhuangzi as a "natural sceptic," but also concurs with Moore in writing, "[...] he seems to be touching the fringe of skepticism pure and simple. But the point is not pressed; he is an idealist at heart, and will not seriously question the existence of a permanent Reality underlying the flow of phenomena." See the "Introduction" to H.A. Giles, trans., *Teachings and Sayings of Chuang Tzū*, edited by Lionel Giles (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001) [reprint of H.A. Giles, trans., *Musings of a Chinese Mystic*, edited by Lionel Giles (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1909)] 2, 5. As noted previously, a sharp distinction between reality and appearance was not a significant feature of traditional Chinese philosophy. James Legge uses the term 'agnosticism' to describe the second chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, the 'Qiwulun 齊物論' ("Discussion on Giving Parity to Things and Events"): "[...] the inquiry pursued in the Book;—a condition of agnosticism." James Legge, trans. *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism*, Part I (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1891, 1962) 129, 177. A.C. Graham in his article "Chuang-Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal" in *History of Religions*, Volume 9, Numbers 2-3, November 1969-February 1970, 147, alludes to a skeptical strain in the text of chapter 2 without using the term, 'skepticism': "Chuang-tzu, for whom it is never legitimate to affirm or deny except in relation to the changing situation, will not deny that there is knowledge; he concludes that all that may be allowed is the interrogative form raising a doubt, 'How do I know...?' [*wu hu* 惡乎, literally 'from where?']"

<sup>2</sup> See A.C. Graham, "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is' and 'Ought'", Chad Hansen, "A *Tao* of *Tao* in Chuang-tzu", Victor H. Mair, "Chuang-tzu and Erasmus: Kindred Wits", Michael Mark Crandell, "On Walking without Touching the Ground: 'Play' in the *Inner Chapters* of the *Chuang-tzu*", and Lee Yearley, "The Perfected Person in the Radical Chuang-tzu", all in Victor H. Mair, ed. *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983) 3-23, 24-55, 85-100, 101-124, and 125-139, respectively. See also Victor H. Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of*



comprehensive studies of the classical Chinese philosophical tradition.<sup>3</sup> And then in 1993, Paul Kjellberg wrote a dissertation entitled *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*. Following this, there appeared a number of articles by Philip J. Ivanhoe, Kjellberg, Lisa Raphals, and Bryan W. Van Norden in various journals, in which Zhuangzi was considered to be one sort of skeptic or another.<sup>4</sup> In 1996, a collection of essays entitled *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, edited by Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, was published.<sup>5</sup>

Ivanhoe, Van Norden, and Hansen are just three representatives of the trend of regarding Zhuangzi as 'skeptical' in the modern sense of the word, the negative dogmatism of claiming that human beings cannot have knowledge. Chung-ying Cheng 成中英 has classified Zhuangzi as a positive or methodological skeptic, while other scholars such as Kjellberg and Raphals have suggested that he is a non-dogmatic or aporetic skeptic who suspends judgment when confronted with conflicting propositions or appearances. Although Graham was not explicit in describing the skepticism he attributed to the text, it is arguable that interpreting it as non-dogmatic skepticism makes

---

*Chuang Tzu* (New York: Bantam Books, 1994) xliii: "Master Chuang [Zhuang] played a vital role in the emergence of Chinese skepticism toward rationality, turning it on its head and satirizing it trenchantly."

<sup>3</sup> A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1989) 170-211, and Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 265-303.

<sup>4</sup> See Paul Kjellberg, *Zhuangzi and Skepticism* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Stanford University, 1993), Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume LXI, Number 4, 1993, 101-116, Paul Kjellberg, "Skepticism, Truth, and the Good Life: A Comparison of Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 44, Number 1, January 1994, 111-133, Lisa Raphals, "Skeptical Strategies in the *Zhuangzi* and *Theaetetus*" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 44, Number 3, July 1994, 501-526, and Bryan W. Van Norden, "Competing Interpretations of the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 46, Number 2, April 1996, 247-268.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). The articles by Kjellberg and Raphals mentioned above were reprinted in this collection, the one by Kjellberg revised and re-titled, "Sextus Empiricus, Zhuangzi, and Xunzi on 'Why Be Skeptical?'".

Graham's interpretation of the text as a whole more coherent. The question is, "If the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* is skeptical in any sense, what understanding of 'skepticism' will enable us to offer the most coherent interpretation of the text?" In this chapter, I aim to articulate a positive interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* that involves construing the text as embodying skepticism of a sort similar to that of the ancient Greeks. As previously pointed out, the Greek skeptics, like Zhuangzi, were primarily interested in the question of how to live well<sup>6</sup>, and were consistent in addressing epistemological questions in the light of this broader ethical concern. Perhaps the most fundamental of the numerous themes that are dealt with in the *Zhuangzi* is the question of how to live a good life, including how to face the inexorability of death. This question was for Zhuangzi, as it was for the ancient Greeks, an ethical question, one that involves practice as much as it does theory. The other themes addressed in the text seem to involve possible answers to the issue of living artfully, offer recommendations for living a fulfilling life, and are often significantly interrelated with this concentration on forging a way (*dao* 道) of life.<sup>7</sup> Some of the other significant themes that occur in the text are: a cosmology of transformation (*hua* 化) and process; the recommendation of an attitude that embraces cosmological, epistemic, and linguistic parity (embodied in the notion of *qiwu* 齊物, 'giving parity to things and events'); and the idea of wandering at ease (*xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊).<sup>8</sup> In addition, the *Zhuangzi* is interested in efficacious action and self-cultivation.

---

<sup>6</sup> Graham writes, "'How shall I live?' is the question from which philosophy starts and which eternally renews it." See A.C. Graham, *Reason and Spontaneity* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1985) 157.

<sup>7</sup> I use 'recommendations' here rather than 'prescriptions' advisedly.

<sup>8</sup> Chung-ying Cheng 成中英 has coined the neologism, 'onto-cosmology' to refer to the cosmology of the Chinese tradition. The prefix 'onto-' from the Greek '*ontos*', the masculine/neuter genitive singular present participle of the verb '*einai*' means "being, existing". The second prefix, 'cosmo-' comes from the Greek noun, '*kosmos*,' meaning "order; decency; form, fashion; ornament, decoration, embellishment; the world

There are a number of thinkers such as Roger T. Ames, Steven K. Coutinho, and William A. Callahan who offer interesting interpretations of the *Zhuangzi* without necessarily committing themselves to the idea that Zhuangzi was a skeptic. I suggest that all of these interpretations are consistent with the skeptical interpretation that I articulate here or at least that none of them conflict with it. Coutinho on the basis of the writing style of the text observes the challenge of using any ‘-ism’ to label the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*:

Interwoven amongst the many strands of thinking, there are to be found elements that hint of skepticism, other elements that hint of relativism, others still that seem inconsistent with both of these. But a crude application, or imposition, of such western philosophical categories is not necessarily of the greatest help. The *Qiwulun* [“Discussion on Giving Parity to Things and Events”] for example bears little resemblance to a western treatise on epistemology, or philosophy of language.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever label we may consider appropriate for the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* must be carefully explicated and applied so as to avoid falling prey to this potential problem. As

---

or universe from its perfect order”. The sense of order intended by the word includes socio-political order, aesthetic order, and logical order. See *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 229 and 446 for the definitions of ‘*einai*’ and ‘*kosmos*’ respectively. Finally, the suffix, ‘-logical’ refers to a rational account. Taken together, onto-cosmology can be understood as a rational account of existing things and creatures and their inherent order understood aesthetically, logically, as well as socially, and politically. And it is to be noted that although the Greek verb ‘*einai*’ (to be, to exist), from which the prefix, ‘onto-’ is derived, in some cases means specifically ‘to be’ as opposed to ‘appearing to be’, this is precisely not the sense in which it is being appropriated by Cheng in his neologism. He writes: “In separating reality from appearance, objectivity from subjectivity, the ancient Greeks sought the immutable and unmoved as the essence of the real and objective. In contrast, the ancient Chinese from the very beginning recognized and accepted change and transformation as irreducible attributes of the world, including both things and human selves. In fact, when we now look at the main differences between western and Chinese philosophy, we have to point to this fundamental divergence.” See Chung-ying Cheng, “The Origins of Chinese Philosophy” in Brian Carr and Indira Mahalingam, eds., *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 501. Perhaps a term such as ‘phenomeno-cosmology’ would preserve the strengths of ‘onto-cosmology’ while being less misleading in this regard. At the end of the day, however, I have opted for ‘cosmology’ with its implications of socio-political, aesthetic, and logical order, but I am sympathetic to what Cheng is trying to accomplish with his neologism.

<sup>9</sup> Steven K. Coutinho, *Dichotomies and Penumbrae: The Significance of Boundaries in Early Chinese Thinking* (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Hawai‘i, 2001) 1. See also *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation, and Paradox* (Aldershot: Variorum, Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming).

Coutinho points out, “Imposition is not in itself objectionable, since all readings are to some extent extracted from the text, and all readings are likewise imposed upon it.”<sup>10</sup>

## 4.2 SKEPTICISM IN THE *ZHUANGZI*

### 4.2.1 *Non-Dogmatic Skepticism*

Kjellberg interprets the *Zhuangzi* as embodying non-dogmatic or aporetic skepticism. He writes: “[...] it is important to remember that the result of Zhuangzi’s skeptical arguments is not a judgment about the way things are, not even the judgment that the way things are is unknowable, but rather a suspension of judgment.”<sup>11</sup> In addition to construing Zhuangzi’s skepticism as non-dogmatic in character, Kjellberg is aware that non-dogmatic skepticism supports rather than conflicts with the positive recommendations that Zhuangzi makes for living a fulfilling life:

By freeing people from their unreflective commitments, skepticism places them in a standpoint of open-minded awareness from which they can rely on their natural inclinations to guide them in the best direction—it is on the basis of this assumption that Zhuangzi recommends skepticism as a way of life. Thus the point of the book is to present a method for living well, or more particularly, a method for choosing well between the various ways of living that are available to us.<sup>12</sup>

This interpretive approach has much in common with that of Graham in identifying the importance of living well to the *Zhuangzi*.

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Kjellberg, *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*, 139. Despite making explicit the precise conception of skepticism that he thinks can be appropriately applied to the text, he is on occasion insufficiently careful in his diction as in the following, which has the result of misleading his readers: “[...] he [Zhuangzi] denies that people can know how to live in the sense of being able to give an account although he does think that people can cultivate the ability to live well.” See Kjellberg, *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*, 97. However, this problem can be easily avoided by understanding the sentence as claiming that Zhuangzi *doubts* (rather than ‘denies’) that people can know, in terms of being able to give an account, how to live.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

Raphals also understands the text as recommending aporetic skepticism. In her explication, she distinguishes three kinds of skepticism, following the work of Gisela Striker<sup>13</sup>:

As a thesis or doctrine, skepticism is the proposition explicit or tacit, that nothing can be known. The so-called “skeptic’s circle,” the logically self-refuting claim that nothing can be known (including the claim that nothing can be known), refers to, and tends to undermine skepticism as a doctrine.

As a recommendation, skepticism is the imperative to suspend judgment. [...] As a recommendation, skepticism does not risk self-refutation, since it makes no positive claim to, or denial of, knowledge or belief.

As a method, skepticism is a question or inquiry that leads to doubt.<sup>14</sup>

What Raphals refers to as ‘skepticism as a thesis’ describes the modern skepticism of negative dogmatism, as defined by Alvin I. Goldman. She points out its logical independence from ‘skepticism as a recommendation,’ which I have been referring to as non-dogmatic skepticism. By ‘skepticism as a method,’ Raphals seems to mean the actual debating practices of the skeptics, such as *isostheneia*, the practice of giving equally compelling arguments for a particular conclusion and its contrary. In applying this taxonomy of skepticism to the *Zhuangzi*, Raphals notes the absence of skepticism as a thesis (negative dogmatism) in the ‘*Qiwulun* 齊物論’ and observes that there is evidence for both skepticism as a method and skepticism as a recommendation in the text. It should be noted that these two varieties of skepticism are logically compatible, and each supports the other. However, unlike Kjellberg and Graham, Raphals does not underscore the ethical aspects of Zhuangzi’s skeptical recommendations.

Chung-ying Cheng in his paper, “Nature and Function of Skepticism in Chinese Philosophy”, draws a distinction between negative skepticism and positive skepticism.

---

<sup>13</sup> Gisela Striker, “Sceptical Strategies” in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, 54-83

Negative skepticism is what I have been referring to as modern or dogmatic skepticism, the theory that human beings cannot attain to knowledge. What Cheng refers to as positive skepticism is often referred to as methodological skepticism of the sort that René Descartes entertained in his *Discourse on the Method* (1637).<sup>15</sup> According to Cheng, St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Descartes (1596-1650), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) are examples of positive (methodological) skeptics in the Western tradition, in so far as they used a skeptical method or a method of doubt to achieve knowledge or a certain kind of mentality. Whereas Descartes begins by doubting knowledge in order to reconstrue it, Chinese exemplars of positive skepticism such as Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi affirm such knowledge “along the affirmation of higher order or [*sic*] truth or knowledge.”<sup>16</sup>

Cheng’s distinction does not seem to make a place for the aporetic skepticism that is at issue here. His equation of negative skepticism (a philosophical position that negates or invalidates all knowledge claims and all truth claims) with the non-dogmatic skepticism of Sextus Empiricus is problematic. As a result of this equation, Cheng suggests that the Pyrrhonists dogmatically deny the possibility of knowledge. And then, when he specifically compares Zhuangzi with Pyrrhonism, he suggests that the Pyrrhonists, like positive or methodological skeptics, argue for higher level truth and knowledge:

Insofar as Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi]’s argument is based on subjectivity of knowledge and relativity of things, his position resembles Pyrrhonism. But Chuang Tzu, however, differs from the Pyrrhonist by drawing a positive conclusion from his own skeptical

---

<sup>14</sup> Lisa Raphals, “Skeptical Strategies in the *Zhuangzi* and *Theaetetus*” in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe *op. cit.*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences*, translated by Robert Stoothoff in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Donald Murdoch, trans., *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 20-56.

<sup>16</sup> Chung-ying Cheng 成中英, “Nature and Function of Skepticism in Chinese Philosophy” in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 27, Number 2, April 1977, 154, n. 3.

criticism: he urges a person to identify himself with Heaven and Earth and all the ten thousand things.<sup>17</sup>

Later in the article, he claims that there is no theory-practice or knowledge-action distinction in traditional Chinese experience and cosmology.<sup>18</sup> I am hesitant to attribute an argument to Zhuangzi as Cheng does, since the text seldom resorts to the giving of philosophical arguments, and in fact, disparages disputation (*bian* 辯). Instead the text seems to recommend a variety of spiritual practices designed to bring about peace of mind and harmony. Furthermore, Zhuangzi, like the Pyrrhonists, carefully expressed himself so as to avoid the self-refutation that holding a fixed philosophical position of skepticism entails. For this reason, I recommend understanding Zhuangzi's recommendations as embodying a philosophical attitude rather than a position. I would further suggest that instead of "drawing a positive conclusion," Zhuangzi makes a positive recommendation. However, Cheng's point that skepticism in the West, in contrast with Chinese versions of skepticism, lacks a "metaphysical interest" and perhaps even harbors "some implicit opposition to metaphysical thinking" is well-taken. Another significant point of difference between Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus lies in the teleological interest of Pyrrhonism, which seems to be lacking in the Chinese tradition.<sup>19</sup> I think Cheng's claim that Western philosophy is dominated by negative skepticism (save for Augustine, Descartes, and Kant) is overstated, though I agree that negative skepticism had little or no role to play in the Chinese tradition.

Cheng claims that Daoism embraces positive or methodological skepticism:

---

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>18</sup> Wang Yangming 王陽明's expression, '*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一' (the continuity or unity of knowledge and action, knowing and doing) substantiates this observation.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapters 5 and 6 for more on this important difference between Zhuangzi and the Pyrrhonists.

Skepticism is used by Taoism [Daoism] as a method of criticism for establishing an ultimate antiskeptical view of philosophy. In this sense, Taoism is not a negative skeptical position: it is a constructive philosophy which contains skeptical elements for constructive purposes.<sup>20</sup>

This approach is similar in some respects to that of a group of interpreters (Ivanhoe, Van Norden, and others) who have considered Zhuangzi to be a therapeutic skeptic.<sup>21</sup> I disagree that Daoism is an ultimate anti-skeptical position, but it is clear that it has a practical, constructive dimension, which I take to be consistent with the recommendation by the Pyrrhonists to suspend judgment.

As evidenced by the following quotations, Graham also treats Zhuangzi as a skeptic, although it is not immediately clear what sort of skepticism he has in mind.

[...] Chuang-tzŭ [Zhuangzi] is the profoundest sceptic in an age when doubt was as deep as in our own, and the strongest enemy of rationalism at the moment when China seemed on the point of making the same commitment to logic as Greece, but did not.<sup>22</sup>

Chuang-tzŭ derides all claims that reason can give us certainty.<sup>23</sup>

Chuang-tzŭ is also sceptical about the organ with which we think [...].<sup>24</sup>

Skepticism and relativism as extreme as Chuang-tzu's are not in themselves unfamiliar to a modern reader, far from it. What is perhaps strange to him is that there is no vertigo in the doubt, which pervades the most rhapsodic passages of a philosophical poet who seems always to gaze on life and death with unwavering assurance. But there is anguish in ethical skepticism only if one feels bound to choose in spite of having no grounds to choose.<sup>25</sup>

There are several passages which suggest that Graham's notion of skepticism is the negative dogmatism of modern skepticism:

---

<sup>20</sup> Cheng, *op. cit.*, 140.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 5 for a discussion of therapeutic skepticism as it has been applied to the *Zhuangzi*.

<sup>22</sup> Graham, *Reason and Spontaneity*, 184.

<sup>23</sup> Graham, *Chuang-Tzŭ: The Inner Chapters*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* See also *Reason and Spontaneity*, 186, "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is' and 'Ought'", 7, and *Disputers of the Tao*, 182.

<sup>25</sup> Graham, "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is' and 'Ought'", 7. See also *Reason and Spontaneity*, 186, and *Disputers of the Tao*, 186.



Looking back, we find two stages in Chuang-tzū's thought.

(1) All principles for grounding rules of conduct are themselves groundless.<sup>26</sup>

(2) At the rockbottom of scepticism there remain spontaneity and a single imperative to guide it, 'Mirror things as they are', equivalent to our 'Be aware'.<sup>27</sup>

Chuang-tzū sets himself against both the moralists and the logicians. He denies all formulated rules of conduct [...]. He denies too that moralists or sophists can ever settle their differences by logical demonstration that—to choose the closest convenient English equivalents for the Chinese formulae of assent or denial—"That's it" or "That's not".<sup>28</sup>

For him [Zhuangzi], no end however highly valued can outweigh 'Be aware'. He accepts without question that we have to take the world as objectively it is, denies only that analytic reason is the way to find out about it.<sup>29</sup>

Graham's resort to the language of 'denial' and 'acceptance without question' is unnecessarily categorical, since it implies that Zhuangzi dogmatically asserts his skeptical point of view. However, skepticism as a recommendation involves doubt, or better yet, being at a loss, rather than denial, and following suppositions rather than accepting without question. By making these modifications, Graham's interpretation can be made consistent with skepticism in its non-dogmatic formulation, which as a recommendation for living a productive life, succeeds in making better sense of the text as a whole.

Coutinho also accepts the interpretation of Zhuangzi as a skeptic, but with reservations: "Now, what those who call Zhuangzi a skeptic are saying is that there are remarkable similarities between some of the ideas and aims of Zhuangzi and those of the

---

<sup>26</sup> Sentence (1) can be softened by changing it as follows: "It seems that all principles for grounding rules of conduct are themselves groundless." A similar strategy may also be invoked in interpreting sentence (2).

<sup>27</sup> Graham, *Reason and Spontaneity*, 188. See also "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is' and 'Ought'", 11 and *Disputers of the Tao*, 193.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 188. See also *Disputers of the Tao*, 194.

ancient Skeptics (capitalized), and this is undoubtedly true.”<sup>30</sup> He clarifies his position on this issue as follows:

In addition to the fact that the ancient Skeptics were not skeptics, there are several other problems. The first one is not Zhuangzi’s in particular, but that of the ancient Skeptics themselves. And this is that one cannot escape the logical consequences of a skeptical doctrine merely by refusing to assert it. [...] The second problem is that, if we use the term “Skeptic” to refer not to one who holds to a skeptical doctrine, but to a follower of Sextus Empiricus, then it is even more obvious that Zhuangzi cannot have been a Skeptic.<sup>31</sup>

This quotation seems misguided in so far as it privileges the modern conception of skepticism as negative dogmatism over the ancient version of non-dogmatic skepticism.

I think it preferable to maintain neutrality on the issue of which of these is *really* skepticism. Raphals pointed out that a skeptical doctrine is logically independent from a skeptical recommendation, and I concur. According to this understanding then, the aporetic skeptic is not bound to the logical consequences of a skeptical doctrine as Coutinho suggests. It is obvious that Zhuangzi was not a follower of Pyrrho or Sextus Empiricus, and for this reason, he cannot be referred to, at least literally, as a “Chinese Pyrrhonist.” However, it does seem acceptable to refer to his thought as involving an element of non-dogmatic skepticism that is not inconsistent with Pyrrhonism. As Coutinho himself points out, his quarrel with those who would call Zhuangzi a skeptic is more terminological than anything else.<sup>32</sup>

While most of the interpretations discussed here acknowledge the importance of living a productive life to the text, their analyses are still situated firmly within the realm of epistemology. For example, these interpretations consistently employ a vocabulary

---

<sup>30</sup> Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 32.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

that is typically associated with epistemology and metaphysics as they are traditionally understood in Western philosophy. This is not to say that the application of such terms as ‘skepticism’ to the *Zhuangzi* is incorrect, but rather that it is misleading to the extent that such terms provide an incomplete characterization of the philosophical contribution of that text. My interpretation differs from these in that equal emphasis is given to both the epistemological and ethical dimensions of Zhuangzi’s philosophy. While there are undeniably epistemic aspects to this philosophy, there is a recognizable shift from the epistemological concerns of non-dogmatic skepticism to the ethical concerns of way-making (*dao* 道) and how to live a good life.

One of the passages in the *Zhuangzi* that is regularly cited as embodying skepticism is the exchange that occurs between Nie Que 齧缺 (Gnawgap) and Wang Ni 王倪 (Kingly Boundary) in the ‘*Qiwulun*’:

齧缺問乎王倪曰。子知物之所同是乎。曰。吾惡乎知之。子知子之所不知邪。曰。吾惡乎知之。然則物无知邪。曰。吾惡乎知之。雖然。嘗試言之。庸詎知吾所謂知之非不知邪。庸詎知吾所謂不知之非知邪。<sup>33</sup>

Gnawgap asked Kingly Boundary<sup>34</sup> saying, “Do you know what creatures agree in affirming as this, the one in question (*shi* 是)?” He replied, “How would I know it?” “Do you know what you do not know?” The reply was, “How would I know it? That being so, do creatures lack knowledge?” He answered, “How would I know it? Even though this is so, allow me to try to put it into words. How do I know that what I refer to as knowing (*zhi* 知)

<sup>33</sup> 6/2/64-66.

<sup>34</sup> Nie Que 齧缺 and Wang Ni 王倪 are clearly fictional characters invented by Zhuangzi. The word, ‘*nie* 齧’ means to ‘to bite, to gnaw’ and ‘*que* 缺’ means ‘deficient, lacking, short, incomplete, defective, a vacancy, an opening’. This has led Graham to render ‘Nie Que’ as ‘Gaptooth’. The word, ‘*ni* 倪’ means ‘young and weak, division, a beginning, a limit, bounds’. Kjellberg follows Graham in translating ‘Nie Que’ as ‘Gaptooth’ and translates ‘Wang Ni’ as ‘Royal Relativity’. See Kjellberg, *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*, 132, “Sextus Empiricus, Zhuangzi, and Xunzi on ‘Why Be Skeptical?’” in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 8, and “*Zhuangzi*” in Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2001) 216. James R. Ware translates ‘Nie Que’ as ‘Gnawholes’ and ‘Wang Ni’ as ‘Royal Scion’. See James R. Ware, trans., *The Sayings of Chuang Tzu* (Taipei 臺北: Confucius Publishing Co. 文致出版社, 1970, 1983) 24. Victor H. Mair translates ‘Nie Que’ as ‘Gnaw Gap’ and ‘Wang Ni’ as ‘Princely Scion’. See Victor H. Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, 20. Coutinho translates ‘Nie Que’ as ‘Toothless’ and ‘Wang Ni’ as ‘Royal Grindstone’. See Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 32.

is not not-knowing (*bu zhi* 不知)? How do I know that what I refer to as not-knowing (*bu zhi*) is not knowing (*zhi*)?”<sup>35</sup>

The skepticism expressed in this passage is consistent with the non-dogmatic variety of the Pyrrhonists because Kingly Boundary casts his skeptical doubts onto his own skepticism. He responds to Gnawgap’s question concerning his own knowledge or lack thereof about what creatures agree in affirming as this, with a further admission of uncertainty.

Commenting on this passage, Graham writes:

If we could find something to start from on which everyone in the world agreed I still would not *know* it (it would merely be that everyone happens to call the same thing by the same name); I cannot even know what it is I do not know—like Meno in Plato’s dialogue *Meno*<sup>36</sup>, Chuang-tzū [Zhuangzi] thinks that a contradiction—and I am still contradicting myself if I try to find a rockbottom of scepticism in ‘I know that no thing knows anything’. Moreover, there is no guarantee that something I happen to feel sure of is more likely to be true than something I doubt [...].<sup>37</sup>

Yearley and Christoph Harbsmeier both support this interpretation. Yearley writes, “Chuang-tzu [Zhuangzi]’s position, then, is not the simple ‘we know nothing.’ Rather it is the more complex and subtle ‘We do not know if we know or if we do not know.’ Chuang-tzu is even skeptical about his own skepticism. He is just not sure.”<sup>38</sup> Harbsmeier, in his article “Conceptions of Knowledge in Ancient China” pursues the question as to whether or not a notion of epistemological skepticism was developed in Chinese thought. Based on the Gnawgap and Kingly Boundary dialogue, he argues that Zhuangzi’s approach was as follows, “For every level of knowledge one may have achieved in one’s life, there is a

---

<sup>35</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 58 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 45.

<sup>36</sup> It is arguable that Graham’s move from the concerns about whether one can recognize what it is that one does not know in the *Meno* to the idea that one cannot know what one does not know is anachronistic. This latter idea was a feature of the Middle/New Academy and does not seem to have been a particular concern of Plato’s. I am indebted to James Tiles for pointing out this observation to me.

<sup>37</sup> Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 11. See also *Reason and Spontaneity*, 186, “Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of ‘Is’ and ‘Ought’”, 7, and *Disputers of the Tao*, 182.

higher level of uncertainty concerning the reliability of that knowledge one has achieved.”<sup>39</sup>

This idea is consistent with Pyrrhonism because of the continuous doubting of the previous levels of knowledge one has attained. It is worth noting, however, that Harbsmeier’s analysis is expressed in the vocabulary of epistemology and leaves the ethical aspects of Zhuangzi’s thought out of the equation.

The following passage, also from the ‘*Qiwulun*’, is steeped in aporetic skepticism:

今且有言於此。不知其與是類乎。其與是不類乎。類與不類。相與爲類。則與彼无以異矣。雖然。請嘗言之。有始也者。有未始有始也者。有未始有夫未始有始也者。有有也者。有无也者。有未始有无也者。有未始有夫未始有无也者。俄而无矣。而未知有无之果孰有孰无也。今我則已有謂矣。而未知吾所謂之其果有謂乎。其果无謂乎。<sup>40</sup>

Now I am about to say something on this, but I don’t know if it is of a kind with this, the one in question (*shi* 是), or if it is not of a kind with this. Whether it is of a kind or not of a kind, if it can be regarded as of a kind together, then it is not different from the other (*bi* 彼).

Though this is so, allow me to try to put it into words. There is beginning. There is not yet beginning prior to there being beginning. There is not yet beginning prior to there being not yet beginning prior to there being beginning. There is something (*you* 有). There is nothing (*wu* 无 [無]<sup>41</sup>). There is not yet beginning prior to there being nothing. There is not yet beginning prior to there being that not yet beginning prior to there being nothing. Suddenly, there is something and nothing. And I do not yet know of something and nothing which is really something and which is nothing. Now then I have said something and I do not yet know if what I have said really has said anything or really has said nothing.<sup>42</sup>

In this quotation there are two distinct layers of skepticism. The first is skepticism about ‘something’ or the ‘determinate’ (*you* 有) and ‘nothing’ or the ‘indeterminate’ (*wu* 无). The second is skepticism about the extent to which the statement of this doubt about something and nothing is meaningful, or is similar in kind to the statements of other people on this

---

<sup>38</sup> Lee Yearley, “The Perfected Person in the Radical Chuang-tzu” in Mair, *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu*, 127. Be it noted that I hesitate to refer to Zhuangzi as holding a ‘position,’ for the reason that such a notion conflicts with aporetic skepticism.

<sup>39</sup> Christoph Harbsmeier, “Conceptions of Knowledge in Ancient China” in Hans Lenk and Gregor Paul, eds., *Epistemological Issues in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) 24.

<sup>40</sup> 5/2/47-51.

<sup>41</sup> The character ‘wu 无’ is an alternative graph for ‘wu 無’.

subject. Zhuangzi discusses the regress of the notions of ‘There is beginning’ (*You shi ye zhe* 有始也者), and ‘There is not yet beginning’ (*You wei shi you shi ye zhe* 有未始有始也者), and then maps the distinction between *you* and *wu* onto the regress of ‘*You shi ye zhe*,’ and ‘*You wei shi you shi ye zhe*’. However, his primary confusion is about something and nothing. In fact, he professes not to know where something stops and nothing begins. This profession of uncertainty qualifies as an expression of skepticism. But Zhuangzi goes further; he professes doubt about the significance of his statement. It is this second level of skepticism that puts him on a par with the non-dogmatism of Sextus Empiricus and the other Pyrrhonists.<sup>43</sup>

Raphals and Harbsmeier would seem to support my analysis concerning the consistency of Zhuangzi’s non-dogmatic skepticism with Pyrrhonism. Raphals writes about this passage, “Zhuangzi never answers these questions, and never directly claims that we cannot make distinctions, whether as perceptual judgments or in language. Were he to make the skeptical claim that language is meaningless, Zhuangzi would be open to the charge of self-refutation.”<sup>44</sup> On this reading, Zhuangzi is not a dogmatist, positive or negative, in that he neither makes assertions nor denials about the epistemological status of his skeptical observation concerning the content of his statement or lack thereof. As such, like that of Sextus Empiricus, his theory is not self-contradictory. Harbsmeier claims, “The Taoist [Daoist] sceptical attitude is that all knowing of theorems is never quite certain. There may

---

<sup>42</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 55 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 42-43.

<sup>43</sup> Zhuangzi’s skepticism about the meaningfulness of his statement is also a form of linguistic skepticism, but the point to which I wish to draw attention here is the way in which it casts doubt on his initial layer of skepticism. See below for a detailed discussion of Zhuangzi’s language skepticism.

<sup>44</sup> Raphals, *op. cit.*, 33.

be delusion.”<sup>45</sup> The virtue of this analysis is its recognition that Daoist skepticism, like Pyrrhonism, calls into question the possibility of knowing theorems. For example, the Pyrrhonists did not hold theses on the basis of their skeptical formulae, such as *aphasia* (non-assertion).<sup>46</sup> However, Harbsmeier’s epistemological analysis suffers from some severe liabilities. In ignoring the ethical and spiritual aspects of the *Zhuangzi*, it implies that the knowing of theorems was of much greater significance to traditional Chinese thought than it probably was. Furthermore, in suggesting that the Daoists were concerned with the idea that “there may be delusion,” Harbsmeier overwrites the Chinese tradition with the distinction between reality and appearance that is so familiar to Western philosophy. On this point, Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall write:

The dominant Western preference for ontological permanence over the flux and change of the phenomenal world means that the world of ordinary experience cannot be presumed finally real. “Reality” must refer to that *which grounds* the world of appearances which, as *mere appearances*, are misleading and/or illusory.

There is little recourse to anything like a reality/appearance distinction in Classical Chinese thought.<sup>47</sup>

In the concluding dialogue of the ‘*Qiushui* 秋水’ (“Autumn Floods”) chapter, Zhuangzi and his friend, Huizi 惠子 (Hui Shi 惠施) each express doubts about the other’s capacity to have knowledge:

莊子與惠子遊於濠梁之上。莊子曰。儵魚出遊從容。是魚之樂也。惠子曰。子非魚。安知魚之樂。莊子曰。子非我。安知我不知魚之樂。惠子曰。我非子。固不知

---

<sup>45</sup> Harbsmeier, *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>46</sup> See *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.20.192-193. Mates, *op. cit.*, 114-115. It is worth reiterating that one of Roger T. Ames’ and David L. Hall’s translations for ‘*wu wei* 無爲’ is “nonassertive action”. See Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 52, and Ames and Hall, trans., *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”*: A Philosophical Translation, 38-39, 44-45, 67.

<sup>47</sup> Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, trans., *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001) 9.

子矣。子固非魚也。子之不知魚之樂全矣。莊子曰。請循其本。子曰。汝安知魚樂云者。既已知吾知之而問我。我知之濠上也。<sup>48</sup>

Zhuangzi and Huizi were traveling on the bridge over the Hao 濠 River. Zhuangzi said, "The minnows emerging and swimming unhurriedly, this is the happiness of fishes." Huizi said, "You are not a fish. How do you know (*an zhi* 安知) the happiness of fishes?" Zhuangzi replied, "You are not I. How do you know (*an zhi*) that I do not know the happiness of fishes?" Huizi answered, "I am not you and I certainly do not know you. You are certainly not a fish, so the case of your not knowing the happiness of fishes is complete." Zhuangzi said, "Let us return to your origin. You said, 'How do you know (*an zhi*) fish happiness?' You already knew that I knew it when you asked me. I know it from here on the Hao."<sup>49</sup>

In this exchange, Huizi attempts to dispute Zhuangzi's claim concerning the happiness of fishes by arguing that Zhuangzi cannot know that, on account of the fact that he is not a fish.

Zhuangzi reverses the argument by claiming that Huizi is not Zhuangzi. Huizi acknowledges Zhuangzi's point and thinks this proves his initial claim. Zhuangzi then resorts to what appears to be a bit of creative sophistry in arguing against Huizi. But as Graham points out, the expression, '*an zhi* 安知' means both "how do you know?" and "whence do you know?", and thus, there is more than creative sophistry at stake here.<sup>50</sup>

Ames argues that we learn a great deal about the traditional Chinese conception of knowledge from this passage:

Knowledge is always proximate as the condition of an experience rather than of an isolated experiencer. Situation has primacy, and agency is an abstraction from it. Knowledge is a tracing out and mapping of the productive patterns (*li* 理) of one's environs in such a manner as to move efficaciously and without obstruction.

[...] for Zhuangzi, knowledge is performative, a function of fruitful correlations. Thus, it is something done—a qualitative achievement. Knowing a situation is the "realizing" of it in the sense of "making it real." Knowing is also perlocutionary in the sense of setting the affective tone of the experience.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> 45/17/87-91.

<sup>49</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 123 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 188-189.

<sup>50</sup> Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 123.

<sup>51</sup> Roger T. Ames, "Knowing in the *Zhuangzi*: 'From Here, on the Bridge, over the River Hao'" in Roger T. Ames, ed., *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 220. See also Ames and Hall, trans., *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant": A Philosophical Translation*, 108-109.



This passage underscores the way in which epistemology and ethics are mutually implicated in the Chinese tradition. The unity of knowledge and action (*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一) ensures that knowledge involves affect just as much as it does cognition. Knowledge is often understood by giving primacy to cognition, either de-emphasizing or disregarding the affective dimension that is arguably involved in it. In knowing, we not only cognize a world but we also realize a world through our participation in transforming the ordinary into something ‘magical’ through our creation of productive relationships with the myriad things, events, and creatures (*wu* 物). This particular experience of observing fishes do what fishes naturally and spontaneously (*ziran* 自然) do is a part of a larger situation that Zhuangzi would seem to characterize as happy. For Zhuangzi, optimum productivity is a function of allowing something to be itself without intervention or contrivance. It is in this way that one can attain to a condition of equilibrium or stillness (*jing* 靜) in one’s heart-mind (*xin* 心) and experience the concrete feeling of happiness.

Skepticism presents itself in relation to whatever knowledge claim is current. In this passage, Zhuangzi employs debating techniques that are somewhat similar to the Socratic *elenchus* and the skeptic’s *isostheneia* in an effort to point out the limitations of reason as expressed here by Huizi’s logical, analytical mind. In a non-technical sense, skepticism is doubt, uncertainty, or general resistance to specific claims to authoritative knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, while the skepticism in this passage is not explicit, it is an underlying theme. As

---

<sup>52</sup> The ‘*Yangshengzhu* 養生主’ (“The Mastery of Nurturing Life”) chapter opens with following lines, which also suggest skepticism in this non-technical sense:

吾生有涯。而知也无涯。以有涯隨无涯。殆已。已，而爲知者。殆而已矣。(7/3/1)

My life has a limit but knowledge has no limits. To use what has a limit to follow what has no limits is precarious and that’s it. Thus, one who chases after knowledge will really be in danger.

Compare Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 62 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 50.

Graham concludes his comment on this passage, “What he [Zhuangzi] is saying is: ‘Whatever you affirm is as relative to standpoint as how I see the fish while I stand up here on the bridge.’”<sup>53</sup> On the basis of these passages, I conclude that Zhuangzi was a non-dogmatic skeptic and that his skepticism is not subject to the problem of self-contradiction.

It is fair to say that Zhuangzi was a non-dogmatic skeptic. However, the attribution of aporetic skepticism to the *Zhuangzi* in so far as it is expressed in terms that are typically associated with epistemology can be misleading to an audience that is unfamiliar with the ethical, spiritual, pragmatic, and rhetorical aspects that I consider to be a vital part of it. For this reason, the characterization, ‘non-dogmatic skepticism’, like most other ‘-isms’, does not exhaust the philosophical ideas expressed in the text. Harbsmeier claims that Zhuangzi gave two arguments for skepticism. They are: 1) the argument from delusion, and 2) “the inevitable subjectivity of human viewpoints.”<sup>54</sup> The first of these, as noted above, is problematic in assuming that the interest in a sharp distinction between reality and appearance was equally important in the Chinese tradition as it was in ontological thought. By contrast, the second argument presented by Harbsmeier offers an interesting parallel with the Pyrrhonists, who noted that the experience of relativity gives us sufficient motivation for withholding assent.

Harbsmeier concludes that Zhuangzi was a non-dogmatic skeptic, and that he was not a negative dogmatist:

The doubting attitude to knowledge, the insistence on the justification for claiming the objective validity of apparently self-evident or commonly accepted knowledge, is a central part of rationality and a crucial factor in early Chinese intellectual history.

---

<sup>53</sup> Graham, *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 123.

<sup>54</sup> *Op. cit.*, 24. Harbsmeier’s language is too strong for non-dogmatic skepticism. I recommend understanding ‘the argument from delusion’ in 1) as ‘the observation that there seems to be delusion’ and deleting the modifier ‘inevitable’ in 2).

Zhuangzi's attitude of pervasive uncertainty concerning the question of the reliability of our knowledge is the result of such rational doubt [...].<sup>55</sup>

Because of the philosophical concerns that were addressed in his time and culture, Zhuangzi's non-dogmatic skepticism found expression primarily in the form of language skepticism.

#### 4.2.2 Language Skepticism

Language skepticism is the idea that language is insufficient for expressing knowledge sententially; it casts doubt on the possibility of propositional knowledge.<sup>56</sup>

Graham writes:

The denial that the Way is communicable in words is a familiar paradox of Taoism [Daoism]. [...] The irony is especially acute in the case of Chuang-tzū [Zhuangzi], a master of rhapsodic prose, sophisticated argument, aphorism, anecdote, and gnomic verse, who professes a boundless scepticism as to the possibility of ever saying anything.<sup>57</sup>

The following passage from the 'Qiwulun' demonstrates that Zhuangzi can be reasonably considered a linguistic skeptic:

夫言非吹也。言者有言。其所言者。特未定也。果有言邪。其未嘗有言邪。其以爲異於鷦音。亦有辯乎。其無辯乎。道惡乎隱而有真僞。言惡乎隱而有是非。道隱於小成。言隱於榮華。故有儒墨之是非。以是其所非。而非其所是。欲是其所非。而非其所是。則莫若以明。<sup>58</sup>

Now words are not merely wind. As for words, they have something to say; only what they say is not yet fixed. Has anything really been said? Or have we not yet had the experience of saying something? If we think that it is different from the chirpings of fledglings, is there any distinction? Or is there no distinction?<sup>59</sup> By what is *dao* 道 obscured (*yin* 隱<sup>60</sup>) such that we have the distinction between genuine and artificial? By what are words obscured

---

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>56</sup> The ancient Greek skeptics seem also to have extended their non-dogmatism to language: "[...] the Pyrrhonist does not assent to any propositions other than those expressing a present *pathos* [feeling, affect, state] of his soul [or mind]. This applies in particular to propositions about the meanings of words: Sextus is not prepared even to agree that the assertions of the Dogmatists are meaningful." See Mates, *op. cit.*, 26-27.

<sup>57</sup> Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 25. See also *Disputers of the Tao*, 199. Again, I would recommend softening the language here by replacing the word, 'denial' in the first sentence with 'doubt'.

<sup>58</sup> 4/2/23-27.

<sup>59</sup> Reading 'bian 辨' for 'bian 辯'.

<sup>60</sup> Read in the fourth tone, the character, 'yin 隱' can mean 'to rely upon'.

that we have the distinction between assertion (*shi* 是) and denial (*fei* 非)?<sup>61</sup> *Dao* hides in small accomplishments. Words hide in the flowery flourish of superficial beauty. Therefore there are the assertion and denial of the Ruists and Mohists, who accordingly assert what they deny and deny what they assert. If you want to assert what others deny or deny what others assert, then nothing is like using awareness (*ming* 明).<sup>62</sup>

Zhuangzi suggests that language is about something, but then doubts whether it is fixed (*ding* 定), and on this basis, questions whether it really says anything determinate. He also wonders if human language is really different from other sounds that are found in nature, such as the peeps of baby birds. Hansen interprets this passage as a statement of Zhuangzi's philosophy of language, which claims that all language is indexical. The referent of an indexical term changes according to the context in which it is used.<sup>63</sup> Examples of indexical terms in English are pronouns such as 'you', time words like 'now', words of location such as 'here', and demonstratives like 'that'. I follow Hansen in using 'indexical' to mean that language is referential and that what it refers to, changes according to the speaker and the context of the locution. Hansen writes, "Utterances of judgments and names thus have no fixed relation to any supposed extralinguistic reality."<sup>64</sup> The indexicality of all language is what motivates Zhuangzi's language skepticism. *Dao* is hidden, and this causes us to have

---

<sup>61</sup> The terms '*shi* 是' and '*fei* 非' require considerable explanation. The literal meaning of '*shi* 是' is the demonstrative, "this, the one in question", and the literal meaning of '*fei* 非' is the negative, "not (this)". Consequently, to translate these terms in particular contexts requires applying to them derivative sets of meanings. One way to translate the terms is "to assert" [or "to affirm"] and "to deny," respectively. Another renders them as "correct" and "incorrect". However, in addition to these logical and epistemological derivative meanings, there is a long tradition in China that assigns to these terms a set of meanings that is moral in implication (in which contexts, they are translated as "right" and "wrong" or "approval" and "disapproval" respectively). Therefore, many passages that contain these words can be given equally acceptable logical, epistemological, and ethical readings. This is still further evidence that disciplines such as epistemology and logic were not sharply separated from disciplines such as ethics and social and political philosophy in the classical Chinese tradition.

<sup>62</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 52 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 39.

<sup>63</sup> The theory that language is indexical is consistent with the emphasis on process and change in the text and in the tradition as a whole.

<sup>64</sup> Hansen, *Language and Logic in Ancient China* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983) 91.

notions such as genuine (*zhen* 真) and artificial (*wei* 偽). Words (*yan* 言) are also obscured, and this causes the notions of affirmation and denial (*shifei* 是非) to arise.<sup>65</sup>

Since language is not fixed, our notions of genuine and artificial, of this and not this (affirmation and denial), are relative to the opinions of our *cheng xin* 成心 (rigidly fixed dispositions, predetermined heart-mind, prejudiced heart-mind, opinion). The notion of the *cheng xin* and the problem of choosing among opposite sides of any distinction are addressed in the following passage from the 'Qiwulun':

夫隨其成心而師之。誰獨且無師乎。奚必知代而心自取者有之。愚者與有焉。未成乎心而有是非。是今日適越而昔至也。是以無有爲有。無有爲有。雖有神禹。且不能知。吾獨且奈何哉。<sup>66</sup>

Now if one were to follow one's rigidly fixed dispositions (*cheng xin* 成心) and make them one's teacher, then who in particular would be without a teacher? How does one only know alternation and yet one's heart-mind (*xin* 心) of its own accord takes one [a set of rigidly fixed dispositions]? Fools also have one. Not yet being determined in heart-mind and yet having affirmation and denial, this is like 'going to Yue 越 today and arriving yesterday'. This is to treat nothing as something. If one treats nothing as something, even the spirit-like Yu 禹 could not know it, so how can you expect me to?<sup>67</sup>

Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭 comments on this passage: "This shows that all distinctions of right and wrong are due to opinions."<sup>68</sup> That is to say, *shi* and *fei* are based in opinion, and not in

---

<sup>65</sup> The following sentences from 'Qiu shui 秋水' ("Autumn Floods") also express language skepticism: 可以言論者。物之粗也。可以意致者。物之精也。言之所不能論。意之所不能察致者。不期精粗焉。(43/17/23-24)

What one can use words to discourse about is the crudeness of things and events. What one can use thoughts to transmit is the refined essence of things and events. That which words cannot express and that which thoughts cannot examine and transmit should not be expected to have crudeness and fineness in them.

Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 146: "Those which can be sorted in words are the more massive among things. As for what words cannot sort or ideas convey, we do not specify anything in it as quintessential or massive." Also see Watson, *op. cit.*, 178

The third sentence implies that there are things that are beyond the capacity of words to describe, but it does not express this point of view dogmatically. In so far as linguistic skepticism is the idea that "language is somehow inadequate for expressing certain facts about reality," Zhuangzi is skeptical about language.

<sup>66</sup> 4/2/21-23.

<sup>67</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 51 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 38-39.

<sup>68</sup> Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭, trans., *A Taoist Classic: Chuang-Tzu* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1933, 1989) 43.

knowledge. The rigidly fixed heart-mind is the opposite of what Zhuangzi encourages us to cultivate. In keeping with the theme of this quotation, Donald J. Munro writes:

In the *Chuang-tzu* [Zhuangzi] we learn that the sage views knowledge of things as an obstacle and that he does not judge things as right or wrong (*shih fei* [shifei]). Nor does he utilize his moral sense (*i* [yi 義]). All these activities are associated with man's "prejudiced mind" (*ch'eng hsin* [cheng xin]), which knows one fact and views it as the whole truth. [...] The knowledge available to the human mind is always partial, and no judgment should ever be made on the basis of it.<sup>69</sup>

Because the *cheng xin* makes judgments on the basis of incomplete knowledge, abiding by it is similar to accepting the paradoxical idea of going to Yue today and arriving there yesterday.<sup>70</sup> Zhuangzi shows that the Ruists (Confucians) and Mohists hold contrary opinions, which are not resolvable from within their perspectives. The most efficacious solution to the problems that arise from applying words in an over-determined manner is the employment of an attitude of illumined awareness (*ming* 明) toward the plurality of perspectives. This attitude is at once epistemic and ethical. Callahan writes,

In this context, 'enlightenment'<sup>71</sup> [*ming* 明] is the ability to 'interchange' and 'intercommunicate,' in many ways analogous with *tong* 通. *Ming* is an elaborate interchange or exchange of *shih* and *fei* judgments, and as such is a process of Daoist reversal (*fan* 反) which 'illuminates' new possibilities following its literal definition [...] By switching *shih* and *fei* we show that they are contingent, and we are thus not bound to either one or the other.<sup>72</sup>

In this respect, this illumined awareness is the opposite of the *cheng xin*. Ames and Hall develop this understanding of *ming* further in a discussion of the *Daodejing* 道德經:

---

<sup>69</sup> Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969) 134.

<sup>70</sup> This is one of Hui Shi's ten paradoxes. What is contained in the various stories concerning Hui Shi in the *Zhuangzi* is virtually all that we know of him today. See the 'Tianxia 天下' ("Under the Firmament") chapter (93/33/69 – 94/33/87) of the *Zhuangzi* for a more complete account of his philosophy, including a complete list of the ten paradoxes. See also Lisa Raphals, "On Hui Shi" in Ames, *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*, 143-162.

<sup>71</sup> The translation of '*ming* 明' as "enlightenment" is potentially misleading as this is the common English translation for the Buddhist idea of *nirvāna*.

It is not through an internal struggle of reason against the passions but through “acuity (*ming* 明)”—a mirroring of things of the world as they are in their interdependent relations with us—that we reach a state in which nothing among all of the myriad of “the goings on” in the world will be able to agitate our hearts-and-minds, and we are able to promote the flourishing of our world.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the *Zhuangzi* recommends using *ming* as a means of harmonizing the plethora of contrary perspectives which one encounters in the world. This is tantamount to cultivating a disposition and forging a way of life that is characterized by an unagitated heart-mind and a form of harmony (*he* 和), that is characteristically natural, social, and political.<sup>74</sup>

Linguistic skepticism is also in evidence in the famous passage on disputation in the

‘*Qiwulun*’:

既使我與若辯矣。若勝我。我不若勝。若果是也。我果非也邪。我勝若。若不吾勝。我果是也。而果非也邪。其或是也。其或非也邪。其俱是也。其俱非也邪。我與若不能相知也。則人固受其~~其~~闇。吾誰使正之。使同乎若者正之。既與若同矣。惡能正之。使同乎我者正之。既同乎我矣。惡能正之。使異乎我與若者正之。既異乎我與若矣。惡能正之。使同乎我與若者正之。既同乎我與若矣。惡能正之。然則我與若與人俱不能相之也。而待彼也邪。<sup>75</sup>

Suppose you and I have a dispute. If you beat me and I do not beat you, are you really right (*shi* 是) and am I really wrong (*fei* 非)? If I beat you and you do not beat me, am I really right and are you really wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? Are we right together or wrong together? If you and I cannot mutually know, then other people will certainly be in the dark. Who should we employ to decide it? If we employ someone who is similar to you to decide it, since he is already similar to you, how can he decide? If we employ someone who is similar to me to decide it, since he is already similar to me, how can he decide? If we employ someone who is different from you and me both to decide it, since he is already different from us, how can he decide? If we employ someone who is similar to you and me both to decide it, since he is already similar to us, how can he decide?

---

<sup>72</sup> William A. Callahan, “Cook Ding’s Life on the Whetstone: Contingency, Action, and Inertia in the *Zhuangzi*” in Ames, *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*, 183.

<sup>73</sup> Hall and Ames, trans., *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”: A Philosophical Translation*, 39.

<sup>74</sup> It is interesting to note that *Mengzi* 孟子 (*Mencius*) 2A2 discusses the notion of ‘*bu dong xin* 不動心’ (unmoved or unagitated heart-mind), which may be considered as equivalent to what is referred to in chapter 19 of the *Zhuangzi*, ‘*Dasheng* 達生’ (“Penetrating Life”) as ‘*jing xin* 靜心’, which occurs in the context of Woodcarver Qing (*Zi Qing* 梓慶)’s *zhai* 齋 (fasting):

必齋以靜心。(50/19/56)

I must fast in order to bring my heart-mind into equilibrium (stillness).

<sup>75</sup> 7/2/84-90.

If this is so, then you and I as well as others alike cannot mutually know it. Should we wait<sup>76</sup> for another person?<sup>77</sup>

This quotation consists almost entirely of questions concerning how rightness or correctness (*shi*) and wrongness or incorrectness (*fei*) are to be determined. In order for the entire conditional sentence, “If this is so, then you and I as well as others alike cannot mutually know it” to be true, the antecedent must be true; it must be so (*ran* 然). Zhuangzi is not committing himself dogmatically to the idea that it is ‘so’; he is open to either possibility. The main point of this passage is that disputes seem to be irresolvable because the different ways people learn language predispose them to different points of view, and it seems to Zhuangzi that there is no way to determine with any finality who is correct.

#### 4.3 COSMOLOGY IN THE *ZHUANGZI*: TRANSFORMATION, PROCESS, CHANGE, AND FLUX

The theme of transformation is extremely important to any adequate understanding of the *Zhuangzi*, and is directly linked to his non-dogmatic linguistic skepticism. This theme emerges early in the first chapter, ‘*Xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊,’ (“Wandering without a Destination”) which opens with the story of an enormous fish, the Kun 鯤 transforming into the Peng 鵬 bird.

北冥有魚。其名爲鯤。鯤之大不知其幾千里也。化而爲鳥。其名爲鵬。鵬之背不知其幾千里也。怒而飛。其翼若垂天之雲。<sup>78</sup>

In the north sea<sup>79</sup>, there is a fish. Its name is Kun 鯤.<sup>80</sup> The greatness of the Kun, one does not know how many thousands of *li* 里<sup>81</sup> it spans. It transforms and becomes a bird. Its name is Peng 鵬. The back of Peng, one does not know how many thousands of *li* it

<sup>76</sup> ‘*Dai* 待’ can also be interpreted as “to depend on”.

<sup>77</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 60 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 48.

<sup>78</sup> 1/1/1-2.

<sup>79</sup> Reading ‘*ming* 溟’ for ‘*ming* 冥’.

<sup>80</sup> The irony is particularly strong here as the character for the name of the fish, ‘*kun* 鯤’ means ‘fish roe’.

<sup>81</sup> A *li* 里 is an ancient Chinese measure of distance, roughly equivalent to one third of a mile.



spans. It exerts itself with vigor and flies. Its wings are like the clouds hanging in the sky.<sup>82</sup>

The character, ‘*hua* 化’ (to transform, transformation) is the nineteenth character in the first line of the work, and it can be said that a cosmology of process and change complements the epistemology found in the text. I intentionally employ the word ‘cosmology’ here, since applying the word ‘ontology’ to traditional Chinese thought can be misleading in so far as ‘ontology’ is often associated with a reality-appearance distinction that arguably plays little to no role in classical Chinese thought.

The concluding passage of the ‘*Qiwulun*’, the famous “Butterfly Dream,” is another of the key passages concerning the theme of transformation.

昔者莊周夢爲胡蝶。栩栩然胡蝶也。自喻適志與。不知周也。俄然覺。則蘧蘧然周也。不知周之夢爲胡蝶與。胡蝶之夢爲周與。周與胡蝶則必有分矣。此之謂物化。<sup>83</sup>

At night, Zhuang Zhou 莊周 dreamed he was a butterfly; in a pleased and glad manner he was a butterfly, happy with himself and going along with his wishes! He was not aware of Zhou. Suddenly he awoke, and in a pleasantly surprised manner was Zhou. He did not know if he was Zhou having dreamed he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhou. Between Zhou and the butterfly, there is certainly a dividing. This is called transforming with things-and-events (*wu hua* 物化).<sup>84</sup>

Many commentators have taken this passage as being fundamentally concerned with the reliability of sense perception on the basis of the enigma of dreams, as propounded by Descartes and other Western philosophers. Sense skeptics doubt the reliability of knowledge that is ascertained through the senses. In fact, it is probably because of Descartes’ well-known use of dream examples that a Western reader might immediately assume that the dream passages in the *Zhuangzi* involve skepticism about the senses and the external world. Kjellberg is an interesting example of this trend when he claims of

---

<sup>82</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 43 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 29.

Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus that: “Both doubt reason as well as the senses.”<sup>85</sup> But then he later claims, “Although some of the most widely quoted passages from Zhuangzi involve dream skepticism, there is little evidence in the text to suggest that he entertained any serious doubts about the existence of the external world.”<sup>86</sup> The first quotation is perhaps true of Sextus, but since the reliability of sense perception does not seem to have been one of the primary concerns of traditional Chinese thought, it does not seem to apply with equal weight to Zhuangzi. The second quotation is more consistent with the idea that Zhuangzi cannot be considered a sense skeptic, and Hansen, Ivanhoe, and Ames all seem to be in agreement on this point.

Instead of understanding this story primarily as making an epistemological point, I recommend reading it as a description of the process of transformation. A butterfly transforms from a cocoon, which is relatively static in both its location and motion, into a colorful winged creature that represents the freedom of easy rambling (*you* 遊). This passage is a celebration of the transformations and changes that all of the myriad things undergo. Although, there is necessarily a distinction between Zhuang Zhou and the butterfly he dreamed he was, it is not necessary to declare either of these experiences with any finality as better, more enjoyable, or more real. The recommendation of this celebration of transformation seems to be: welcome the multiplicity of transformations, approach them with an attitude of equanimity, and perhaps most importantly of all, enjoy the rich diversity of the experience of being alive.

---

<sup>83</sup> 7/2/94-96.

<sup>84</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 61 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 49.

<sup>85</sup> Kjellberg, “Skepticism, Truth, and the Good Life: A Comparison of Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus” in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 44, Number 1, January 1994, 116.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 118. It is worth noting that both this sentence and the one just quoted appear to have been omitted from the revised and reprinted version of this paper that appeared in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*

The sixth chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, 'Dazongshi 大宗師' ("The Great Master"), again

features the theme of transformation and addresses it in the light of the phenomenon of death, as in the following passage:

子祀, 子輿, 子犁, 子來。四人相與語曰。孰能以无爲首。以生爲脊。以死爲尻。孰能死生存亡之一體也。吾與之友矣。四人相視而笑。莫逆於心。遂相與爲友。俄而子輿有病。子祀往問之。曰。偉哉。夫造物者將以予爲此拘拘也。曲僂發背。上有五管。頤隱於齊。肩高於頂。句贅指天。陰陽之氣有沴。其心間而无事。~~汗~~而鑑於井。曰。嗟乎。夫造物者又將以予爲此拘拘也。子祀曰。汝惡之乎。曰。亡。予何惡。浸假而化予之左臂以爲雞。予因以求時夜。浸假而化予之右臂以爲彈。予因以求鴉炙。浸假而化予之尻以爲輪。以神爲馬。予因此乘之。豈更駕哉。且夫得者時也。失者順也。安時而處順。哀樂不能入也。此古之所謂縣解也。而不能自解者。物有結之。且夫物不勝天久矣。吾又何惡焉。俄而子來有病。喘喘然將死。其妻子環而泣之。子犁往問之曰。叱避。无怛化。倚其戶與之語曰。偉哉造化。又將奚以汝爲。將奚以汝適。以汝爲鼠肝乎。以汝爲蟲臂乎。子來曰。父母於子。東西南北。唯命之從。陰陽於人。不翅於父母。彼近吾死。而我不聽。我則悍矣。彼何罪焉。夫大塊載我以形。勞我以生。佚我以老。息我以死。故善吾生者。乃所以善吾死也。今之大冶鑄金。金蛹躍曰。我且必爲鑊錙。大冶必以爲不祥之金。今一犯人之形。而曰。人耳人耳。夫造化者必以爲不祥之人。今一以天地爲大鑪。以造化爲大冶。惡乎往而不可哉。成然寐。遽然覺。<sup>87</sup>

Zisi 子祀, Ziyu 子輿, Zili 子犁, and Zilai 子來, four men were talking together. "Who can take nothing (*wu* 无) as the head, life as the spine, and death as the tailbone? Who can take death and life, existence and passing away as one continuous body? I will be friends with him." The four men looked at each other and laughed. None felt opposition in his heart-mind. Thereupon, they were friends with each other. Suddenly Ziyu fell ill. Zisi went to ask after him. Ziyu said, "Fantastic! That which creates things-and-events (*zaowuzhe* 造物者) makes me all crooked like this. I am hunched and my back sticks out. Above there are the five organs, my cheeks are buried in my navel, my shoulders are taller than the top of my head, and my pigtail points to the sky. There is a disharmony in the energies of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽." In his heart-mind, there were no affairs of concern. He lightly and quickly moved to look at his reflection in the well, and said, "Gosh! That which creates things-and-events makes me all crooked like this." Zisi asked, "Do you resent it?" He said, "No. What is there for me to resent? If my left arm is gradually transformed into a chicken, I will accordingly seek to announce the time. If my right arm is gradually transformed into a slingshot, I will accordingly seek an owl for roasting. If my tailbone is gradually transformed into a wheel and my spirit into a horse, I will accordingly ride it. Would I ever have to harness horses again? Moreover, one who gets life is timely. One who loses life follows along with nature. Be content with the time and reside in the flow, and in this manner neither sadness nor joy can come in. This is what the ancients referred to as 'being

<sup>87</sup> 17/6/45-60.

liberated from hanging upside down'. And if one is unable to free oneself, things-and-events will bind one. Moreover, that things-and-events do not vanquish the heavens (*tian* 天<sup>88</sup>) has been the case for a long time. What have I got to resent?" Suddenly, Zilai had a sickness. His breathing was heavy and he was about to die. His wife and children surrounded him and cried. Zili went to ask after him, and said, "Stand back! Do not disturb the transformations. He leaned against the gate and said, "Fantastic is the process that creates and transforms. What will you be made into? Where will you go? Will you be made into a rat's liver? Will you be made into an insect's arm?" Zilai said, "As for a father and mother with respect to their children, no matter whether one goes east, west, north, or south, one only follows their commands (*ming* 命). As for *yin* and *yang* with regard to people, it is no different from a father and mother. The other is near and I die. If we do not accept it, then we are being defiant. What crime is there in it? Now the great clod (*dakuai* 大塊) carries me along with a body, has me laboring through life, comforts me with old age, and rests me in death. Therefore, since I regard my life as good, I also regard my death as good. Now take the case of a blacksmith casting metal. If the metal were to rise and leap up and say, 'I must be made into a Moye 鑞<sup>89</sup> sword,' the blacksmith would certainly regard it as an inauspicious metal. Now once I have encountered the human form, if I say, 'A person and that's it! A person and that's it,' then that which creates transformations (*zaohuazhe* 造化者) will regard me as an inauspicious human being. Now if we at once take the heavens and earth as a great smelting furnace, and that which creates and transforms as a great blacksmith, then wherever we go would not be unacceptable. I will sleep peacefully and awaken happily.<sup>90</sup>

Rather than viewing death as something undesirable, this passage, along with many others in the text, encourages us to celebrate death as just one of the many processes of transformation which we encounter in our experience. Ames and Hall, commenting on this passage, write:

[...] in this flux of experience, the human being has no place of privilege. Like everything else, the human form is processive, and must yield deferentially to the ongoing, ineluctable propensity of transformation [...] The *Zhuangzi* envisions the possibility of assuming a human form as an arbitrary and not especially welcome perturbation within the larger processes of transformation. Zhuangzi's response to the misgivings one might have about death is that there is real comfort and even a religious

<sup>88</sup> Following the scholarship of Roger T. Ames, David L. Hall, and Henry Rosemont, Jr., I leave the term, '*tian* 天,' usually translated as 'Heaven, (or better: 'the heavens'), the sky, nature,' untranslated so as to avoid the unfortunate associations of transcendence that a Western reader brings to the tradition upon encountering a term such as 'Heaven'.

<sup>89</sup> A famous sword made by Ganjiang 干將 for King Helü 盍闔 of Wu 吳 (reigned 514 – 496/494 BCE).

<sup>90</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 87-89 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 83-85.

awe in the recognition that assuming the form of one kind of thing gives way to the ceaseless adventure of becoming other things.<sup>91</sup>

The last line of the passage employs the metaphor of sleeping and waking for life and death. The word, ‘*mei* 寐’ (sleep) can be interpreted as representing death and ‘*jue* 覺’ (awaken) can be construed as life, or the values of these terms can be reversed with ‘*mei*’ representing life and ‘*jue*’ representing death, as in the ‘*Qiwulun*’ chapter.<sup>92</sup> In either case, the idea is that our lives are ephemeral; we suddenly assume human form only to pass onto something else just as suddenly; we are here one moment and gone the next. The sentence, “Be content with the time and reside in the flow, and in this manner neither sadness nor joy can come in” recommends a specific attitude for us to adopt, namely one of being at peace with time and the flow of events, in the light of what is traditionally regarded as a tragic circumstance, for example, the contraction of a disfiguring and terminal illness. Zhuangzi thus recommends an awareness and celebration of transformation as a means of approaching the inexorability of death with equanimity.

Hansen argues against the view that Zhuangzi was interested in process and change: “The standard interpretive theory frequently attributes a Heraclitus-like problem of change to Chinese philosophers (especially Daoists). I object.”<sup>93</sup> Commenting on the “Butterfly Dream” passage, he writes: “[...] we more plausibly regard the transformation of things as linguistic flux than as natural flux. *Dao* is constantly changing; that is not a

---

<sup>91</sup> Ames and Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*, 22-23. See also Ames and Hall, trans., *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”: A Philosophical Translation*, 70, 168-169, and Roger T. Ames, “Death as Transformation in Classical Daoism” in Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon, eds. *Death and Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1998, especially 66 and 70.

<sup>92</sup> See Chapter 5 for the passage from 6/2/81-83 and a fuller discussion of it.

<sup>93</sup> Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, 50.

metaphysical claim but a claim about discourse.”<sup>94</sup> This approach seems to be the result of an over-reliance on the linguistic component of his inventive translation of ‘*dao* 道’ as ‘guiding discourse’ or ‘prescriptive discourse’ and his intention of avoiding any metaphysical associations with the term, but ‘*dao*’ clearly also involves non-linguistic ways, methods, or teachings. According to Hansen, Zhuangzi claims “[...] that what is *shih* [*shi*] can be *fei* and what is *fei* can be *shih*. This is not a metaphysical claim that all is in flux. It is an observation about the relativity of judgments (*shih-feis*) to ways (*taos* [*daos*]) of using *yen* [*yan* 言]/words:language.”<sup>95</sup> But the problem with this reading is that the text has ‘*wu hua* 物化’ (the transformation of things-and-events) rather than ‘*yan hua* 言化’ (linguistic transformation). It is important to note, as Hansen does, that the idea of transformation in the *Zhuangzi* is not a metaphysical *claim* in the sense that it does not have the status of a dogmatic assertion about ontology. However, the observation of transformation seems to apply as much to non-linguistic things (*wu* 物) in nature as to language.

It is important to observe that Zhuangzi in being concerned with process and transformation does no violence to his non-dogmatic skepticism. He does not dogmatically assert that the world is characterized by process and change. It is enough for him to record his observation of transformation and change. This non-dogmatically expressed cosmology of transformation is linked with his epistemological recommendations of locating oneself in the axis or hinge of *dao* (*dao shu* 道樞) and resting in the potter’s wheel of *tian* (*xiu hu tianjun* 休乎天鈞/均), whereby one is able to observe the revolutions of the changing

---

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

circumstances and appreciate the harmony among pairs of opposites.<sup>96</sup> As noted in Chapter 1, Heraclitus' conception of the interconnectedness of opposites suggests that apparent opposites are in some sense interconnected. As the interconnectedness of opposites is closely related to a flux ontology for Heraclitus, Zhuangzi's observations concerning process and change are closely related to his aporetic linguistic skepticism.

It will be recalled here that Aenesidemus postulated a relationship between the skeptic way and Heracliteanism that Sextus rejected. I suggested in the last chapter that although there is no necessary connection between the two, that is to say, non-dogmatic skepticism and Heracliteanism are not mutually entailing and the two are logically independent, the Heraclitean has a choice of how strongly he wishes to cling to his ontological observations. He also seems to have a choice in terms of the attitude or position toward language he wishes to adopt. Since it is an open question as to whether a Heraclitean would cling to dogmas about flux and the interconnectedness of opposites or rather express these as non-dogmatic empirical observations, I suggest that a cosmology of process and transformation can accompany and complement a (non-dogmatic) skeptical epistemology. I further suggest that this approach resonates significantly with the *Zhuangzi*.

Let us return now to the question of the precise manner in which ontology/cosmology and epistemology are linked for both Heraclitus and Zhuangzi. We experience the opposites of summer and winter as flowing into one another cosmologically, and we can describe them epistemologically as significantly interconnected. There is for Heraclitus, as for Zhuangzi, a cyclical process whereby one

---

<sup>96</sup> Hansen, "A *Tao* of *Tao* in Chuang-tzu", *op. cit.*, 47.

of a pair of opposites transforms into the other: life becomes death as part of the larger life process, young becomes old, waking becomes sleeping, and day becomes night. However, one significant difference between them on this question lies in the fact that Heraclitus interpreted the pairs of opposites as being agonistically at war with one another, whereas Zhuangzi saw them as potentially capable of being harmonized and made most productive by the sage's non-coercive action (*wu wei* 無爲).

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION: SKEPTICISM AS A WAY OF LIVING: POSITIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following quotation, Zhuangzi provides some recommendations as to how to respond efficaciously to the situation of competing alternative points of view:

物无非彼。物无非是。自彼則不見。自知則知之。故曰。彼出於是。是亦因彼。彼是。方生之說也。雖然。方生方死。方死方生。方可方不可。方不可方可。因是因非。因非因是。是以聖人不由。而照之於天。亦因是也。是亦彼也。彼亦是也。彼亦一是非。此亦一是非。果且有彼是乎哉。果且无彼是乎哉。彼是莫得其偶。謂之道樞。樞始得其環中。以應无窮。是亦一无窮。非亦一无窮也。故曰。莫若以明。<sup>97</sup>

Among things-and-events, there is none that is not other (*bi* 彼). Among things-and-events, there is none that is not this, the one in question (*shi* 是). If one views them from the other, one does not see them. If one knows them from oneself, then one knows them. Therefore I say, "The other emerges from this. This also accords with the other. This is to say, the other and this accord with each other. Even so, as soon as something is living, it is dying. And as soon as it is dying, it is living. As soon as it is acceptable, it is unacceptable. As soon as it is unacceptable, it is acceptable. Accommodating affirmation (*yin shi* 因是), it accommodates denial (*yin fei* 因非). Accommodating denial (*yin fei*), it accommodates affirmation (*yin shi*). For this reason, the sage does not proceed in this way and illuminates them in *tian* 天, which is also an accommodating affirmation. This is also the other. The other is also this. The other also is continuously affirmed and denied. This is also continuously affirmed and denied. Are there really the other and this? Or are there not really the other and this? When neither the other nor this gains its counterpart, we call it the axis of *dao* (*daoshu* 道樞<sup>98</sup>). When the axis begins to obtain the center of its circle, it thereby responds without end. This is also continuously without end. Not this is also continuously without end. Therefore, I say, nothing is like using awareness (*ming* 明).<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> See section 4.4 below for more on these recommendations.

<sup>97</sup> 4/2/27-31.

<sup>98</sup> 'Shu 樞' can also be translated as "pivot" or "hinge".

<sup>99</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 52-53 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 39-40.



In this quotation, Zhuangzi does not assert a preference in any given pair of opposites. Neither life nor death is conceived of as intrinsically better than its counterpart. As Coutinho writes, “Zhuangzi maintains that what appear to be antagonistic dichotomies are really interdependent and complementary.”<sup>100</sup> What is rendered here (and in other passages) as ‘acceptable’ is the word, ‘*ke* 可’.<sup>101</sup> This is the word that the later Mohists used for the assertibility of a proposition. It is arguable that Zhuangzi had some degree of familiarity with the later Mohist works on logic. Based on the correlative thinking that pervades much of Chinese thought and culture, acceptability (of a proposition) evokes unacceptability (*bu ke* 不可), just as *shi* and *fei* evoke each other. Zhuangzi suggests that the sage does not favor one side of a distinction over the other. Rather, he accepts them both together as correlatives. Because of this, it is inconclusive as to whether there is really a fixed distinction. Therefore, in illuminating the alternatives in *tian* (*zhao zhi yu tian* 照之於天), the sage occupies a neutral ground, where no single point of view is dominant and from where he can adaptively respond to the situation according to the changing circumstances (*yin shi* 因是). This non-preference for either side of any given distinction is consistent with aporetic skepticism as follows. For Zhuangzi, to make use of awareness (*ming* 明) of the plurality of perspectives is the first step in harmonizing the cacophony of disagreement that arises from various individuals and competing lineages making excessively specific determinations about *shi* and *fei*. One who uses *ming* rests in the *dao shu* 道樞 (the axis, hinge, or pivot of *dao*). The epistemological concerns in this passage are directly linked

---

<sup>100</sup> Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 54.

<sup>101</sup> ‘*Ke* 可’ can also mean ‘possible’.

with Zhuangzi's perspective on cosmology. Pairs of opposites are mutually dependent and correlative based on the experience of the world as in process and flux. Living is an inexorable process that includes dying, and dying in turn is a process that engenders new living things. This cyclical interchanging and interconnection of opposites in an ongoing process was a general characteristic of Chinese cosmology and commonsense.

In the passage that is known as "Three in the Morning", Zhuangzi expands upon his recommendations for how to act.

勞神明爲一。而不知其同也。謂之朝三。何謂朝三。狙公賦茅。曰。朝三而暮四。衆狙皆怒。曰。然則朝四而暮三。衆狙皆悅。名實未虧。而喜怒爲用。亦因是也。是以勝人和之以是非。而休乎天鈞<sup>102</sup>。是之謂兩行。<sup>103</sup>

To exhaust one's spirit and awareness and to regard them as one, without realizing that they are the same, we call this 'Three in the Morning'. What is referred to as 'Three in the Morning'? A monkey keeper in giving chestnuts said, "Three in the morning and four in the evening." All the monkeys were furious. He said, "If this is so, then four in the morning and three in the evening." The monkeys were all delighted. While the name (*ming* 名) and the actuality (*shi* 實) were not lacking, their happiness and anger were in use. This is also accommodating affirmation (*yin shi*). For this reason, the sage harmonizes the alternatives with affirmation and denial, and rests in the potter's wheel of *tian* (*tianjun* 天鈞/均). This is called 'letting both alternatives proceed'.<sup>104</sup>

The perspective of the monkeys changed with regard to the number of chestnuts they were allotted in the morning and in the evening, even though the total number was quantitatively the same on any given day. Zhuangzi thinks that this foolishness is similar to that of the Confucians and Mohists, who argue for the final correctness of their points of view.

Zhuangzi's conception of the sage is that of one who appeases those who hold to rigid points of view in the same way that the monkey keeper appeased the monkeys. On this point, Munro writes, "The Taoist [Daoist] sage 'rests in the Heavenly pivot [*xiu hu tianjun*

---

<sup>102</sup> One edition has 'jun 均' (equal, even, level, fair, all, also, a potter's wheel) for 'jun 鈞' (a unit of weight equal to 30 catties, you, your). It is worth noting a degree of synonymy between 'jun 均' and the 'qi 齊' of 'Qiwulun'.

休乎天鈞]’ and views everything as the same. He is tranquil because he has developed the mental state of emptiness and does not make judgments or evaluative statements about things.”<sup>105</sup> However, this is not to say that Zhuangzi’s vision of the Daoist sage is a person who has no positive recommendations to offer; far from it, he recommends specific practices that are intended to be productive of a good life lived well.

In chapter 4 of the *Zhuangzi*, ‘*Renjianshi* 人閒世’ (“Among the Human World”) the ideal condition of the heart-mind, namely emptiness or vacuity (*xu* 虛), is developed further:

仲尼曰。齋。吾將語若。有<sup>106</sup>而爲之。其易邪。易之者~~碑~~天不宜。顏回曰。回之家貧。唯不飲酒不茹葷者數月矣。如此則可以爲齋乎。曰。是祭祀之齋。非心齋也。回曰。敢問心齋。仲尼曰。若一志。无聽之以耳。而聽之以心。无聽之以心。而聽之以氣。聽止於耳。<sup>107</sup>心止於符。氣也者虛而待物者也。唯道集虛。虛者心齋也。顏回曰。回之未始得使。實自回也。得使之也。未始有回也。可謂虛乎。夫子曰。盡矣。吾語若。若能入遊其樊。而無感其名。入則鳴。不入則止。無門無毒。一宅而寓於不得已。則幾矣。絕迹易。无行地難。爲人使易以僞。聞以有翼飛者矣。未聞以无翼飛者也。聞以有知知者矣。未聞以无知知者也。瞻彼闕者。虛室生白。吉祥止止。夫且不止。是之謂坐馳。夫徇耳目內通。而外於心知。鬼神將來舍。而況人乎。是萬物之化也。禹舜之所紐也。伏戲几蘧之所行終。而況散焉者乎。<sup>108</sup>

Zhongni 仲尼 [Confucius] said, “Fast, and I will tell you. Once you have fixed dispositions, is that not too easy? If it is too easy, it is not suitable for the bright heavens.” Yan Hui said, “My family is poor. I have already not drunk wine or eaten meat in several months. It being like this, can this then be regarded as fasting?” He replied, “This is the fasting of sacrifice, and is not the fasting of the heart-mind (*xin zhai* 心齋).” Hui said, “May I dare ask about the fasting of the heart-mind?” Zhongni answered, “Unify your purposes (*zhi* 志). Do not listen with your ears, but listen with your heart-mind, or rather, do not listen with your heart-mind, but listen with the *qi* 氣. The ears stop at listening. The heart-mind stops at being in agreement with thought. As for *qi*, it is empty (*xu* 虛) and contains things-and-events. Only *dao* collects emptiness. That which is empty is fasting.” Yan Hui said, “My not yet having obtained instruction, I was actually thinking from my own point of view. Once having obtained the instruction, there was not yet a Hui. Can this be considered

<sup>103</sup> 5/2/37-40.

<sup>104</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 54 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>105</sup> Munro, *op. cit.*, 154.

<sup>106</sup> Supplying the character, ‘*xin* 心,’ which appears to have been omitted.

<sup>107</sup> It has been supposed that ‘*ting zhi yu er* 聽止於耳’ is a transposition of ‘*er zhi yu ting* 耳止於聽’. I follow this emendation in my translation.

<sup>108</sup> 9/4/24-34.

emptiness?” The master replied, “You have exhausted it, I am telling you. You can enter [Wei 衛] and roam free within the cage, without feeling a need for reputation. If your words are accepted, then call out, but if they are not accepted, then stop. Do not give him [the ruler of Wei] a door or an objective. If you unify your residence and lodge in what you cannot stop, then this is close. To break off making traces is easy, but not to walk on the ground is hard. To do human activities is easy. You have heard of using wings to fly, but you have not yet heard of flying without wings. You have heard of using knowledge to know, but you have not yet heard of using no knowledge to know. Look up at that emptiness, the empty room, which generates light. It is auspicious to stop. If you do not settle, this is called ‘a seated gallop’. If you follow the ears and eyes, you will inwardly have a penetrating understanding, and your wisdom will be placed outside your heart-mind. Ghosts and spirits will come into you and lodge there, how much more so what is human? This is to transform with the myriad things and events, the pivot of Yu 禹 and Shun 舜, and the completion of the practices of Fuxi 伏羲 [伏羲] and Jiqu 几蘧. How much more should it apply to inferior persons?”<sup>109</sup>

In this passage, the character of Confucius describes what appears to be a meditative practice designed to bring about a disposition of emptiness in one’s heart-mind.<sup>110</sup> The

<sup>109</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzú: The Inner Chapters*, 68-69 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 57-58.

<sup>110</sup> See also the opening passage of the ‘*Qiwulun*,’ wherein a similar cultivation practice is described: 南郭子綦隱几而坐。仰天而噓。蒼焉似喪其耦。顏成子游立侍乎前。曰。何居乎。形固可使如槁木。而心固可使如死灰乎。今之隱几者非昔之隱几者也。子綦曰。偃。不亦善乎而問之也。今者吾喪我。汝知之乎。(3/2/1-3)

Nanguo Ziqi 南郭子綦 was leaning on a table and sitting. He looked up at the sky and exhaled. With the appearance of having separated from his body, he seemed to have lost his counterpart. Yancheng Ziyou 顏成子游 was standing in attendance in front of him, and asked, “Where do you reside? Can the bodily form be made to resemble dry wood, and the heart-mind to resemble dead ashes? The one leaning on the table now is not the one leaning on the table before.” Ziqi said, “Yan 偃, your asking it is good. Just now, I lost me. Did you know it?”

Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzú: The Inner Chapters*, 48 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 36. See chapter 6, ‘*Dazongshi* 大宗師’ (“The Great Master”) for another passage that is frequently discussed together with these two:

顏回曰。回益矣。仲尼曰。何謂也。曰。回忘仁義矣。曰。可矣。猶未也。他日復見。曰。回益矣。曰。何謂也。曰。回忘禮樂矣。曰。可矣。猶未也。他日復見。曰。回益矣。曰。何謂也。曰。回坐忘矣。仲尼蹙然曰。何謂坐忘。顏回曰。墮肢體。黜聰明。離形去知。同於大通。此謂坐忘。仲尼曰。同則无好也。化則无常也。而果其賢乎。丘也請從而後也。(19/6/89-93)

Yan Hui 顏回 said, “I have improved.” Zhongni 仲尼 [Confucius] asked, “What are you referring to?” He replied, “I have forgotten authoritative humanity (*ren* 仁) and appropriateness (*yi* 義).” The reply was, “Acceptable, but you still have not yet reached it.” Another day, he saw Confucius again and said, “I have improved.” Confucius asked, “What are you referring to?” He replied, “I have forgotten ritual propriety (*li* 禮) and music (*yue* 樂).” The reply was, “Acceptable, but you still have not yet reached it.” Another day, he again saw Confucius and said, “I have improved.” Confucius asked, “What are you referring to?” He replied, “I sit in forgetfulness (*zuowang* 坐忘) now.” Zhongni nervously asked, “What do you mean by ‘sitting in forgetfulness’?” Yan Hui responded, “Drop off your limbs and body, eliminate the faculties of hearing and seeing (cleverness), part from your bodily form, dispense with wisdom, and merge with the

practice specifically involves adopting an attitude of ‘*wu zhi* 无知’, translated literally as “not knowing”, sometimes rendered as ‘ignorance’, but perhaps best understood as “unmediated knowing or realization.” Thus, *wu zhi* is understood as a spiritual achievement, which results from the practice of *xin zhai* (the fasting of the heart-mind). This passage recommends a practice that is consistent with the sage’s activities of “harmonizing the alternatives with affirmation and denial, resting in the potter’s wheel of *tian*, and letting both alternatives proceed,” described in the “Three in the Morning” passage. David McCraw applies the term, ‘*epochē*’ to the line about “roaming free within the cage”: “Confucius’ ode to spiritual epokhe [*sic*] as foundation for political involvement recapitulates the passage’s main motifs: the heart’s empty room as a cage that lets one roam free; and images of flight, which climax with its concluding, ambiguously evocative ‘sitting gallop.’”<sup>111</sup> It is worth observing that both the Pyrrhonist philosophy and the *Zhuangzi* are presented in negative discourse.<sup>112</sup> A possible explanation for this tendency is that there is a certain degree of modesty and humility, as well as subtlety that attends such an approach. Neither the Pyrrhonists nor *Zhuangzi* assume that there is a right way of being to which they have unique and privileged access. Rather, there is a genuine open-mindedness and accommodation of diverse points of view. The negative expression can thus be regarded as a ground for pluralism, a theme to which I shall return in the conclusion.

---

great thoroughfare (*datong* 大通). This is what I call ‘sitting in forgetfulness.’” Zhongni said, “If you merge with it, then you are without preferences (*wu hao* 无好). If you transform, then you are without persistence (*wu chang* 无常). You are truly worthy! I would like to request permission to follow you as a disciple.”

Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 92 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 90-91. It has been noted that these three passages are examples of the *Zhuangzi* significantly influencing Chan 禪 (Japanese: Zen) Buddhism. Interestingly, the Daoist notion of ‘*wang* 忘’ (forgetting) might be considered an interesting functional equivalent for the Greek skeptics’ ‘*epochē*’ (withholding, suspending).

<sup>111</sup> David McCraw, “Pursuing *Zhuangzi* as Rhymester: A Snark-hunt in Eight Fits”. *Sino-Platonic Papers*, Number 67, April 1995, 8.

We again see Zhuangzi's positive recommendations for living a significant life in the following passage.

何謂和之以天倪<sup>113</sup>。曰。是不是。然不然。是若果是也。則是之異乎不是也亦无辯。然若果然也。則然之異乎不然也亦无辯。化聲之相待。和之以天倪。因之以曼衍。所以窮年也。<sup>114</sup>

What is referred to as harmonizing them [the alternatives] on the grindstone of *tian* (*tianni* 天倪)? It is said, "This and not this, so and not so." If this is really like this, then the difference between this and not this is surely without a distinction<sup>115</sup>. If so is really like so, then the difference between so and not so is surely without a distinction. The mutual alternation of the transforming sounds, harmonize them on the grindstone of *tian*, accord with their endless transformations and thereby come to the end of your years.<sup>116</sup>

Linking the closely related notions of the potter's wheel of *tian*, referred to above in the "Three in the Morning" story, and the grindstone of *tian*, Coutinho writes, "Both wheels revolve about an empty space [*wu*] 無 through which passes an invisible axis *shu* 樞.

The function of the potter's wheel is to build things up, that of the grindstone is to wear things down."<sup>117</sup> And again,

[...] harmonizing with the grindstone of nature has to do with opposites, specifically the opposites of affirming and not affirming, and the opposites of being so and not being so. Again, these opposites are placed side by side in a manner that, if not contradictory, is at least paradoxical. The point might be one of the alternation of opposites: affirming and not affirming, attributing and not attributing, and this would certainly follow the image of circularity of the activity of the grindstone. [...] Perhaps, then, with the grindstone we not only juxtapose the opposites, but somehow blend them together, allowing them to manifest simultaneously.<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> This observation also applies to Buddhist philosophy.

<sup>113</sup> In a quotation from the 'Yiwenzhi 藝文志' chapter of the *Qian Hanshu* 前漢書 by Ban Gu 班固 (32 – 92 CE), 'tianni 天倪' appears as 'tianyan 天研' 'Yan 研' means 'to grind, grindstone'. The character, 'ni 倪' appeared above in 'Wang Ni 王倪', whose name I translated as 'Kingly Boundary'. Some scholars such as Kjellberg and Coutinho have translated 'Wang Ni' in relation to 'tianni', so Kjellberg translates the proper name as 'Royal Relativity' and the philosophical term as "Natural Relativity" or "Heaven's relativity". See Kjellberg, *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*, 131, and "Zhuangzi" in Ivanhoe and Van Norden, *op. cit.*, 218. Coutinho translates 'Wang Ni' as "Royal Grindstone" and 'tianni' as "the grindstone of *tian*". See Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 32. Cheng translates 'tianni' as 'natural relations'. See Cheng, *op. cit.*, 145.

<sup>114</sup> 7/2/90-92.

<sup>115</sup> Reading 'bian 辨' for 'bian 辯'.

<sup>116</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 60 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 48-49.

<sup>117</sup> Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 16.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

Callahan also discusses the two concepts together:

[...] the opposites—the *shil/fei*—are sharpened on a metaphorical block. This sharpening out is not a grinding down of conventional language through diurnal [*sic*] experience as some contend. Rather it is a harmonizing that allows the diversity of the *shil/fei* distinction, for the character in question is *he* 和, which means “to harmonize” and “to mix.” The sharpened *shil/fei* judgments are interchanged and equalized, and even accumulated on the whetstone of Nature. The accumulation is relative to the circumstances of the situation at hand, for we must recognize that the whetstone and the potter’s wheel are not universal principles, but “tools” used in specific situations. Without *ming* we are tools of the various discourses; with *ming* they can also become our tools.<sup>119</sup>

Treating the concepts of *tianjun* and *tianni* together is a sound procedure as they are equated in the following passage:

寓言十九。重言十七。卮言日出。和以天倪。寓言十九。藉外論之。親父不爲其子媒。親父譽之。不若非其父者也。非吾罪也。人之罪也。與己同則應。不與己同則反。同於己爲是之。異於己爲非之。重言十七。所以己言也。是爲耆艾。年先矣。而无經緯本末以期年耆者。是非先也。人而无以先人。无人道也。人而无人道。是之謂陳人。卮言日出。和以天倪。因以曼衍。所以窮年。不言則齊。齊與言不齊。言與齊不齊也。故曰无言。言无言。終身言。未嘗不言。終不身言。未嘗不言。有自也而可。有自也而不可。有自也而然。有自也而不然。惡乎然。然於然。惡乎不然。不然於不然。惡乎可。可於可。惡乎不可。不可於不可。物固有所然。物固有所可。无物不然。无物不可。非卮言日出。和以天倪。孰得其久。萬物皆種也。以不同形相禪。始卒若環。莫得其倫。是謂天均。天均者。天倪也。<sup>120</sup>

Lodged words (*yuyan* 寓言) are effective nine out of ten times, weighted words (*zhongyan* 重言<sup>121</sup>) are effective seven out of ten times, but goblet words (*zhiyan* 卮言<sup>122</sup>) emerge anew on a daily basis and harmonize on the grindstone of *tian*. ‘Lodged words are effective nine out of ten times’ means discoursing on it outside of pretexts. A father does not act as a matchmaker on behalf of his son, because a father praising him is not as good as someone other than his father praising him. The burden of proof is not mine, but that of other people. If my point of view and his are in agreement, then he responds. If

<sup>119</sup> Callahan, *op. cit.*, 184.

<sup>120</sup> 75/27/1-10.

<sup>121</sup> Some have chosen to read this as ‘*chongyan* 重言’ and have accordingly translated it as “repeated words” or “quotations”. See for example, Frederic Henry Balfour, trans., *The Divine Classic of Nan-hua; Being the Works of Chuang Tsz, Taoist Philosopher* (Shanghai & Hongkong: Kelly & Walsh [Yokohama: Kelly & Co., London: Trübner & Co.], 1881) 339, James R. Ware, trans., *The Sayings of Chuang Tzu*, 344, Watson, *op. cit.*, 303, Victor H. Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, 278, and Martin Palmer with Elizabeth Breuilley, Chang Wai Ming, and Jay Ramsay, trans., *The Book of Chuang Tzu* (London: Arkana/Penguin Books, 1996) 244.

<sup>122</sup> Also written, ‘*zhiyan* 卮言’.

they are not in agreement, then he turns away. What is in agreement he affirms in a contrived or artificial<sup>123</sup> manner (*wei shi* 爲是). What is not in agreement he denies in a contrived or artificial manner (*wei fei* 爲非). ‘Weighted words are effective seven out of ten times’ means that by which one brings one’s words to an end<sup>124</sup>. This is the situation of elders coming first on account of their years. If one lacks the main points and the roots and the branches while being in one’s elder years, this is not to be ahead. If such a person is not ahead of others, then he has not the *dao* of human beings. If a person lacks the *dao* of human beings, he is called an old and stale person. Goblet words emerge anew on a daily basis, harmonize on the grindstone of *tian*, accord with the endless transformations, and thereby enable one to come to the end of his years. If one does not speak, then things are even (*qi* 齊). What is even together with the words is uneven. The words and what is even are uneven. Therefore, this is called ‘non-referential speaking’ (*wu yan* 无言). Speaking for one’s entire life is not yet having had the experience of not speaking; not speaking for one’s entire life is not yet having had the experience of not speaking. From one standpoint, it is acceptable, and from another it is not acceptable. From one perspective it is so, and from another perspective it is not so. How is it so? It is so by being so. How is it not so? It is not so by being not so. How is it acceptable? It is acceptable by being acceptable. How is it unacceptable? It is unacceptable by being unacceptable. Things-and-events certainly have that which is so of them. Things and events certainly have that which is acceptable about them. No thing is not so. No thing is not acceptable. Without goblet words emerging daily and harmonizing on the grindstone of *tian*, who would be able to keep it up for long? The myriad things are all from seeds and on account of their different forms they abdicate from one to the next. In the beginning and at the end, they are like a circle, whose series none is able to obtain. This is called the potter’s wheel of *tian*. The potter’s wheel of *tian* is the grindstone of *tian*.<sup>125</sup>

The binomial term ‘*yuyan* 寓言’ in modern Chinese translates to “fable, allegory, parable” and, by extension, “metaphor”. Mair considers ‘*yuyan*’ as a binomial in the classical language, and thus translates it as “metaphors”. Burton Watson renders it as “imputed words” and Graham translates it, based on the fact that ‘*yu* 寓’ means “to lodge”, as “Saying from a lodging-place”. Although Mair and Watson have succeeded in making sense out of the term, I follow Graham in translating it as “lodged words”. I favor this translation because there are many references to ‘*yu*’ (lodging) in the *Zhuangzi*,

<sup>123</sup> ‘*Wei* 爲’ (to deem, act, make, do) is cognate with ‘*wei* 僞’ (artifice). In fact, Coutinho understands ‘*wei shi* 爲是’ as ‘*wei shi* 僞是’ and translates the term as ‘artificial judgment’. See Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 97.

<sup>124</sup> Reading ‘*yi* 已’ for ‘*ji* 己’.

<sup>125</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 106-107 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 303-305.



several of which occur in the ‘*Qiwulun*’ which is significantly related to the ‘*Yuyan*’ chapter in several respects. For example, in the passage that follows, a person of penetrating understanding (*dazhe* 達者) is said to lodge (*yu*) conflicting alternatives in the usual (*yong* 庸):

爲是不用而寓諸庸。庸也者用也。用也者通也。<sup>126</sup>

Contrived or artificial affirmation (*wei shi* 爲是) he does not use, and lodges them [the alternatives] in the usual. As for the usual, it is useful. As for the useful, it interpenetrates.<sup>127</sup>

In fact, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) has claimed that the ‘*Yuyan* 寓言’ (“Lodged Words”) chapter can be considered a preface to the entire text of the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>128</sup>

I think it best to interpret the term, ‘*zhongyan* 重言’ as “weighted words”, that is words which carry the weight of authority, though the approach noted above that suggests interpreting this term as ‘*chongyan*’ and understanding it as “repeated words” or “quotations” is also acceptable for conveying this sense of authority. It is suggested that such weighted words bring an effective end to a persuasive speech, at least approximately seventy percent of the time. This is a common feature of the narrative as opposed to analytical approach generally adopted in classical Chinese philosophical texts. In the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), for example, the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經) is frequently cited to illustrate with some weight the philosophical point being addressed.

---

<sup>126</sup> 4-5/2/36-37.

<sup>127</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzŭ: The Inner Chapters*, 53-54 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 41. See Chapter 3, note 111 for a longer citation of this passage.

<sup>128</sup> 本篇和天下篇同是莊子全書的序例。

This chapter and the ‘*Tianxia*’ chapter together share in being a preface to the complete book, the *Zhuangzi*. Quoted in Huang Jinhong 黃錦鈺, ed., *Xinyi Zhuangzi Duben* 新譯莊子讀本 [*Zhuangzi: A New Annotated Reader*] (Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1974, 1996) 320.

Perhaps the most challenging of the three terms to get a handle on is ‘*zhiyan* 卮言’. A *zhi* 卮 (卮) is a wine vessel that tips when full and then straightens itself out when empty. Graham thus translates ‘*zhiyan*’ as “‘Spillover’ saying” and writes, “It is speech characterized by the intelligent spontaneity of Taoist [Daoist] behaviour in general, a fluid language which keeps its equilibrium through changing meanings and viewpoints.”<sup>129</sup> Ames and Hall write:

In *Zhuangzi* 27, this same idea [as in chapter 4 of the *Daodejing*] of inexhaustible novelty is applied linguistically with the notion of “goblet words (*zhiyan* 卮言).” “Goblet” words are words that are renewed with each use because when they are filled up with meaning, they tip themselves out, only to be filled again. Such language is appropriate to the fluidity and irreversibility of experience.<sup>130</sup>

Cheng has pointed out that with *zhiyan*, language becomes highly expressive, a free and spontaneous overflowing means of expression.<sup>131</sup> For *Zhuangzi*, language is performative, and is not something that can be sharply distinguished from other forms of action. Poetic language of the sort *Zhuangzi* uses creates an ambiance of associations. A goblet is empty on the inside and this resonates with the image of the empty heart-mind discussed above. *Zhiyan* as ‘overflowing goblet language’ is directly related to the idea of “harmonizing on the grindstone of *tian* and according with the endless transformations.” McCraw gives a nice summary of the three kinds of speech in an effort to apply them to an analysis of rhyme in the *Zhuangzi*:

**Lodged** words adopt, adapt, and/or parodize viewpoints of some --usually dramatized-- speaker; **heavy** words get weighted by didactic authority and/or by force of the speaker’s own discursive argument; **spillover** words, the least remote from our notions of lyric effusion, keep a zany, fluid equilibrium among changing meanings and viewpoints [...].

<sup>129</sup> Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 107.

<sup>130</sup> Ames and Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant*, 84.

<sup>131</sup> Cheng, *Philosophy* 672: “Taoism [Daoism]” seminar at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, March 7, 1999.

We find all kinds in Zzian [Zhuangzian] verse, and the three-part typology does appeal.<sup>132</sup>

It is fitting to conclude this chapter with a discussion of this passage concerning Zhuangzi's interest in language as it ties in nicely with the earlier discussion of his language skepticism.

The passage concludes by equating *tianjun* (the potter's wheel of *tian*) with *tianni* (the grindstone of *tian*). The sage uses both of these correlative concepts to harmonize conflicting alternatives in an accommodating and adaptive manner. As Coutinho observes:

But the grindstone of nature is also the potter's wheel of nature. [...] The potter's wheel is also huge and heavy, and relentless in its revolutions. But rather than being slow and breaking things down, the potter's wheel is quick and builds things up. The grindstone is *yin*; the potter's wheel is *yang*. But they are also one and the same! The processes of transformation by which things develop and break down are the very same processes by which they develop and grow.<sup>133</sup>

Zhuangzi's recommendations for pragmatic action include using illumined awareness (*ming*) and accommodating affirmation (*yin shi*) to harmonize (*he*) the multiplicity of *shifei* distinctions on the grindstone of *tian* (*tianni*), to rest in the potter's wheel of *tian* (*tianjun*), and thereby to allow the axis of *dao* to find its center from which the sage can adaptively respond without end. Thus, in observing the difficulty involved in the encounter with conflicting alternatives and in presenting the pragmatic advice that it does, the *Zhuangzi* moves from non-dogmatic skepticism to the way-making (*dao*) that is construed as a central component of a productive life.

In the next chapter, I will examine the work of a number of contemporary scholars including Robert E. Allinson, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Bryan W. Van Norden, et al., and Chad

---

<sup>132</sup> McCraw, *op. cit.*, 7.

Hansen. These scholars construe ‘skepticism’ as limited to its modern formulation, that is, as an extreme negative, dogmatic, and anti-intellectual philosophical *position*, amounting to the idea that it is impossible in some important sense for human beings to attain knowledge. Their understanding of ‘skepticism’ in this impoverished, pejorative, and anti-intellectual sense results in confusion of several kinds. For example, these scholars, on this basis, have either denied that there is skepticism in the *Zhuangzi* or have claimed that its presence creates significant interpretive challenges. Having articulated my own positive interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* here, which centrally involves understanding Zhuangzi’s skepticism as non-dogmatic in character<sup>134</sup>, I will thus endeavor to trace out the consequences and liabilities of applying a dogmatic formulation of skepticism to the text.

---

<sup>133</sup> Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 98.

<sup>134</sup> It is also rhetorical, pragmatic, and aesthetic in my view, though I have not specifically argued this here.

CHAPTER 5  
THE MISATTRIBUTION OF DOGMATIC SKEPTICISM TO THE *ZHUANGZI* 莊子

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I survey the work of a number of contemporary Western scholars, who overlap in construing ‘skepticism’ as it applies to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 as an extreme negative, dogmatic, and anti-intellectual philosophical *position*. As a general rule, these scholars either argue that there is no skepticism in the *Zhuangzi* or construe the chief interpretive problem of the text as the reconciliation of the skeptical passages with the positive spiritual message that is also contained in the text. For instance, Robert E. Allinson conflates skepticism with a pernicious, thoroughgoing, ‘anything goes’ relativism: “If one takes the thesis of thoroughgoing relativism seriously, one must be a skeptic. One is therefore not even in a position to advocate one’s relativism.”<sup>1</sup> On this basis, he rejects both the skeptical and relativist interpretations of the text. Philip J. Ivanhoe and several other scholars, who claim that the function of Zhuangzi’s skepticism is *therapeutic*, have suggested that we must not take seriously the ‘seemingly’ skeptical passages in the text because their negative, anti-intellectual message conflicts with the positive skill passages that recommend the cultivation of consummate talent.<sup>2</sup> One virtue of these interpretations is their effort to locate the philosophical project of the *Zhuangzi* in the realm of ethics rather than epistemology. Chad Hansen is another thinker who has applied skepticism in its modern formulation as negative dogmatism in his interpretation

---

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, 111.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Philip J. Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*”, and “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?” in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 196-214. See also Bryan W. Van Norden, *op. cit.* and Eric Schwitzgebel, “Zhuangzi’s Attitude Toward Language and His Skepticism” in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 68.

of the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>3</sup> However, he differs in significant ways from Allinson and the group of “therapeutic skepticism” interpreters in construing the text as advocating a version of political liberalism *rather than* spiritual guidance.<sup>4</sup>

## 5.2 ROBERT E. ALLINSON

Robert E. Allinson in his book, *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation: An Analysis of the Inner Chapters*<sup>5</sup>, argues that the central theme of the *Zhuangzi* is spiritual transformation:

The major objective of the text is to facilitate and to describe spiritual transformation. The accent is equally on what one is transformed *from* and what one is transformed *to*. One is transformed from the mental prison of differing and competing conceptual belief systems, but this does not imply that one is transformed to some kind of skeptical relativism.<sup>6</sup>

He claims that Zhuangzi cannot be a relativist because of the untenability of that position and its inconsistency with what he takes to be the central theme of the work, namely spiritual transformation. However, Allinson in freely conflating relativism with skepticism

---

<sup>3</sup> Although his characterization of skepticism as negative dogmatism is not made explicit in “A Tao of Tao in Chuang-tzu” and “Zhuangzi: Discriminating about Discriminating”, Chapter 8 of *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*, he specifically applies Alvin I. Goldman’s definition of ‘skepticism’ to Zhuangzi in his most recent paper on the subject, “Guru or Skeptic? Relativistic Skepticism in the *Zhuangzi*” in Scott Cook, ed., *Hiding the World in the World: Uneven Discourses on the Zhuangzi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003) 128-162.

<sup>4</sup> Lisa Raphals aptly observes that, “[...] most of these discussions [those of Hansen, Allinson, and Ivanhoe] do not distinguish skeptical doctrines from skeptical recommendations.” See “Skeptical Strategies in the *Zhuangzi* and *Theaetetus*” in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> See Allinson, *op. cit.*, especially Chapters 8 and 9, entitled “The Question of Relativism” and “The Origin of the Relativistic Thesis”, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 111. Allinson has noticed that an important theme of the text is that of transformation (*hua* 化). However, he seems to overstate his claim when he identifies this as *the* central theme of this arguably multi-authored text. His claim that the “objective” of the text is to bring about a spiritual transformation in the reader similarly goes against the tendency for Chinese thinkers to see process and change as continuous, without a final end or *telos*. It is worth noting that Kuang-ming Wu 吳光明 takes an approach similar to Allinson on the issue of the transformative effect the text is supposed to have on the reader. See Kuang-ming Wu, *Chuang Tzu: World Philosopher at Play* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982) 7. The analyses of both Allinson and Wu depend upon the idea of interpreting the text of the *Zhuangzi* as a whole, despite their acceptance of the well-known supposition that the text was composed by many hands over a period of time and suffers many textual corruptions. Wu, in particular, is interested in the fabric of the text as a whole, more than the philosophical content of a subset of its chapters. Like Allinson, his point is that the text is performative in so far as it brings about some kind of change in the reader. This approach differs from mine

displays an inadequate understanding of both, as evidenced in the quotation above.<sup>7</sup>

Allinson's confusion of skepticism with relativism is made even more apparent in his definition of what he calls 'Hard Relativism': "Hard Relativism is a position which makes Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi] out to be a skeptic in the strongest possible sense: all values are to be taken as equivalent to all other values."<sup>8</sup> What follows the colon in this quotation does not qualify as skepticism of either the ancient or modern varieties, but rather, is an expression of a strong form of axiological relativism.<sup>9</sup>

Allinson calls his own position Asymmetrical Relativism or Either Relativism and Non-Relativism, though I cannot understand the grammar of this second label. He argues that the positive expressions of awakening, as most clearly exemplified in the various dream passages and most particularly, the one that follows, are all on a "higher axiological plane" than the passages that articulate relativism.<sup>10</sup> Allinson bases much of his interpretation on the following passage from the '*Qiwulun* 齊物論' ("Discussion on Giving Parity to Things and Events"):

---

in so far as I think it necessary to bear in mind the significant features of the composition and redaction of the text.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 111. In Chapter 8 of his book, "The Question of Relativism," Allinson attempts to give a breakdown of five forms of relativism that interpreters have attributed to the *Zhuangzi* and the interpreters he believes to fall under each description. These are not really forms of relativism so much as they are loose characterizations of various interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*. The five are: 1) Hard Relativism (H.G. Creel, Chad Hansen, Lars Hansen, Livia Knaul [Kohn], Wing-tsit Chan [with reservations]), 2) Soft Relativism (Antonio S. Cua, the later A.C. Graham, David B. Wong), 3) Neither Relativism nor Non-Relativism (Graham Parkes, the early A.C. Graham), 4) Both Relativism and Non-Relativism (Russell Goodman), and 5) Asymmetrical Relativism (also known ungrammatically and incomprehensibly as "Either Relativism and Non-Relativism") (Robert E. Allinson). Allinson admits that this schematic representation is his own and that the scholars he mentions would not necessarily refer to themselves with these labels.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>9</sup> The sentence, "All values are to be taken as equivalent to all other values," expresses a version of 'anything goes' relativism about values.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

方其夢也不知其夢也。夢之中又占其夢焉。覺而後知其夢也。且有大覺而後知此其大夢也。而愚者自以爲覺。竊竊然知之。君乎牧<sup>11</sup>乎。固哉。丘也與女皆夢也。予謂女夢亦夢也。<sup>12</sup>

During one's own dream one does not realize that one is dreaming. In a dream one may interpret another dream within it. Only after waking does one realize that one was dreaming. And this is to have a great awakening (*da jue* 大覺) and only then realize that this is a great dream (*da meng* 大夢). And yet the simple-minded think they themselves are awake. They seem to know this with an air of confidence. Lords and shepherds are obstinate in this confidence. [Kong] Qiu 丘<sup>13</sup> and you are both dreaming. I, who say that you are dreaming, am also dreaming.<sup>14</sup>

The Qing 清 scholar, Wang Xianqian 王先謙 writes in his commentary on this passage:

死爲大覺，則生是大夢。<sup>15</sup>

If death is the great awakening, then life is the great dream.

Wang's analysis undermines Allinson's interpretation.<sup>16</sup> Allinson argues that relativism is Zhuangzi's penultimate position; it "[...] applies only within the realm of opinions and arguments of the unenlightened mind, or, as Plato would put it, within the realm of *doxa* or opinion [...]."<sup>17</sup> Here he invokes a Platonic "two worlds" metaphysic that is alien to the cultural world of classical China. In addition, he fails to give his basis for the claim that the passages concerning awakening are on a higher plane of values for Zhuangzi, when he earlier argued that both sides of the spiritual transformation are treated equally. He has thus contradicted himself on the issue of what status the 'relativistic' passages should be afforded in comparison with the passages on awakening: on the one hand, both are given equal

<sup>11</sup> One edition has '*qi* 跂 (an extra toe, crawling; to stand on tiptoe)' for '*mu* 牧 (shepherds)'.

<sup>12</sup> 6/2/81-83.

<sup>13</sup> '*Qiu* 丘' means "mound, hillock," but is best understood here as the proper noun that was Confucius [Kongzi 孔子]' first name, Kong Qiu 孔丘.

<sup>14</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 59-60 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 47-48.

<sup>15</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Zhuangzi Jijie* 莊子集解 (Taibei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1974) 16.

<sup>16</sup> David Loy follows Wang's interpretation: "We are all dreaming, which we will realize when we finally awaken. This assertion must be understood in its wider context, which wonders whether we are wrong to love life and hate death. Perhaps those who do so are exiles who have forgotten the way home. If so, life itself is the ultimate dream and death the ultimate awakening." See "Zhuangzi and Nāgārjuna on the Truth of No Truth" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 64.



weight, on the other, relativism is subordinate to enlightenment. He cannot have it both ways.

In Chapter 9 of his book, “The Origins of the Relativistic Thesis,” Allinson claims that a poor understanding of “the cognitive function of the dream metaphor” is one of the reasons that the *Zhuangzi* has been misread as expounding relativism: “[...] the cognitive benefit afforded by awakening is the movement into a state of knowledge. What one knows as the result of awakening is on a higher level—a level of truth—than what one knew while in a state of illusion.”<sup>18</sup> This view depends on his interpretation of the dream passage quoted above and is problematic in attributing a reality-appearance distinction to the *Zhuangzi*, a distinction that arguably was not a preoccupation of the mainstream of classical Chinese philosophy. Furthermore, there is no equivalent for the abstract noun, “truth” in the Classical Chinese of the Zhou 周 Dynasty.<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere in his curiously Platonic reading of the *Zhuangzi*, Allinson claims that, “The philosopher is the one who exists in the twilight zone between ignorance and knowledge; he has a foot in each realm.”<sup>20</sup> This Platonic “two worlds” metaphysic, with its inherent dualisms, goes against the grain of correlative thinking that arguably was the philosophical backdrop in which the *Zhuangzi*

---

<sup>17</sup> Allinson, *op. cit.*, 122.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 132. Notice that the description of knowledge and ignorance as ‘states’ implies a stasis that undermines the theme of transformation (*hua* 化) and is at variance with the suggestion that the ancient Chinese in general viewed the world as being characterized by process and change.

<sup>19</sup> See Christoph Harbsmeier, “Marginalia Sino-logica” in Robert E. Allinson, ed., *Understanding the Chinese Mind: The Philosophical Roots* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989b) 125-166, especially 129-130. The term, ‘*zhen* 真’ can be understood as equivalent to ‘true’ in the sense of ‘genuine or authentic’. In modern dictionaries using the 214 radical system, this character is classified under the ‘*mu* 目’ (“eye”) signific or radical. To the extent that a Chinese character is a semantic picture, ‘*zhen*’ suggests visual imagery for determining what is *zhen* (genuine, authentic) and what is not *zhen*. It suggests that one uses one’s eyes to judge the authenticity or genuineness of an object. A further interesting observation about ‘*zhen*’ is that it is not one of the most ancient among all Chinese characters. As far as can be ascertained, it does not occur on the oracle bones, which contain the earliest examples of Chinese writing. And interestingly, the term does not occur at all in the Confucian classics.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

was composed. In addition, Allinson seems to contradict his own interpretation of the great awakening, whereby the sage attains knowledge, because on this dualistic model, once knowledge is attained, there is no going back to ignorance.<sup>21</sup>

Another reason that Allinson thinks has made the relativist interpretation attractive to past interpreters of the text is that they have not drawn a clear enough distinction between the Inner, Outer, and Mixed Chapters.<sup>22</sup> For example, chapter 17, ‘*Qiushui* 秋水’ (“Autumn Floods”), he claims, is too often grouped with the Inner Chapters.<sup>23</sup> He argues that it offers a clear statement of relativism, but is one of the Outer Chapters, because it lacks the subtlety

<sup>21</sup> Allinson attributes the way in which the title of chapter two, ‘*Qiwulun* 齊物論’, has been translated and interpreted, as a further origin of the relativistic thesis. He gives two arguments that are supposed to show how the titling of chapter two has skewed the judgments made by interpreters and translators. His first argument is that since the chapter titles were selected by later editors of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and not by Zhuang Zhou 莊周 himself, they cannot be used to ascribe philosophical positions to the text. His second argument claims that certain translations of the title of chapter two come across as if the subject matter of the chapter is going to be a defense of relativism, as opposed to a neutral discussion of the doctrine. In translating ‘*Qiwulun* 齊物論’, one can emphasize the ‘*qi* 齊,’ which means ‘giving parity to, evening out, leveling, equalizing’, or one can emphasize the ‘*lun* 論’, which means ‘theory, discourse, sorting’. ‘*Wu* 物,’ according to Allinson, means ‘thing, kind’. Allinson’s favored translation of the title is “Discourse on the Equality (Equalization) of Things”. He cites the translations of Burton Watson (“Discussion on Making All Things Equal”) and James Legge (“The Adjustment of Controversies”) as being philosophically neutral, something akin to the neutral title, “Notes on Relativism”, as opposed to a title such as “Ontological Equalization”, which predisposes the reader to believe that the author will support that view. I fail to see how this example applies to Chad Hansen’s translation of the title, “On Harmonizing Discussions of Things”, which Allinson thinks is weighted toward the relativistic interpretation, though he admits that the presence of ‘on’ yields some degree of philosophical neutrality. Allinson also gives the translations of: A.C. Graham (“The Sorting Which Evens Things Out”), Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷 and Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭, separately (“The Equality of Things and Opinions”), Kuang-ming Wu (“Equalizing Things and Theories”, later modified to “Things, Theories—Sorting Themselves Out”), and Liou Kia-hway’s French translation (“*La Reduction Ontologique*”) as being weighted toward conveying that the author of the text supported relativism. On this issue, his first argument is more successful than his second. *Ibid.*, 133-136.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>23</sup> However, the force of this claim is greatly weakened when one considers the fact that traditional commentators going back to Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) have observed that the first six of the seven Inner Chapters seem to have “companion” chapters in the outer chapters as follows.

1 <i>Xiaoyaoyou</i> 逍遙遊	22 <i>Zhibeiyou</i> 知北遊
2 <i>Qiwulun</i> 齊物論	17 <i>Qiushui</i> 秋水
3 <i>Yangshengzhu</i> 養生主	19 <i>Dasheng</i> 達生
4 <i>Renjianshi</i> 人間世	20 <i>Shanmu</i> 山木
5 <i>Dechongfu</i> 德充符	21 <i>Tian Zifang</i> 田子方
6 <i>Dazongshi</i> 大宗師	18 <i>Zhile</i> 至樂

of the dream/awakening passages, which he interpreted as just another expression of Plato's metaphysics, in chapter 2. He goes so far as to claim that the authors of '*Qiushui*' did not understand the message of the '*Qiwulun*' because they provided no way to remedy relativism. In arguing thus, Allinson is once again begging the question. He presupposes that Zhuang Zhou 莊周 is not the author of '*Qiushui*', while insisting on a single theme throughout the thirty-three chapters of the text, despite the widely accepted idea that the *Zhuangzi* is the work of many authors.

### 5.3 DOGMATIC THERAPEUTIC SKEPTICISM

The interpretations of three scholars who are representative of the view that Zhuangzi was a 'therapeutic skeptic,' namely Philip J. Ivanhoe, Bryan W. Van Norden, and Eric Schwitzgebel, are examined in this section.<sup>24</sup> As will be noted, some of these interpretations have much in common with Allinson's interpretation of the text. What is perhaps most curious about these interpretations is that the proponents of therapeutic skepticism in the *Zhuangzi* almost without exception, understand skepticism in its modern formulation as negative dogmatism and thus perceive a conflict between Zhuangzi's negative and positive projects.<sup>25</sup> I raised some objections in Chapter 3 to the label

---

<sup>24</sup> Paul Kjellberg in his more recent work describes Zhuangzi's skepticism as 'therapeutic': "Skepticism is not theoretical but therapeutic." And again, "Skeptical arguments might be thought of as 'therapeutic' rather than as 'conclusive,' since their function is to cause a change in the listener rather than to prove a particular point." See "Sextus Empiricus, Zhuangzi, and Xunzi on 'Why Be Skeptical?'," 7, and 20, respectively. It seems that Kjellberg did not refer to skepticism as therapeutic in his earlier version of this essay, "Skepticism, Truth, and the Good Life: A Comparison of Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus", published in *Philosophy East and West*. Mark Berkson is another interpreter who freely describes Zhuangzi as dispensing therapy. See "Language: The Guest of Reality—Zhuangzi and Derrida on Language, Reality, and Skillfulness" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 109.

<sup>25</sup> Berkson, along with Kjellberg, seems to be one of the few who accepts the therapeutic skepticism interpretation without committing himself to the view that the skepticism involved is necessarily the dogmatic variety. Unlike these other authors, Berkson does not offer a specific definition or characterization of skepticism, so his view about it must be gleaned indirectly from what he says about it. He writes, "Zhuangzi continuously turns his own skepticism and wit on himself, deftly escaping the error

‘therapeutic skepticism’ and suggested ‘iatric skepticism’ as an alternative.<sup>26</sup> The idea that negative dogmatism is consistent with iatric skepticism seems confused. It is difficult to see how the claim that human beings cannot attain knowledge can be meaningfully linked to the medical praxis that is alluded to in the analogies to drugs and curing or healing in the works of Sextus Empiricus.

As noted in the previous chapter, Steven K. Coutinho seems to privilege the modern understanding of skepticism as negative dogmatism over the ancient aporetic variety. For this reason, he too seems to be subject to this confusion when he claims of “methodological” or “therapeutic” skepticism that “[...] the purpose of the modifier here is to *take back what the modified term implies* [...]”<sup>27</sup> While this observation expresses the negative function of the term ‘therapeutic’ in this context and perhaps provides an additional reason to abandon that term, it seems to me that the version of skepticism he has in mind is negative dogmatism, since it is that version that is subject to the sense of conflict he suggests. In this respect, Coutinho’s observation is similar to Ivanhoe’s perception that there is a conflict between the negative and positive projects discussed in the *Zhuangzi*. But, despite seeming to fall into this confusion, Coutinho’s point serves as a neat refutation of Ivanhoe and others who have suggested that Zhuangzi was a therapeutic *and* dogmatic skeptic from within their own theoretical suppositions.

As noted in Chapter 3, G.E.R. Lloyd observes that the theoretical model of therapy developed in ancient Greece was usually understood as involving certain knowledge and

---

of taking a position, showing confidence in propositions or labeling another ‘wrong.’” This statement is suggestive of non-dogmatic skepticism in describing the reluctance of taking a position. See “Language: The Guest of Reality”, *op. cit.*, 112.

<sup>26</sup> The modern Chinese for ‘therapy’ is ‘*zhiliao* 治療’ or ‘*liaofa* 療法.’ These words mean ‘therapy’ in the sense of ‘treatment, cure’.

<sup>27</sup> Steven K. Coutinho, *op. cit.*, 33.

that this notion of therapy has little, if any, resonance with traditional Chinese medical theory. He claims:

For the Chinese, the ideal [for the body] is one of ‘free flow’, interaction, intercommunication between parts, with each fulfilling its due and proper function. [...] Even while the Greeks studied processes, to be sure, they looked for stable structures. Anatomical research was directed at disclosing such structures, each with its own distinct form. The emphasis was not, or not so much, on their interdependence or interconnectedness, as on their own several essences.<sup>28</sup>

The style of demonstration involving “bedrock” certainty that Galen (129 – c. 200 CE) aimed for, according to Lloyd, “[...] was never contemplated in China.”<sup>29</sup>

### 5.3.1 Philip J. Ivanhoe

In his article, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*,” Philip J. Ivanhoe claims that there are passages in the *Zhuangzi* that present significant challenges for both the skeptical and relativist interpretations. He writes, “I will argue that Zhuangzi believes one cannot directly say what the *Dao* is but that he believes one can *talk about* examples of sages acting in accordance with it; these paradigmatic individuals manifest an understanding of the Way.”<sup>30</sup> For this reason, he sees the fundamental interpretive problem of the text as the reconciliation of the seemingly skeptical/relativist passages with the passages involving skilled individuals according with *dao* 道.

In a later essay, “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?,” Ivanhoe argues that Chad Hansen’s and David B. Wong’s different interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*, both of which construe the text as espousing theories of relativism, are implausible.<sup>31</sup> He writes, I [...] present what I see as problems with their interpretations, both as readings of the text and as philosophical positions in their own right. I will argue that both

---

<sup>28</sup> Lloyd, *op. cit.*, 206-207.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>30</sup> Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*,” 102.

<sup>31</sup> Ivanhoe, “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?” in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 196-214.

interpretations suffer as plausible interpretations of the text because they do not provide any account of Zhuangzi's beliefs regarding the character of human nature.<sup>32</sup>

It should be noted that the word that is usually translated as 'human nature,' '*xing* 性' does not occur at all in the Inner Chapters, the portion of the text that is usually considered to be the least corrupt.<sup>33</sup> However, it is worth pointing out that in classical texts of this period, Chinese characters were frequently written without their classifiers or radicals. So, it has been observed that the word '*sheng* 生' (birth, life, growth) is often used for '*xing*' in texts of this period. The character, '*xing* 性' is '*sheng* 生' (birth, life, growth) with the addition of the '*xin* 心' (heart-mind) classifier.<sup>34</sup> Chung-ying Cheng 成中英 has pointed out that *xing* 性 is life (*sheng* 生) that supports consciousness broadly construed as the processes of thinking and feeling (*xin* 心). However, this observation does not weaken my point because Zhuangzi, unlike Mencius (Mengzi 孟子) or Xunzi 荀子, did not take a firm stance on the question of the goodness (*shan* 善) or badness (*e* 惡) of human natural tendencies (*xing*). Furthermore, since there is ambiguity concerning which uses of the character '*sheng* 生' might be standing in for '*xing* 性,' one would have to make an argument on a case by case basis for the interpretation of '*sheng* 生' as '*xing* 性.' And this would be hard to do.

It does not seem that Hansen and Wong's interpretations can be criticized, as Ivanhoe suggests, on the basis that they fail to account for a philosophical concept whose

---

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>33</sup> See *A Concordance to Chuang Tzū* 莊子引得 (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 20 哈佛燕京學社引得纂處, 特刊第二十號, May 1947) 656. Benjamin I. Schwartz also makes the observation that Zhuangzi avoids "the constrictive term," '*xing* 性'. See *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985) 229, 234.

corresponding term is absent from the section of the text that is widely accepted to be the most authentic in terms of authorship.<sup>35</sup> However, as identified in the last chapter, although the term ‘*xing*’ is absent from the Inner Chapters, there are numerous passages where Zhuangzi recommends efficacious action in response to the problem of the disharmonious cacophony of alternative viewpoints. It may be this sort of positive interpretation that Ivanhoe considers to be absent from Hansen’s and Wong’s interpretations, and which he is attempting to recover with his conjecture about Zhuangzi’s positive view of human nature.

Later in the essay, Ivanhoe claims that Zhuangzi held a belief in the essential goodness of human nature: “They [the skillful activities and the skilled practitioners of these arts] are all quite benign. This leads me to conclude that Zhuangzi believed human nature is essentially benign and that the majority of our suffering comes from our tendency to subvert our inherent nature by overintellectualizing our lives.”<sup>36</sup> This conclusion seems to be both conjectural and subjective, and is lacking in textual support. For example, there are many people, such as vegetarians or Jains with their belief in *ahimsā* (non-harming), who would think that butchering an ox, no matter how skillfully performed, is anything but a benign activity, and this passage is the only skill story that appears in the Inner Chapters. Paul Kjellberg has also expressed his reservations about this suggestion:

---

<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note the parallel relationship in the etymology of the Greek noun, ‘*physis*’ [‘*phusis*’] (nature) and the verb, ‘*phuein*’ (to grow).

<sup>35</sup> There may, of course, be other reasons to reject these interpretations.

<sup>36</sup> Ivanhoe, “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?”, 202.

Unless we supplement it with a theory of the goodness of nature which, in the absence [of] further substantiation, can only seem hopelessly *ad hoc*, the ideal of skill specifies only the means to be employed and is silent on the question of the ends to be pursued.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, Ivanhoe seems to miss the irony and humor of Lord Wenhui 文惠's final remark in the story,

善哉。吾聞庖丁之言。得養生焉。<sup>38</sup>

“Excellent! I heard the words of Butcher Ding 丁 and attained to nurturing life.”<sup>39</sup>

It seems somewhat ironic to attain to nurturing life by skilled butchering, which entails the taking of a life. Furthermore, many interpreters of the Chinese philosophical tradition would have serious qualms about understanding human nature in that tradition as having *essential* characteristics. Following Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall among others, I think *xing* 性 is best understood as the natural tendencies or dispositions of a person, creature or thing-and-event (*wu* 物) and not as essential nature.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Ivanhoe's conjecture about the source of our suffering emerging from “our tendency to subvert our *inherent* nature by overintellectualizing our lives” lacks sufficient and significant textual support. He goes on to claim that his “[...] interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* has the additional advantage of understanding the text as centrally concerned with the most heated philosophical debate of the time: the issue of the character of human nature.”<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Kjellberg, *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*, 111. And again: “Ivanhoe accounts for this by attributing to Zhuangzi the implicit assumption of a benign nature. On its face, however, this addition seems rather *ad hoc* and in need of further articulation and defense within the context of his system as a whole.” *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>38</sup> 8/3/12.

<sup>39</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzŭ: The Inner Chapters*, 64 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>40</sup> See Roger T. Ames, “The Mencian Conception of *Ren xing* 人性: Does it Mean ‘Human Nature’?” in Henry Rosemont, Jr., ed., *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham* (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1991) 143-175, Roger T. Ames, “Mencius and a Process Notion of Human Nature” in Alan K.L. Chan, ed., *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002) 72-90, and Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, trans., *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*, 83.

<sup>41</sup> Ivanhoe, “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?”, 202.



In characterizing forms of skepticism, Ivanhoe limits his discussion to skepticism “as a philosophical position,” which clearly situates his analysis in the realm of what I have referred to as ‘modern skepticism’, where skepticism is understood as “a negative thesis about epistemic attainments”<sup>42</sup> or “[...] the complete denial of all and every claim to knowledge, strongly held [...]”<sup>43</sup> In his characterization of sense skepticism, ethical skepticism, epistemological skepticism, and language skepticism, Ivanhoe repeatedly alleges that the skeptic *denies* the possibility of certain types of knowledge. For example, he writes, “*Epistemological skepticism* is skepticism about the possibility of knowledge in general. Epistemological skeptics do not deny that there are objective facts about the world, a way it really is, they only deny that we can have reliable knowledge of those facts.”<sup>44</sup>

Ivanhoe proceeds to make his case by reference to the famous “Butterfly Dream” passage (7/2/94-96) and what he refers to as the “*ultimate dream*” passage cited above. As will be noticed, Ivanhoe concurs with Allinson and disagrees with Wang Xianqian in reading ‘*da jue*’ as the promise of an ultimate awakening in which we will come to have knowledge during our lifetimes:

These two stories make slightly different points. In the *ultimate dream* passage, we are told that at the “ultimate awakening” we *will know* what really is real. This is not sense skepticism but a moderate and special form of epistemological skepticism: there is something wrong with the way we are trying to reach knowledge, but the trouble seems to be more with the state of our minds than the state of our senses. And what is wrong with our minds is something we have the power to overcome. The butterfly story tells us that surely it *must be possible* to distinguish between dreaming and waking, but it does not assure us that at some future point in time we will be able to make this distinction without error or doubt. Neither story denies that there is a difference between waking and dreaming, nor does either deny that it is possible to know which is which (the *ultimate dream* passage

---

<sup>42</sup> Goldman, *op. cit.*, 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*”, 103.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

makes just the opposite claim). [...] These are the only two stories in the inner chapters that would lead one to suppose that Zhuangzi was a sense skeptic, and they are best read as examples of a special kind of epistemological skepticism.<sup>45</sup>

The point that reading these passages as evidence for the idea that Zhuangzi was not a sense skeptic is well-taken. Ivanhoe is thus more sensitive to significant cultural differences that underlie the ancient Greek/‘Western’ and ancient Chinese philosophical traditions than is Allinson whose Platonic two worlds metaphysic I criticized above as an inadequate interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*. Nonetheless, Ivanhoe’s interpretation still seems to posit a reality-appearance distinction in the text. Christoph Harbsmeier also invokes a distinction between reality and appearance in interpreting the “great awakening” passage as the argument from delusion: “We may ‘wake up’ to a higher insight which might invalidate whatever we think we know.”<sup>46</sup>

Ivanhoe goes on to claim that Zhuangzi cannot reasonably be considered an ethical skeptic because he believes that certain people understand “*the Way*”.<sup>47</sup> He gives numerous examples of the skill stories to support this point. He writes, “Since Zhuangzi believes there is such a Way he is not a relativist in any strong sense of the term. And yet Zhuangzi often *does* seem to promote the relativist cause. He seems to deny that any one social, ethical or aesthetic scheme is better than another.”<sup>48</sup> Ivanhoe quotes the following passage to support this observation.

民溼寢則腰疾偏死。魚然乎哉。木處則惴慄恂懼。猿猴然乎哉。三者孰知正處。民食芻豢。麋鹿食薦。螂蛆甘帶。鷓鴣耆鼠。四者孰知正味。猿。獼狙以爲雌。

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-105.

<sup>46</sup> Christoph Harbsmeier, “Conceptions of Knowledge in Ancient China”, 24.

<sup>47</sup> There is nothing about the grammar of Classical Chinese to justify the capitalization, singularization, and the inclusion of a definite or indefinite article before ‘*dao* 道’. Thus, Ivanhoe is tending to interpret this term as a single metaphysical entity that is transcendent in the sense of ordering the world from outside it rather than as emergent in it.

<sup>48</sup> Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*”, 106.

麋與鹿交。鮒與魚游。毛嬙麗姬。人之所美也。魚見之深入。鳥見之高飛。麋鹿見之決驟。四者孰知天下之正色哉。<sup>49</sup>

When people sleep in a wet location, they have discomfort in their loins and are paralyzed on one side, but is this so of the loach? When they stay in the trees, they are fearful, trembling, careful, and afraid, but is this so of apes and monkeys? Of the three, which knows the proper place to live? People eat grass-fed cows and sheep and grain-fed pigs and dogs, deer eat grass, centipedes enjoy small snakes, owls and crows like rats. Of the four, which knows the proper flavor? Baboons take apes as their female mates, tailed deer and deer are friends, loaches are friendly with fish. Mao Qiang 毛嬙 and Lady Li 麗, people regarded as beautiful, but when the fishes saw them they dived deep and when the birds saw them they flew high, and when the deer saw them they broke into a run. Of the four, which knows the proper beauty in the world?<sup>50</sup>

He then claims:

Here, and in other passages as well, Zhuangzi uses perspectivism, the claim that all knowledge is relative to the observer's point of view to undercut our normal standards for making value judgements. This seems to pave the way for a thoroughgoing moral relativism. But we should distinguish between relativism as a *philosophical theory* and relativism as a *spiritual therapy*.<sup>51</sup>

To resolve the apparent tension between the positive skill passages and the places where Zhuangzi seems to endorse relativism, Ivanhoe argues that Zhuangzi's perspectivism is a spiritual therapy designed to "dismantle tradition," allow the *Dao* 道 to emerge, and enable people to be freed from their rational minds.<sup>52</sup> That is, along the lines of Allinson, relativism is not the final philosophical view of Zhuangzi, but a step along the way toward the spiritual realization that is expressed so clearly in the skill passages.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> 6/2/67-70.

<sup>50</sup> Compare with Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 58 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 45-46.

<sup>51</sup> Ivanhoe, "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*", 107.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-109.

<sup>53</sup> In similar manner, Berkson writes: "While undermining and dismantling are important techniques, and a destabilized foundation is a critical *intermediate* position for Zhuangzi, he ultimately uses the awareness fostered by such a position to move the listener or reader into a deep connection with the underlying reality of the *Dao*." See Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op.cit.*, 113. This interpretation, perhaps even more than Ivanhoe's, is open to the criticism launched against Allinson's reading above, namely that it invokes a two worlds metaphysic. Like Allinson's and Ivanhoe's readings, it also posits a sharp distinction between reality and appearance in the text. These distinctions are perhaps appropriate interpretations of Plato but seem culturally inappropriate when applied to the *Zhuangzi*.

Ivanhoe argues that *dao* 道 (which he renders as “the Way”) is a metaphysical concept that “is the deep structure of the pattern and processes of the world.”<sup>54</sup> However, this interpretation of *dao* seems to leave out the important prescriptive function of the concept, which is attested to by its cognate *dao* 導 meaning “to lead forth”. As Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall write:

[...] the character [*dao* 道] is primarily gerundive, processional, and dynamic: “a leading forth.” The earliest appearance of *dao* [道] is in the *Book of Documents* [*Shujing* 書經] in the context of cutting a channel and ‘leading’ a river to prevent the overflowing of its banks.

Taking the verbal *dao* as primary, its several derived meanings emerge rather naturally: “to lead through,” and hence “road, path, way, method, to put into words, to explain, teachings, doctrines, art.”<sup>55</sup>

Thus, despite the possibility that *dao* has a metaphysical dimension, Hansen’s interpretation of *dao* as “prescriptive discourse” or “guiding discourse” is not entirely without support. The readings of Hansen and Ames and Hall support an understanding of the Daoist project as fundamentally concerned with the ethical question of how to live a good life, in addition to whatever epistemological or metaphysical questions that were also a concern for classical Daoists. Ames and Hall underscore this approach to Daoism when they translate the title of the *Daodejing* 道德經, as “*Making This Life Significant*”.

Using his metaphysical interpretation of *dao* as a basis, Ivanhoe claims:

Zhuangzi believed there are ways of living that are contrary to the way the world is: that is, which violate our nature and set us against the natural patterns and processes to be found in the world. Moreover, he further believed that there are ways of acting that enable us to accord with the nature of both ourselves as creatures—things among things in Nature’s vast panorama—and Heaven’s patterns and processes.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?”, 201.

<sup>55</sup> Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, trans., *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”: A Philosophical Translation*, 57.

<sup>56</sup> Ivanhoe, “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?”, 201.

As I argued above, there is no term in Classical Chinese that is equivalent to the English word, ‘real’ or ‘reality’. Hansen has argued that the propositional attitudes of ‘believe’ and ‘know’ in Classical Chinese are grammatically different from their English counterparts and that the contrast between belief and knowledge was seldom used by Chinese epistemologies:

Now ancient Chinese has two quite different and grammatically complex expressions which are routinely translated into the propositional attitudes—*chih* [zhi] 知 ‘know’ and *i wei* [yiwei] 以爲 ‘believe’. Because the two expressions are grammatically quite different, Chinese theories of knowledge virtually never used that contrast to formulate skepticism. Instead, knowing was presented as a kind of skill. Think of it as a skill in applying names (discriminating according to community practices). Propositional knowledge was implicitly treated as knowing how (according to the accepted practice) to apply expressions (predicates) to things. Propositional belief, similarly, was a disposition of a speaker to apply such expressions to objects in a particular way and then to behave in ways conventionally associated with that predicate; for example, to believe Nixon is evil is to “evil” (apply the term *evil* to) Nixon and to vote against him or to demonstrate in the streets. [...]. The difference between *chih* and *i wei* can be represented as analogous to that between a disposition or habit and an acknowledged skill. A skill has a success component; it is done correctly. The success element in the meaning of *chih* is what makes the translation *knowledge* (versus *belief*) work.<sup>57</sup>

Ames makes a similar observation when he points out that Chinese philosophy was not motivated significantly by a distinction between reality and appearance. Ivanhoe’s suggestion that Zhuangzi believes that there is a way the world is seems to posit just such a distinction. Nowhere in the *Zhuangzi* is there any direct claim concerning the author’s beliefs. In fact, readers are often left wondering what the author’s opinion is on a given subject when they read the double rhetorical questions with which passages in the text often conclude.

Ivanhoe allows that epistemological skepticism, with appropriate modifications, can be applied to the thought of Zhuangzi. “He is an epistemological skeptic, but only of

---

<sup>57</sup> Hansen, *Language and Logic in Ancient China*, 64.

a *certain kind* of knowledge, i.e. intellectual knowledge. He is not at all skeptical about *intuitive knowledge*.”<sup>58</sup> That is to say, he is skeptical of the propositional knowledge involving “knowing that” but not of the skill knowledge involving “knowing how”.<sup>59</sup> Ivanhoe concludes that Zhuangzi’s epistemological skepticism boils down to language skepticism, the “belief that language is inadequate for expressing certain facts about reality, at least in propositional form.”<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, according to Ivanhoe, the reader must take Zhuangzi’s proposals as exclusively *therapeutic*. In his later essay, he writes:

I agree that Zhuangzi is a language or conceptual skeptic, but I believe that this is part of the greater distrust of the human intellect. Such skepticism is a special kind of epistemological skepticism, it does not entail any claim about how things are in the world nor does it in principle preclude other ways of knowing that might help us understand and accord with the things and events in the world.<sup>61</sup>

If epistemological skepticism is, by definition, “skepticism about the possibility of knowledge in general,” where skepticism is understood as a denial of the very possibility of knowledge, then I fail to see how there can be a “special kind” of epistemological skepticism that does not “preclude other ways of knowing”. Ivanhoe accepts that there are passages in the *Zhuangzi* that encourage us to take the perspective of *tian* 天, which he translates as ‘Nature, Heaven,’ but that they do not recommend the abandonment of

---

<sup>58</sup> Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*”, 110.

<sup>59</sup> It was noted in Chapter 3 that the Pyrrhonist attitude toward empirical knowledge involves thinking of it as both a process and a practice that is open-ended. I think that Ivanhoe’s similar point about Zhuangzi is not entirely inappropriate; however, he seems to express it in terms that are too extreme.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. Of course, Hansen has argued that all verbal instances of ‘*zhi* 知’ (to know, realize) should be understood as ‘know how’ rather than ‘know that’. His suggestion is tantamount to the idea that classical Chinese philosophy lacks a theory of propositional knowledge. If this is right (and I have my suspicions that the idea is somewhat overstated), then Ivanhoe’s observation amounts to the claim that the scope of Zhuangzi’s epistemological skepticism is just all the knowledge that he supposed there could possibly be, namely knowledge of skills. That is to say, on Hansen’s reading, Gilbert Ryle’s distinction between intellectual and intuitive knowledge, which Ivanhoe is bringing to the text, is culturally inappropriate and anachronistic. However, Ryle’s distinction, even on Hansen’s interpretation, could still be invoked as a heuristic for interpreting the text.

the human point of view.<sup>62</sup> Once again, he suggests reading these portions of the text as spiritual *therapy*: “These passages, in which Zhuangzi argues for the Heavenly point of view, are better read as a form of therapy, designed to curb our terrible tendency toward self-aggrandizement.”<sup>63</sup> Even after observing that Zhuangzi holds this unusual form of epistemological skepticism, construed as language skepticism, Ivanhoe concludes his earlier article with the following statement, “Zhuangzi was not a skeptic or a relativist; he had a wordless, unwavering faith in his way.”<sup>64</sup>

### 5.3.2 Bryan W. Van Norden

Bryan W. Van Norden in his article, “Competing Interpretations of the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*” has pointed out the tendency for various thinkers, as exemplified by Allinson’s definition of Hard Relativism cited above, to conflate skepticism and relativism as well as other philosophical theories: “Despite the fact that they are frequently conflated, skepticism, relativism, and particularism are logically independent. None of them entails, or is logically entailed by, any of the others.”<sup>65</sup> However, Van Norden, like Ivanhoe, limits his analysis of skepticism to the dogmatic variety that I have called ‘modern skepticism,’ defining skepticism as follows: “*Skepticism*, as a philosophic position, is the doctrine that one cannot have knowledge.”<sup>66</sup> Like Alvin I. Goldman’s characterization of skepticism, Van Norden’s definition fails to include the non-dogmatic version of skepticism, wherein skepticism as a way of life embodies a philosophical attitude, practice, method, and

---

<sup>61</sup> Ivanhoe, “Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?”, 199.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 200. This claim hardly seems controversial, as one of the descriptions traditionally given to Chinese thought is that it involves the continuity of the human and natural/spiritual realms (*tian ren he yi* 天人合一). It hardly seems likely that Hansen or anyone else would seriously suggest the contrary.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*” 114.

<sup>65</sup> Van Norden, *op. cit.*, 249.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

technique of keeping an open mind and attaining to an achieved sense of stillness, equilibrium (*jing* 靜) or equanimity. According to the ancient Greek understanding of skepticism, it is dogmatists, not skeptics, who ascribe to dogmas or *doctrines*. Therefore, Van Norden's definition of dogmatic skepticism is, in a stricter sense, a definition of negative epistemological dogmatism.

Van Norden also employs this modern understanding of skepticism as negative dogmatism in defining ethical skepticism: "Ethical or moral skepticism [...] holds that we do not have knowledge of ethical truths (whether or not there *are* any moral truths)."<sup>67</sup> Van Norden, unlike Ivanhoe, distinguishes ethical skepticism from moral anti-realism while still treating it as a form of negative epistemological dogmatism. Ivanhoe defines ethical skepticism as follows: "*Ethical skepticism* is the belief that there are no moral truths. Such a skeptic may agree that we can and do have moral beliefs, but she would deny that we have or can have true moral knowledge, since there is nothing for such knowledge to be about."<sup>68</sup> As can be seen, Ivanhoe equates ethical skepticism with moral anti-realism, in so far as his conception of the view is that it denies the existence of moral truth. Non-cognitivist moral anti-realism of this sort is a form of negative ontological dogmatism in that it is a dogmatic ontological claim about the non-existence of moral values.<sup>69</sup> As pointed out above, Van Norden's understanding of ethical skepticism amounts to a version of negative epistemological dogmatism since it is a negative knowledge claim.

---

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Ivanhoe, "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*" 103.

<sup>69</sup> For more on versions of moral anti-realism, consult C.L. Stevenson, *Facts and Values* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), J.L. Mackie, *op. cit.*, and Richard Garner, *Beyond Morality* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).



On the basis of his understanding of skepticism as negative dogmatism, Van Norden writes: “Ethical skepticism, for example, is inconsistent with the view that ethical truths are relative to each individual person’s point of view, because it cannot be true both that certain ethical facts are dependent upon my own opinions (relativism) and that I know no ethical truths (skepticism).”<sup>70</sup> But if one understands skepticism in its non-dogmatic formulation, this inconsistency evaporates and the logical independence (that is, neither entailment nor conflict) of skepticism and relativism comes to the fore. Van Norden clearly perceives the tension that Ivanhoe saw as one of the key problems of interpreting the *Zhuangzi*, namely the need to reconcile the seemingly skeptical and relativist passages in the text with the stories about consummate skill:

It is puzzling that while parts of the Inner Chapters seem to advocate relativism or skepticism, other sections seem to advocate a kind of objectivism. [...] Consider [...] the story of Cook Ding, whose skillful dismembering of an ox serves as a model for “nurturing life.” Zhuangzi’s account does not seem to express any skepticism or doubt about Ding’s success or his skill. Furthermore, the appropriateness of his carving is not described as being relative to the perspective of individuals or of society. Rather, he “relies upon the natural structure [*yi hu tianli* 依乎天理]” of the ox, and “follows the way things inherently are [*yin qi guran* 因其固然].”<sup>71</sup>

But is the story of Ding’s practice of butchering necessarily in conflict with aporetic skepticism? We can read this passage as a description of Butcher Ding’s skill without holding that the positive claims made about it are held objectively, since the issue of objectivity and subjectivity seems to be overcome in successful praxis. I think construing the so-called “skeptical and relativist” passages as recommending a disposition of open-mindedness obviates the problem Van Norden gets into when he tries to use the modern

---

<sup>70</sup> Van Norden, *op. cit.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 251. It is surprising that Van Norden sees the passage about Butcher Ding as advocating a form of ethical objectivism, which he understands as “the joint denial of ethical skepticism and ethical relativism.” See *ibid.*, 249. The passage, as it stands, does not seem to *deny* anything, at least not explicitly.

dogmatic skepticism to interpret the *Zhuangzi*. On this reading, the positive descriptions of skilled artisans and their crafts can be approached as recommendations toward the cultivation of a productive disposition that seems to have the potential to enable one to live one's best life.

Van Norden follows Ivanhoe in attempting to produce a synthesis of what he sees as Zhuangzi's positive and negative projects in maintaining that Zhuangzi is a *therapeutic skeptic*:

In general, we might use the term *therapeutic skepticism* to refer to the use of skeptical arguments to clear away previous convictions in order to make one more receptive to different convictions. Zhuangzi, I submit, is a therapeutic skeptic. He uses skeptical arguments to make us doubt many of our commonsense beliefs. But his goal is not merely to leave us in a state of doubt; his goal is to use doubt to make us more receptive to different convictions. He disorients us so that he can reorient us.<sup>72</sup>

Van Norden, like Ivanhoe, seems to assume that the function of skepticism is fundamentally negative. When aporetic skepticism is appreciated, however, it becomes possible to give the function of skepticism a more charitable and positive reading. This approach is consistent with the Daoist tendency to value what is typically less valued or even regarded as negative, in any given pair of opposites (e.g., nothing as opposed to something, pliant as opposed to hard or strong, skeptical as opposed to dogmatic, etc.). It is also consistent with what Van Norden describes as Zhuangzi's 'goal'. Consequently, we need not declare skepticism as Zhuangzi's negative project and contrast that with his positive project of skill mastery and other Daoist cultivation practices. Nor does it seem wise to label the skeptical passages as embodying "therapeutic skepticism" in order to soften the anti-intellectual blow that skepticism is often considered to deliver. This is tantamount to claiming that Zhuangzi did

---

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 258. The ideas in this passage are not without some merit. What I object to is the somewhat rigid way in which they seem to be stated.

not really mean what he said when he waxed skeptical and that the real stuff of the text lies elsewhere in passages that on first blush seem to contradict the skeptical tendency.<sup>73</sup>

Ivanhoe employs the same interpretive device, and Allinson argues for something very similar when he suggests that relativism is not Zhuangzi's final position, but a stage we must pass through in the course of spiritual transformation.

I continue to question the value of referring to the skeptical passages as the instrumental use of skeptical arguments, because I think the most meaningful understanding of skepticism is one that is considered a philosophical practice, rather than a philosophical position and one that recommends strategies for good and successful activity rather than asserts philosophical arguments for particular conclusions. Van Norden's discussion of Zhuangzi's goal and the goal of skepticism is also highly suspect. In his writings, Sextus Empiricus refers to the *telos* or end of skepticism as *ataraxia* (peace of mind, freedom from disquiet, imperturbability), not as doubt as Van Norden here suggests. For Sextus, *epochē* (withholding of assent) is the means to that end.<sup>74</sup> Van Norden's suggestion that the goal of skepticism is doubt seems to arise from his use of the modern dogmatic formulation of that idea. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that one must be careful in ascribing goals of any sort to Chinese thinkers because it has been observed in the literature that teleology and eschatology are relatively absent from the Chinese tradition. This is consistent with the Chinese emphasis on process and change, wherein the functional equivalent to goals would be something more akin to John Dewey's notion of "ends-in-view". The relative insignificance of talk of ends in Chinese thought is a significant point of difference between

---

<sup>73</sup> See the section below on Eric Schwitzgebel's interpretation that employs precisely this strategy.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the problem that this postulation of an end poses for non-dogmatic skepticism.

the Hellenistic skeptics and Zhuangzi, and is perhaps something which the Greek aporetic skeptics might “learn” from Zhuangzi.

### 5.3.3 *Eric Schwitzgebel*

Eric Schwitzgebel follows in many respects the interpretations of Ivanhoe and Van Norden. He opens his paper, “Zhuangzi’s Attitude Toward Language and His Skepticism” with the observation that “A tension stands at the heart of the *Zhuangzi*.”<sup>75</sup> According to Schwitzgebel, that tension concerns Zhuangzi’s skepticism and relativism, on the one hand, and his tendency “[...] to make a variety of factual claims and to endorse and condemn various ways of living, in apparent disregard of any skeptical or relativist considerations,” on the other.<sup>76</sup> In his paper, he offers a proposal to resolve this tension with respect to Zhuangzi’s skepticism, but claims that many of his arguments can be applied with equal efficacy to his relativism. He writes: “My position can be summed up rather simply: Although Zhuangzi *argues* for radical skepticism, he does not *sincerely subscribe* to it. In other words, Zhuangzi’s skepticism is “therapeutic”—he endorses it more with the desire to evoke particular reactions in the reader than as an expression of his heartfelt beliefs.”<sup>77</sup> Here is a succinct statement of what I consider to be a questionable interpretive strategy, namely the serious suggestion that Zhuangzi did not *really* mean some of the things he said. I am not alone in regarding such a strategy as highly dubious, and Schwitzgebel himself is aware of the problems with such an approach. He writes in his paper that he hopes to persuade his reader that Zhuangzi is an “exceptional case.” Many of my above observations concerning

---

<sup>75</sup> Schwitzgebel, *op. cit.*, 68.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

the problems with Ivanhoe's and Van Norden's interpretations will apply also to Schwitzgebel's reading.

Schwitzgebel draws a dubious distinction between radical or "philosophical" skepticism and everyday skepticism. Like all of the interpreters discussed so far in this chapter, he defines 'skepticism' as a philosophical *position*: "Roughly, a skeptic is someone who thinks that none of her beliefs constitute knowledge, or at least none of her beliefs in some quite broad and general domain, such as beliefs about the 'external world,' or beliefs arrived at inductively."<sup>78</sup> By contrast, he characterizes 'everyday skepticism' as follows: "When nonphilosophers speak of a skeptic, they usually mean either someone who does not subscribe to a particular claim or body of claims [...], or they mean someone who holds higher standards of evidence than most, usually in a particular domain."<sup>79</sup> In my view, the first definition of skepticism is problematic as an interpretation of Zhuangzi, for the reason that it is limited to the modern dogmatic formulation of skepticism. What is here characterized as 'everyday skepticism' is virtually devoid of content that distinguishes it significantly from other forms of skepticism.

Schwitzgebel goes on to claim that while Zhuangzi argues for radical or philosophical skepticism, he does not subscribe to it and is not a radical skeptic. This he argues for on the basis of the "overall tone of the Inner Chapters,"<sup>80</sup> not a very persuasive argument by itself on account of the textual corruption and the questionable authorship of the text. In addition, arguments based on tone, which is usually understood as the author's attitude toward his subject, are highly interpretive, as one's understanding of the tone of any

---

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

given text is largely a subjective phenomenon. If one understands skepticism as non-dogmatism, it will be plain that it makes little sense to talk of “skeptical arguments” or “arguing for radical skepticism.” The tension which Schwitzgebel asserts lies at the heart of the *Zhuangzi* does not even arise if we alter our formulation of skepticism from negative dogmatism to non-dogmatic open-mindedness.

Schwitzgebel concludes that Zhuangzi is a skeptic in the everyday sense. His characterization of everyday skepticism in his conclusion resonates to some extent with the account of non-dogmatic skepticism discussed here.<sup>81</sup> He reiterates his idea that Zhuangzi wrote the skeptical passages

[...] with a therapeutic intent—that is, to jolt the reader into a certain kind of everyday skepticism, a kind of open-mindedness that consists in putting somewhat less faith than is standard in one’s own and others’ beliefs. Such open-mindedness may be both an epistemic and a moral boon, leading not only to a receptiveness to new evidence but also to a tolerance of people with different beliefs.<sup>82</sup>

Despite having some value, this interpretation seems to assume that Zhuangzi’s skepticism is largely predicated upon a notion of belief. As observed above, Hansen has pointed out that Chinese epistemologies seldom concentrated on the contrast between belief and knowledge. In the case of the *Zhuangzi*, it is arguable that the distinctions of *shi* 是 (this, the one in question, to assert, correct) and *fei* 非 (not [this], to deny, incorrect) serve as a functional equivalent to belief.

Rather than employing his vague notion of everyday skepticism, I think Schwitzgebel’s interpretation would be greatly improved by investigating other formulations of skepticism that have been suggested in the history of philosophy. In fact, ‘everyday

---

<sup>81</sup> In a footnote, he claims that the ideal of open-mindedness is compatible with that advanced by Kjellberg in his dissertation, *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*, 139-146. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of Kjellberg’s interpretation.

skepticism' is an inappropriate label. To whatever extent there is an everyday understanding of skepticism, it seems to be ambiguous between denial, doubt, and *aporia*, as in the 'everyday' locution, "skeptical of UFO's". But it is often the case that everyday skepticism tends to be the modern dogmatic version of skepticism rather than the non-dogmatic formulation of the ancients. Furthermore, it makes little sense to contrast everyday skepticism with philosophical skepticism, and since even dogmatic skepticism comes in different scopes, the equation of philosophical skepticism with radical skepticism is too extreme. Both forms of skepticism, modern and ancient, dogmatic and non-dogmatic, are philosophical. It does not seem wise to suppose that to be philosophical one must hold definitive positions and assert arguments for those positions. The aporetic skeptic holds no fixed positions and offers recommendations or suggestions rather than arguments, but this alone does not necessarily make her less philosophical than her dogmatic counterpart.

Schwitzgebel's conclusion is not without its virtues. His observation that the open-mindedness, receptivity, and tolerance that Zhuangzi recommends is as much ethical as it is epistemological is well-taken.<sup>83</sup> For Zhuangzi, it seems that epistemological issues are to be investigated to the extent that they shed light upon the larger ethical question of how to live. And this is a crucial point to which many interpreters give insufficient attention or simply miss altogether.

#### 5.4 CHAD HANSEN

In his earlier writings on the subject of Zhuangzi's skepticism, Chad Hansen's understanding of skepticism was implicit and ambiguous in so far as there is confusion as

---

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

to whether he applied it in its dogmatic or its non-dogmatic formulation to the text. For example, there are several passages that suggest dogmatic skepticism:

The skeptic asserts that no distinction or term unqualifiedly reflects reality.<sup>84</sup>

There is no difference in the words or substance between skepticism and mysticism. There is a characteristic attitudinal difference—the wonder and awe of the mystic versus the critical frustration of the skeptic.<sup>85</sup>

Theoretically, Chuang-tzu [Zhuangzi] stops with relativistic skepticism while emotionally he adopts the wonder, humor, and optimism of the mystic.<sup>86</sup>

In attributing the skeptic with “critical frustration,” Hansen seems not to have the Pyrrhonists, for whom withholding of assent or suspension of judgment (*epochē*) was a causal condition for *ataraxia* (freedom from *tarachē* or disturbance) in mind.<sup>87</sup> One might surmise from these examples that he is thinking of skepticism in its modern negative dogmatic formulation.

At the same time, other passages lead one to suspect that Hansen is suggesting that non-dogmatic skepticism is the form most relevant to the challenges of interpreting the *Zhuangzi*:

The skeptical, questioning tone is unmistakable. [...] the grammatical and logical context forbids our taking the sentences under consideration as direct assertions that there is some entity which we unqualifiedly ought to obey.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Berkson similarly observes, “What these skillful sages have in common is a mind that is open and responsive to the situation, a mind that does not bring preconceptions along with it. This allows these sages to respond with awareness.” Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *op. cit.*, 119.

<sup>84</sup> Hansen, “A *Tao* of *Tao* in Chuang-tzu” in Mair, *op. cit.*, 48.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Hansen makes the point even more explicit in his book: “The difference between skeptics and mystics is not that we do *shi* [是] and *fei* [非] in one and do not in the other. Skeptics and mystics have exactly the same *shi-fei* [是非] content: none. But, practically, we cannot avoid *shüing* and *feüing*. The difference between them is merely a difference in attitude toward the *way* we *shi* and *fei*. The skeptic furrows his brow critically and experiences the failure of absolute knowledge as a disappointment. The mystic revels in the incomprehensibility of it.” See *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, 284.

<sup>88</sup> “A *Tao* of *Tao* in Chuang-tzu”, 42.



Here the idea of skepticism as an attitude of open-minded questioning is consistent with the aporetic skepticism that was practiced by many of the Greek skeptics of the Hellenistic Age.

Still other passages are confused on the dogmatic or non-dogmatic character of the skepticism in question, in hinting at non-dogmatism while simultaneously making reference to the notion of refutation and the “argumentative context”:

[...] rather than treating the passage as committing Chuang-tzu [Zhuangzi] to the dogmatic view that the true ruler is there despite lack of evidence, we treat the author as recognizing the force of his own refutation of such a notion.

The argumentative context and the grammatical structure together require that we treat these references as other than theoretical assertions.<sup>89</sup>

The argument can show that Zhuangzi finds no way to show which scheme of distinctions is correct. Its thrust is skeptical. We cannot know which way of dividing the world is correct. We cannot know whether the scheme that makes ten thousand distinctions or one that makes five thousand distinctions is correct. In that case, we also cannot know if the scheme that makes two or one or *none* is correct. The assertion that making no distinctions is the correct way is as dogmatic and unwarranted as any other alternative.<sup>90</sup>

Let us look more carefully at the character of Zhuangzi’s skepticism. It faces the same challenge as pyrrhonism [*sic*]. Is the skeptic herself not making a dogmatic claim? She claims to know that we do not know anything.<sup>91</sup>

This last quotation perhaps most clearly displays Hansen’s inadequate grasp of Pyrrhonism. Non-dogmatic skeptics, such as the Pyrrhonists, cleverly avoid the problem of self-referential inconsistency alluded to here in their reluctance to make dogmatic claims or assertions. It is precisely the dogmatic skeptic and other dogmatists who must contend with this problem. When the *Zhuangzi* is interpreted in the light of aporetic

---

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>90</sup> Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, 270.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

skepticism, the problem of the self-refutation of the most extreme version of dogmatic skepticism simply does not arise.

Whatever ambiguity there is in Hansen's earlier work on the subject that one may charitably wish to explain away, is resolved in favor of dogmatic skepticism in his latest paper on skepticism in the *Zhuangzi*. He writes, "Skepticism is an epistemological stance with many variations," and follows Goldman in distinguishing varieties of skepticism based on theme, scope, and strength.<sup>92</sup> That he follows Goldman's understanding of skepticism as negative dogmatism is made eminently clear when he writes:

Several writers deny that Zhuangzi's is direct skepticism about our epistemic achievements—whether we have knowledge. They draw parallels to ancient Greek Pyrrhonian skepticism and construe Zhuangzi's theme as nonepistemic. They aver that Zhuangzi's apparent skepticism is really an attitude we *ought* to adopt (suspension of judgment) to get peace of mind.<sup>93</sup>

I think Hansen misses the point of this interpretive strategy when he claims that skepticism is construed as "nonepistemic". The point is rather that non-dogmatic skepticism is as much epistemological as it is ethical. Skepticism need not be a negative thesis about epistemic achievements to qualify as epistemology. The Pyrrhonist's project includes important epistemological suppositions and then recommends (but does not assert as a moral imperative) a strategy for dealing with the epistemological problems it poses. As it turns out, according to Sextus, this strategy conveniently brings about peace of mind.

Hansen seems to misattribute the dogmatic "therapeutic" strategy of interpretation, which describes the views of Ivanhoe, Van Norden, and Schwitzgebel, to Kjellberg and

---

<sup>92</sup> Hansen, "Guru or Skeptic? Relativistic Skepticism in the *Zhuangzi*" in Cook, *op. cit.*, 141.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* The Pyrrhonist recommendation to suspend judgment is not usually phrased as the imperative assertion that we ought to adopt a particular attitude, as Hansen expresses it here, for this invites self-referential inconsistency.

Raphals.<sup>94</sup> As pointed out above, none of the scholars discussed here<sup>95</sup> who argue for an interpretation of the therapeutic function of Zhuangzi's skepticism employs the non-dogmatic formulation of skepticism, as Kjellberg and Raphals do. Rather, each and every one of them understands skepticism in its modern sense, where it is taken as equivalent to negative dogmatism. For this reason, I take issue with conflating these varying interpretations. While Hansen misunderstands what I take to be a crucial criterion for articulating a coherent interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*, he does point out the inadequacy of the view that understands therapeutic skepticism to be necessarily dogmatic in character.

Hansen is insufficiently careful in so far as he fails to draw the distinction between a *negative thesis* and *philosophical doubts* about our epistemic attainments: "I restrict that term ['skepticism'], as contemporary philosophical usage does, to philosophical doubts about cognitive achievement—*knowing* and *justifying*."<sup>96</sup> Hansen goes on to say,

[...] I do not accept that a wider theme and significance for skeptical lines of reasoning rules out that the text also expresses skepticism about distinctions and *shi-fei* (this-not this) in the familiar sense of straightforward doubt of our epistemic achievements. It seems to me obvious that it does. Second, I conclude that a representative philosophical reader/writer should find this significance in the political implications, rather than in some recipe for spiritual edification.<sup>97</sup>

What Hansen here refers to as "skepticism [...] in the familiar sense of straightforward doubt of our epistemic achievements" is significantly different from "a negative thesis about epistemic attainments." I agree with Hansen that the text does express the former, but I disagree with his tendency to conflate these two incompatible conceptions of skepticism.

Furthermore, one wonders why he finds it necessary to eschew the possibility that the

---

<sup>94</sup> See *ibid.*, 159, n. 42, and 142.

<sup>95</sup> Berkson is a possible exception.

<sup>96</sup> *Op. cit.*, 142.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

broader significance of the skepticism in the *Zhuangzi* pertains to spiritual achievement in favor of a political liberalism. It seems clear to me that it can have both implications without contradiction. In fact, the supposition that the text offers some form of spiritual guidance yields a more coherent interpretation because there are numerous examples throughout the text of Daoist teachers and sages who have attained to various spiritual achievements.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has offered a critique of five interpreters of the *Zhuangzi*, who, with differing motivations, have ascribed a notion of dogmatic skepticism to the philosophy contained in that text. Despite agreement among them that skepticism understood as a negative thesis about our epistemic attainments is the formulation that can best be applied to *Zhuangzi*, these thinkers often diverge in their interpretations of the function that that variety of skepticism plays in the text and in the tradition. Allinson denies the skeptical interpretation altogether and concentrates on the role of spiritual transformation. Ivanhoe and the other scholars who have described *Zhuangzi* as a therapeutic skeptic, have for the most part understood his (dogmatic) skepticism as at variance with the positive message of the text, which is embedded in the various exemplars *Zhuangzi* points to, who have mastered a skill or who have cultivated their *de* 德 (excellence, character, virtue, power, attributes) to the utmost. In the effort to offer a corrective on interpretations of the *Zhuangzi* that would limit the philosophy of that text to epistemology alone by drawing attention to the many aspects of the text that are unaccounted for by such an interpretation, Allinson and the ‘therapeutic skepticism’ interpreters share much in common. Hansen, by contrast, takes his understanding of *Zhuangzi*’s dogmatic skepticism in a very different direction. He

claims that Zhuangzi's skepticism is motivated by his perspectival relativism, is unwilling to accept the reading of Zhuangzi as a spiritual teacher, and claims that his (dogmatic) skepticism motivates, at most, a liberal political stance.<sup>98</sup>

As pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3, the understanding of skepticism as equivalent to negative dogmatism is a modern phenomenon in Western philosophy. The skeptics of the Hellenistic Age in ancient Greece understood skepticism as the non-dogmatic and open-minded tendency of suspending judgment in the light of conflicting appearances. It does not make sense to ascribe dogmatic skepticism to Zhuangzi for a number of reasons. Chief among these is that this ascription creates interpretive problems that simply do not arise when alternative interpretations are sought. Furthermore, it is anachronistic and culturally insensitive to do so.<sup>99</sup> To whatever extent there is skepticism in the *Zhuangzi*, I maintain that it is not the modern formulation that equates it with negative dogmatism. Instead, the skepticism that is contained in the text seems to be best construed as a non-dogmatic form of skepticism, which, with appropriate qualifications, is similar to that of Pyrrhonism. It is worth reiterating here that Zhuangzi's aporetic skepticism, as I understand it, entails an aesthetic, pragmatic, and rhetorical dimension, wherein the sharp line that is usually drawn between epistemology and ethics is blurred significantly.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>99</sup> I speculate that this tendency may be the result of one of the serious shortcomings of the analytic tradition of philosophy, so dominant in academic departments of philosophy today, namely its comparative insensitivity to particular, historical contexts.

<sup>100</sup> It is safe to say that the aporetic skepticism of the Pyrrhonists involves pragmatic and rhetorical dimensions. I am less certain about the role of aesthetics in Pyrrhonist philosophy, but the Pyrrhonist interest in painting is perhaps telling. See Warren, *op. cit.*, 95-96.

CHAPTER 6  
ACHIEVING FREEDOM FROM DISTURBANCE IN CULTIVATING A  
DISPOSITION OF OPEN-MINDED AWARENESS  
ZHUANGZI 莊子'S APPLICATION OF NON-DOGMATIC SKEPTICISM TO THE  
PLURALITY OF CONFLICTING PERSPECTIVES AND CHANGING PHENOMENA

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I made the case that it does not make sense to understand the skeptical passages in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 in terms of the modern formulation of skepticism as negative dogmatism. One reason for this is that such a reading tends to create interpretive conflicts in the text that fail to surface when one appreciates the possibility that Zhuangzi's apparent skepticism in these passages may be aporetic or non-dogmatic in character. However, the aporetic skepticism that was recommended in the Western tradition by Sextus Empiricus and his Pyrrhonist predecessors is not immune from criticism.

6.1.1 *Adoxastos is Impossible*

By far the most common criticism that has been launched against skepticism of this variety, both in ancient and modern times, is the idea that a life without commitments or belief (*adoxastos*) is impossible, since such a life makes purposive action impossible (*apraxia*). For example, Colotes the Epicurean (died 271 BCE), argued that Arcesilaus' use of *epochē* necessarily results in total inaction, and Aristocles (second century CE), a Peripatetic writer, argued against Pyrrhonism that judgment and belief are "inseparably bound up with the use of the senses and other mental faculties."<sup>1</sup> Galen wondered if the Pyrrhonist would suggest that we should remain in bed for lack of certainty as to whether it is day or night, or if we should remain on a ship while the other passengers are

disembarking over concern that what appears to be land is not actually land.<sup>2</sup> David Hume (1711-1776), writing in 1748, also offered a version of this criticism:

[...] a Pyrrhonian cannot expect, that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind: or if it had, that its influence would be beneficial to society. On the contrary, he must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence. [...] And though a Pyrrhonian may throw himself or others into a momentary amazement and confusion by his profound reasonings; the first and most trivial event in his life will put to flight all his doubts and scruples, and leave him the same, in every point of action and speculation, with the philosophers of every other sect, or with those who never concerned themselves in any philosophical researches.<sup>3</sup>

It is to be noted though that the non-dogmatic skeptics of whom Hume speaks should not be characterized as having any interest in the universal application of principles, for such a project would conflict with and thereby undermine the approach of aporetic skepticism.<sup>4</sup>

#### 6.1.2 *The Response of Sextus Empiricus to the Criticism that Adoxastos is Impossible*

Not surprisingly, the ancient aporetic skeptics responded to this criticism that a life without belief is impossible. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the Pyrrhonian alternative to a life of belief was one of living according to the appearances. This idea is very ancient, dating back to Pyrrho and Timon, and was developed further by Aenesidemus. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus presents a clear description of what such a life would

---

<sup>1</sup> See M.F. Burnyeat, "Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?" in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes, *op. cit.*, 22-23, n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Antony Flew (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1988) 191.

<sup>4</sup> As an example of this, consider the discussion of *wu zhi* 無知 below as "unprincipled knowing" in the interpretation of David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames.

look like.<sup>5</sup> And in *Against the Mathematicians*, Book 11 (*Against the Ethicists*), he

writes:

He, then, who suspends judgement about all things which depend on belief wins happiness most fully, and during involuntary and irrational affections although he is perturbed—[...] yet his state of feeling is moderate. Hence, too, one must scorn those who fancy that he is confined to a state of inactivity or of inconsistency,—to inactivity, because, as all life consists in desires and avoidances, he that neither desires nor avoids anything is virtually rejecting life and remaining like a vegetable; and to inconsistency because, should he ever be subject to a tyrant and compelled to do something unspeakable, either he will not submit to the order given him but will choose a voluntary death, or else to avoid torture he will do what is commanded, and thus he will no longer be (in Timon’s phrase) “unmov’d by choice and avoidance,” but will choose the one and refuse the other, which is the action of those who confidently hold that something to be avoided and desirable exists.—Now in arguing thus they do not comprehend that the Sceptic does not conduct his life according to philosophical theory (for so as regards this he is inactive), but as regards the non-philosophic regulation of life he is capable of desiring some things and avoiding others. And when compelled by a tyrant to commit any forbidden act he will perchance choose the one course and avoid the other owing to the pre-conception [*prolēpsis*]<sup>6</sup> due to his ancestral laws and customs; and as compared with the Dogmatist he will certainly endure hardship more easily because he has not, like the other, any additional beliefs beyond the actual suffering.<sup>7</sup>

Commenting on this passage, Benson Mates writes:

[...] when confronted with the alternatives, he [the Pyrrhonist] will indeed make a choice, not on the basis of a philosophical theory to the effect that something is really choiceworthy, but rather in accord with the laws and customs of his country as commonly

<sup>5</sup> *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.11.21-1.11.24. Quoted above in Chapter 3.

<sup>6</sup> Mates points out that Bury somewhat misleadingly translates *prolēpsis* as “pre-conception” and suggests understanding this term as “the common ‘prephilosophical’ concepts and assumptions of all mankind”. See Mates, *op. cit.*, 71.

<sup>7</sup> *oukoun ho peri pantōn [men] epechōn tōn kata doxan teleiotatēn kartoutai tēn eudaimonian, en de tois akousiois kai alogois kinēmasi tarattetai men [...] metriopathōs de diatithetai. hothen kai kataphronein anankaion tōn eis anenergēsian men hoti tou biou pantos en hairesei kai phugais ontos ho mēte hairoumenos ti mēte pheugōn dunamei ton bion arneitai kai tinos phutou tropon epeichen, eis apemphasin de hoti hupo turannōi pote genomenos kai tōn arrētōn ti poiein anankazomenos ē ouch hupomenei to prostattomenon all’ ekousian eleitai thanaton, ē pheugōn tas basanous poiēsai to keleuomenon, houtō te ouketi “aphugēs kai anairetos estai” kata ton Timōna, alla to men eleitai tou d’ apostēsetai, hoper ēn tōn meta peismatos kateilēphotōn to pheukton ti einai kai haireton. tauta dē legontes ou suniasin hoti kata men ton philosophon logon ou bioi ho skeptikos (anenergētos gar estin hoson epi toutōi), kata de tēn aphilosophon tērēsīn dunatai ta men haireisthai ta de pheugein. anankazomenos te hupo turannou ti tōn apēgoreumenōn prattein, tēi kata tous patrious nomous kai ta ethē prolēpsei tuchon to men eleitai to de pheuxetai kai rhaion ge oisei to sklērōn para ton apo tōn dogmatikōn, hoti ouden exōthen toutōi prosdoxazei kathaper ekeinos.*

*Against the Mathematicians* 11.5.160-167 (*Against the Ethicists* 5.160-167). Greek text and English translation from Bury, *Sextus Empiricus III*, 462-465



(or prephilosophically) understood. Therefore, in these circumstances, too, it would seem that the Skeptic's behavior will be indistinguishable from that of the common man. I think that the same is the case as regards all the rest of the Skeptic's nonlinguistic behavior.<sup>8</sup>

Sextus is consistent in pointing out that the ancient skeptics did not hold fixed philosophical theories and did not live their lives according to theoretical precepts. What he describes as the 'non-philosophic regulation' of life might best be understood as referring to the avoidance of endorsing such philosophical theories, opting instead to live according to a philosophical practice. In following such a course, there is nothing in particular that marks one's behavior as distinctive from the behavior of other people. In other words, it is possible for one to perform the same actions as other people, under similar circumstances, while entertaining very different ideas from the others about one's reasons or justification for performing those actions. The skeptic, then, lives according to the common conventions and regulations of his society and according to what appears to him to be the case in any particular circumstance. For this reason, an aporetic skeptic would not engage in behaviors that others would regard as immoral and/or illegal merely for the reason that there seems to be no firm evidence to justify those behaviors as opposed to the opposite actions, which most people would tend to consider moral and/or legal. Instead, he will follow the conventions of traditional morality as it is generally construed in his time and place, not because he accepts his actions as moral or immoral, but because it appears to him that it is useful to do so in so far as such an accommodating approach tends to bring about freedom from disturbance.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, 72.

### 6.1.3 *The Debate between Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede on the Scope of Epochē*

Myles Burnyeat agrees with Colotes, Aristocles, Galen, and Hume among others that the life without belief required by non-dogmatic skepticism is incoherent since he interprets *epochē* (suspension or withholding of judgment, belief, or assent) as complete and total. By contrast, Michael Frede suggests that the ancient skeptics did not recommend suspending all judgment, but only judgment that involves the additional idea that the impression one is acting on is true.

Burnyeat observes the historical importance of a distinction between reality and appearance to the development of Pyrrhonism:

In the controversy between the sceptic and the dogmatists over whether any truth exists at all, the issue is whether any proposition or class of propositions can be accepted as true of a real objective world as distinct from mere appearance. For ‘true’ in these discussions means ‘true of a real objective world’; the true if there is such a thing, is what conforms with the real, an association traditional to the word *alēthēs* since the earliest period of Greek philosophy [...].<sup>9</sup>

He amplifies this point by observing further that suspending belief must refer to suspending belief about real existence, which, he claims, amounts to suspending all belief: “There can be no question of belief about appearance, as opposed to real existence, if statements recording how things appear cannot be described as true or false, only statements making claims as to how things really are.”<sup>10</sup> Burnyeat’s observation that the Greek word ‘*alēthēs*’ (true) was traditionally associated closely with “the real” is worthy of consideration, and Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin explore this idea further in describing the Greek interest in reality and appearance:

The Greeks were generally explicit and confrontational when they pressed arguments against rivals. Because claims to possess sure knowledge were common

---

<sup>9</sup> Burnyeat, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

currency, both sides in a given debate tended to elaborate and push as far as possible their own notions about reality. It is difficult to ignore a charge that your reality is mere seeming, and tempting to vindicate it by demonstrating that the confusion is actually your opponent's.<sup>11</sup>

However, although the reality-appearance distinction was a prominent characteristic of the Greek philosophical tradition and thus served as a significant background to the development of Pyrrhonism, it can be argued that that distinction was less important to Pyrrhonism than Burnyeat seems to suggest, for the ancient non-dogmatic skeptics in emphasizing skepticism as a way of life tended to de-emphasize epistemic concern over the reality side of the distinction and limit their statements to descriptions of how things appear to them under certain conditions or circumstances.<sup>12</sup> Mates observes:

As applied to the Dogmatists, the point [that the application of “true” and “false” is restricted to the external world] is surely correct. [...]

However, in my opinion it is not quite correct to attribute this usage to the Pyrrhonists themselves. There is every reason to doubt that Sextus, as a Pyrrhonist, accepts the existence of so-called “external objects” and “states of affairs,” or even that he considers the phrase “external object,” as used by the Dogmatists, to be meaningful.<sup>13</sup>

What Mates is pointing out here is the Pyrrhonists' relative lack of interest in a sharp distinction between reality and appearance. He writes further, “The obvious distinction we are considering could also be characterized simply as that between appearance and reality. But we must be careful not to read into this a Pyrrhonist commitment to the existence of any such thing or domain of things as so-called ‘reality.’”<sup>14</sup>

It is worth pointing out that the ancient aporetic skeptics were attempting to respond to the reality-appearance distinction so prevalent in their time and culture with an alternative approach that in some ways resembles traditional Chinese methods of dealing

---

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin, *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 209.

<sup>12</sup> In this way, Pyrrhonism seems to be somewhat uncharacteristic of Greek philosophy.

with conflicting appearances or opinions. It was noted above in Chapters 4 and 5 that a hard and fast distinction between reality and appearance was never really seriously entertained by traditional Chinese thinkers. As Lloyd and Sivin explain:

Ancient Chinese found no reason to doubt that the fundamental physical realities were what they could see and touch. Possessors of the Way were not motivated to reject common sense and base the physical cosmos on a hidden order of things. In this they were unlike Masters of Truth in the Greek world, looking for fresh ways to trump their rivals. Appearance versus reality became a Chinese issue only with the introduction of Indian metaphysics, which first made a splash in the third century A.D. But that was spiritual, not physical, reality.<sup>15</sup>

There was not, as there was for Greek ontological thought, the impulse to seek for One privileged explanatory account of what was the case beyond the many phenomena that appear differently to different observers. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall explain this tendency as follows:

There is little recourse to anything like a reality/appearance distinction in Classical Chinese thought. Classical Chinese thinkers were not interested in the search for an ontological ground for phenomena. Rather, they were preoccupied with the phenomenal world of process and change construed simply as *wanwu* 萬物—“the ten thousand things.” They were less inclined to ask *what* makes something real or *why* things exist, and more interested in negotiating the complex relationships among the changing phenomena themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, Burnyeat’s argument relies too much on the anachronistic ideas of propositions and a semantic conception of truth. The closest thing to a proposition in traditional Greek thought of this period was the Stoic semantic idea of a *lekton* (sayable), which involves the idea that sentences as wholes signify. And Mates claims, “[...] for Sextus appearances cannot be identified with propositions any more than with states of

---

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, 203.

<sup>16</sup> Ames and Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*, 9. See also Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 126-127.

affairs.”<sup>17</sup> In addition, the idea that statements describing appearances lack a truth value is too extreme, and so, Burnyeat’s conclusion that there can be no belief with respect to appearance cannot be granted. A.C. Graham illuminates this problem as follows:

Why have we chosen to say ‘aware’ when philosophers generally say ‘know’? Philosophy has an incorrigible bias towards thinking of knowledge in terms of the verbally formulable, the proposition, the logical grounding of which has nothing to do with such psychological questions as whether the knower is being acted on causally by things which the proposition is about. [...] Awareness, although aided by propositional knowledge, is primarily of the concrete situation, to which one cannot attend without being causally affected, so that to have become aware of it at all one must already be responding to it in ways which vary with the range and degree of awareness. Knowing, on the other hand, is not a matter of degree, either one knows or does not. [...] A further objection to ‘know’ is that knowing a proposition to be true is independent of viewpoint, so that there would be no possibility of an imperative ‘Know’ proving like ‘Be aware’ to be relevant to morals.<sup>18</sup>

Graham’s point that philosophy has a bias toward the content of propositions serves as a justification for interpreting Sextus’ remarks about the ‘non-philosophical regulation’ of life, quoted above as embodying a philosophical praxis.

Another problem with Burnyeat’s interpretation is that it suggests that the disagreement between skeptics and dogmatists pertains most fundamentally to the *existence* of truth, the dogmatists championing the idea that truth exists and the skeptic suspending judgment on the question. However, the disagreement between skeptics and dogmatists on the question of truth seems to be less metaphysical and more epistemological and even ethical in character.

It is also to be noted that the word, ‘*epochē*’ is not etymologically connected to ‘*doxai*’ (beliefs), and simply means “suspending” or “withholding”. In fact, it is defined

---

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Graham, *Reason and Spontaneity*, 38.

in the lexicon as “*a check, a cessation*”.<sup>19</sup> Various translators and interpreters have supplied the object of this suspense as ‘judgment,’ ‘belief,’ and ‘assent’ based on the contexts in which the term is employed. The noun, ‘*epochē*’ is derived from the verb, ‘*epechein*’ in the sense of “*to keep in, hold back, check*” or “*to stay, stop, wait, pause*”. However, it is worth noting that this verb has several other meanings, of which at least one might be appropriated in order to provide the term, ‘*epochē*’ with a richer semantic content. The verb, ‘*epechein*’ when applied to things can mean “to occupy or engage them.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, in addition to its meaning of “suspending” or “withholding”, we may find in the term a positive recommendation of productively engaging things in the world.

As a result of his idea that *epochē* entails suspension of all belief, Burnyeat supports the criticism of aporetic skepticism that a life without belief is impossible:

One may feel that this added element of belief is the very thing that gives meaning and sense to a life, even if it is also the source of trouble and disturbance. Without it, the sceptic’s life will be a hollow shell of the existence he enjoyed, and was troubled by, prior to his sceptical enlightenment. [...] So far from relying on the will to control assent, the sceptic panacea, beginning with the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus, is to use reason to check all the sources of belief and destroy all trust in reason itself, thereby eliminating the very inclination to believe. The life without belief is not an achievement of the will but a paralysis of reason itself.<sup>21</sup>

To begin with, Burnyeat does not argue for his idea that belief is what imbues life with meaning and sense.<sup>22</sup> Nor is it clear that without belief, the skeptic’s life will necessarily be reduced to a meaningless passivity. Furthermore, the assertion that the skeptic uses reason for the purpose of checking belief and destroying all trust in reason attributes an overly assertive agenda to the non-dogmatic skeptics which I do not think they had. The

---

<sup>19</sup> See Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 309.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 285-286.

<sup>21</sup> Burnyeat, *op. cit.*, 41-42.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Meaning’ and ‘sense’ in this context seem to denote particularly vague concepts.

skeptic's goal for Sextus at least, if it even makes sense to speak of a goal for skepticism, was *ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance.

Despite the fact that this goal of *ataraxia* is expressed in the negative with an alpha-privative word in the Greek and the negative notion of “freedom from” (as opposed to the positive “freedom to”) in English translation, it does not make sense to suppose that the skeptic wishes to destroy all trust in reason or intelligibility. In fact, the skeptic makes use of reason to persuade others of the *apparent* utility or value of suspending judgment in the light of conflicting appearances or perceptions. For example, Martha C. Nussbaum has observed that Sextus adheres to the principle of non-contradiction in his writings.<sup>23</sup> In a similar way, the following passage suggests that Zhuangzi was dissatisfied with the self-referential inconsistency involved in, for example, the negative dogmatic claim that one knows that human beings cannot know:

以指喻指之非指。不若以非指喻指之非指也。以馬喻馬之非馬。不若以非馬喻馬之非馬也。天地一指也。萬物一馬也。<sup>24</sup>

To employ an ostensive meaning (*zhi* 指<sup>25</sup>) to show that an ostensive meaning is not an ostensive meaning is not as good as using a non-ostensive meaning to show that an ostensive meaning is not an ostensive meaning. To employ a horse to show that a horse is not a horse is not as good as using a non-horse to show that a horse is not a horse. The heavens and earth are one ostensive meaning. The myriad things and events are one horse.<sup>26</sup>

In this rather cryptic passage, Zhuangzi appears to be criticizing the works of a thinker called Gongsun Long 公孫龍, a representative of the Lineage or School of Names (*Mingjia* 名家).<sup>27</sup> Since so few of the classical Chinese logical works are extant, this passage is

particularly challenging to translate and interpret. However, what it seems to show is that

---

<sup>23</sup> Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, 307-308, 311.

<sup>24</sup> 4/2/31-33.

<sup>25</sup> The word, ‘*zhi* 指’ means “finger, to point, to direct, to indicate, to refer to”.

<sup>26</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 53 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 40.

Zhuangzi was no more satisfied with a self-contradictory account than anyone else. He thinks that a coherent idea is one that does not rest what it is trying to establish on itself. So it seems that Sextus and Zhuangzi both use reason and language to draw our attention to the liabilities of depending too heavily on rational discourse. But it is not clear that using discursive reason or logical rules of inference so as to make one's discourse intelligible necessarily requires a dogmatic commitment to reason and the logical rules one employs, as Nussbaum, for example, seems to suppose.

Graham has developed the possibility of employing reason and rules of inference without being committed to them in characterizing Zhuangzi as an anti-rationalist. Anti-rationalism must be distinguished from irrationalism, which might be described as the indiscriminate and wanton disregard of reason in favor of deliberate irrationality.

Graham clarifies his anti-rationalist characterization of Zhuangzi as follows:

Chuang-tzū [Zhuangzi] learned more than one might have expected from his rationalist mentor Hui Shih [Hui Shi 惠施]. [...] He [Hui Shi with his ten paradoxical theses] wishes to discredit only spatial and temporal divisions, but it will take only one more step to observe that all reasoning depends on making distinctions, and to reach the conclusion that we should abandon reason for the immediate experience of an undifferentiated world [...]. It is in 'The sorting that evens things out' ['*Qiwulun* 齊物論'] that Chuang-tzū takes this step.<sup>28</sup>

Graham's observation that Zhuangzi seeks to discredit an over-reliance on reason and its methods of disputation (*bian* 辯) is well-taken. He does not suggest as Burnyeat does that anti-rationalism necessarily results in living a "hollow shell" of an existence all but devoid of meaning and sense. While I avoid the term, 'anti-rationalism' for its polemical associations and would caution against understanding Zhuangzi as recommending the

---

<sup>27</sup> In particular, this passage addresses the essays, '*Bomalun* 白馬論' ("White Horse Discourse") and '*Zhiwulun* 指物論' ("Discourse on Referring to Things and Events Ostensively").

<sup>28</sup> Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 9. See also *Disputers of the Tao*, 176.



complete abandonment of rational discourse, it is worth noting that the ancient skeptics and Zhuangzi both used reason and discourse as tools to point out the problems involved in relying too heavily on these very tools in the conduct of one's life.

Frede offers a much more satisfying account of non-dogmatic skepticism than does Burnyeat. Like Burnyeat, he begins his analysis with the question of what withholding assent (*epochē*) entails:

What [...] is the status of this view that it is wise to withhold assent? To start with, it is the conclusion of an argument the skeptic produces to show that the wise man will always withhold assent. But it is clearly not the case that the skeptic, in arguing this way, thinks that he commits himself to the position that it is wise always to withhold assent. For to commit oneself to this position would be to give assent. In this particular case it is easy to see why the skeptic is not committed to the conclusion of his argument. It is an argument drawn from premises which only his opponent, by granting them, is committed to: an argument designed to show his opponent that he is in a dilemma, that he is committed to conflicting claims and hence had better consider the matter further until he is in a position to decide between them.<sup>29</sup>

Mates supports Frede's idea that one can make temporary use of logic and reason without dogmatic commitment:

Sextus's entire performance<sup>30</sup> should be understood as a feigned dialectical exchange with his opponents, the Dogmatists. He replies to them by deducing—using both their logic and certain premises with which they appear to agree—conclusions they will presumably find unacceptable. In all cases he is working within the framework of what the opponents say; for the sake of argument he uses their concepts on a temporary basis, or he uses the loose intuitive notions (*prolēpseis*) common to all mankind. But he never puts himself on the line by asserting that one or another of the premises is true, or even by claiming soundness for the types of logical inference—for example, *reductio ad absurdum*—that he employs.<sup>31</sup>

As observed in Chapter 3, Frede draws a distinction between two kinds of assent associated respectively with having a view and taking a position or making a claim. The

---

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, 202-203. What Frede is describing here is *isostheneia* as a philosophical method, which he points out has much in common with the Socratic *elenchus*.

<sup>30</sup> Note that the use of the word, 'performance' is particularly appropriate here since it brings to mind the notion of praxis.

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.*, 26.

passive acceptance involved in having a view is consistent with aporetic skepticism. It is the active acceptance of a proposition as true entailed in taking a position or making a claim that the non-dogmatic skeptic recommends suspending or withholding. By drawing on this distinction, a skeptic can express the views, which he uses to guide his behavior by giving an autobiographical report without taking a position on the truth of these perspectives.<sup>32</sup> In other words, there is a difference between habits and dispositions, which do not require the making of claims and the active acceptance of the validity of propositions. It appears that the foregoing analysis could also be applied with equal effectiveness to the *Zhuangzi*.

It is worth pointing out that Frede, like Burnyeat, supposes that there is a passivity that attends aporetic skepticism. However, unlike Burnyeat, Frede does not perceive this to be one of its inherent limitations, and, in fact, qualifies the observation that having a view involves passive acquiescence in the impressions that strike one with his example of the expert craftsman and his variety of skill knowledge (an instance of an embodied “knowing how” rather than the propositional knowledge of “knowing that”). Contra Burnyeat, he writes:

It may be the case that action does not require that one take the impression one is acting on to be true. It might be the case that action does not, in addition to the impression that *p*, require a positive act of assent or the further thought that it is true that *p*. All that may be needed is one’s acquiescence in the impression, and all this may amount to is that in the series of impressions one has reached an impression which produces an action rather than the kind of disquiet which would make one go on to consider the matter further till one reached an impression which one no longer resists and which produces an action.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Frede, *op. cit.*, 210.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

Frede provides the example of an expert craftsman who knows how to perform his craft without consciously thinking of what he is doing as he acts on his expert beliefs.<sup>34</sup> Thus, a skeptic can simply follow common practice and behave in the same way toward the impressions that strike him as would someone who believed the corresponding views to be true.<sup>35</sup>

Frede's analysis also has its interesting parallels with the *Zhuangzi*. For example, the idea of knowledge as an embodied praxis involving knowing how to perform a task or set of tasks skillfully is clearly related to Zhuangzi's ideas about the importance of spontaneity to skill mastery. Graham writes:

[...] man has stunted and maimed his spontaneous aptitude by the habit of distinguishing alternatives, the right and the wrong, benefit and harm, self and others, and reasoning in order to judge between them. To recover and educate his knack he must learn to reflect his situation with the unclouded clarity of a mirror, and respond to it with the immediacy of an echo to a sound or shadow to a shape.<sup>36</sup> For Chuang-tzū [Zhuangzi] the fundamental error is to suppose that life presents us with issues which must be formulated in words so that we can envisage alternatives and find reasons for preferring one to the other. People who really know what they are doing, such as a cook carving an ox, or a carpenter or an angler, do not precede each move by weighing the arguments for different alternatives. They spread attention over the whole situation, let its focus roam freely, forget themselves in their total absorption in the object, and then the trained hand reacts spontaneously with a confidence and precision impossible to anyone who is applying rules and thinking out moves.<sup>37</sup>

Although there are a few places in this quotation where Graham's point is too strongly stated for non-dogmatic skepticism, he develops the idea here that it is possible for a life that proceeds without an over-reliance on discursive reasoning to involve a significant

---

<sup>34</sup> The specific example he gives is quoted in Chapter 3.

<sup>35</sup> Frede, *op. cit.*, 210, 212.

<sup>36</sup> 至人之用心若鏡。不將不迎。應而不藏。(21/7/32-33)

The utmost person's use of his heart-mind is like a mirror. It neither leads nor welcomes. It responds and yet does not store.

Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 98 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 97

<sup>37</sup> Graham, *op. cit.*, 6. See also "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is' and 'Ought'", 7-8, and *Disputers of the Tao*, 186.

dimension of self-cultivation. This approach is a far cry from Burnyeat's characterization of non-dogmatic skepticism's life without belief as a sorry state resulting from its anti-intellectual attacks on reason. In addition, the *Zhuangzi*, along the lines of Frede's interpretation of *epochē*, also recommends following common practice, in so far as it is useful to do so.<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that, as pointed out in Chapter 4, the Daoist idea of forgetting (*wang* 忘) might be construed as a reasonable functional equivalent for the Greek *epochē*. Thus, the difference between aporetic skepticism and other philosophies is in the realm of thought rather than action: "[...] he [the Pyrrhonist] would insist that adopting Pyrrhonism should make no difference to action, and that in particular it need make no difference to action."<sup>39</sup>

#### 6.1.4 *The Non-Teleological Tendencies of Classical Daoism*

One of the problems that has led to the criticism that a life without belief is impossible is that Sextus and the other ancient skeptics suggest that the skeptic has a *telos* or final end.<sup>40</sup> Not only does this teleological view contradict the notion that *ataraxia* followed from *epochē* quite by chance at least initially, but it contravenes the very idea that the skeptical inquiry must be continuous and never-ending lest it revert to dogmatism, a point that Otávio Bueno has underscored.<sup>41</sup> This is one significant way in which Zhuangzi's aporetic skepticism diverges from and goes beyond that of the Pyrrhonists, since the Daoist functions with notions such as "ends-in-view", propensities, and

<sup>38</sup> See 4-5/2/36-37, quoted in note 111 of Chapter 3 and also in Chapter 4.

<sup>39</sup> Mates, *op. cit.*, 74.

<sup>40</sup> See Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, 290-291. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the Academic skeptics such as Arcesilaus and Carneades, and even Aenesidemus viewed *epochē* as the *telos* of skepticism whereas Sextus construed it as *ataraxia*.

<sup>41</sup> Bueno, *op. cit.*, 1.

dispositions, which unlike the common understanding of *telos* as fixed and determined, are responses to the apparently provisional and processive character of experience.

The understanding of experience as provisional and processive precludes a final vocabulary of the sort that is common in Greek discussions of ethics. That is, it makes little sense to postulate fixed, deterministic goals or objectives in a cosmological worldview that is perceived as being dominated by process and change. It will be remembered that Aenesidemus and Sextus diverged in their opinions regarding the affinity between non-dogmatic skepticism and the perspectival and ontological aspects or attitudes of Heracliteanism. It was pointed out that Aenesidemus' approach to this issue probably places him closer to Zhuangzi in so far as Zhuangzi, like Aenesidemus, would seem to agree that it is possible to record one's observation and experience of process and change without necessarily committing oneself dogmatically to this idea. Thus there can be no final vocabulary in a cosmology of the sort that Zhuangzi entertained. The flux and flow of unmediated experience and the avoidance of a vocabulary of ends contributes to the literary genre in which the *Zhuangzi* is composed. It is in such a context that the literary technique of irony is facilitated. The play, spontaneity, and creativity which are employed in the *Zhuangzi* as examples of *zhiyan* 卮言 ('overflowing goblet language') are only possible when a final vocabulary involving fixed ends or goals is abandoned.

## 6.2 THE PYRRHONIST AND DAOIST USES OF NEGATIVE DISCOURSE

As pointed out previously, both the Pyrrhonists and Zhuangzi make use of negative discourse. The negative presentation is modest in character, and this modesty is especially consistent with the approaches of Pyrrhonism and Zhuangzi's version of Daoism to epistemological, cosmological, and ethical questions. Several of the words in

the Pyrrhonist vocabulary are alpha-privative words (i.e. where the initial alpha has the quality of negating what follows it): *ataraxia*, *aphasia*, *adiaphoria*, *apragmosynē*, *akatalēpsia*, *apatheia*, *agnoein*.<sup>42</sup> Even the adjective, ‘*aporētikos*’ (aporetic) derived from ‘*aporia*’ is marked with an alpha-privative.<sup>43</sup> In similar fashion, Daoist texts make frequent use of the word, ‘*wu* 無 (无)’ in a way that might even be considered to be functionally equivalent to the alpha-privative, although ‘*wu*’, unlike the alpha-privative, is a word in its own right, meaning “nothing, lacking, absence”.

Hall and Ames have described the many Daoist philosophical terms that involve this negative marker as “the *wu* 無-forms.”<sup>44</sup> These include *wu wei* 無爲 (without action), *wu yu* 無欲 (lacking desire), *wu zhi* 無知 (not knowing, ignorance), *wu zheng* 無爭 (non-contention), *wu shi* 無事 (without affairs), *wu xin* 無心 (not thinking and feeling, absent-[heart-]minded), *wu ming* 無名 (the nameless), *wu qing* 無情 (without emotion, non-factual), and *wu yan* 無言 (wordless). They write:

[...] Daoism expresses its deferential activity through what we shall call the *wu*-forms: *wuzhi* 無知, *wuwei* 無爲, *wuyu* 無欲—that is, “no-knowledge,” a sort of knowing without resort to rules or principles; “no-action,” or actions in accordance with the *de* 德 (“particular focus”) of things, and “no-desire,” or desiring that does not seek to own or control its “object” (which, in effect, makes it an “objectless desire”).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, the words ‘*alēthēs*’ (true) and ‘*alētheia*’ (truth) also involve an alpha-privative, which negates ‘*lēthein*’, a form of ‘*lanthanein*’, which means “unknown, unseen, unnoticed, forgotten”.

<sup>43</sup> The verb ‘*aporein*’ means “to be without means or resource”, “to be at a loss, be in doubt, be puzzled”. See Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 105

<sup>44</sup> See Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, 45-58, and Ames and Hall, trans., *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”: A Philosophical Translation*, 36-53, 67-68

<sup>45</sup> Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han*, 46. See also *Daodejing*, 38.

While these expressions can be literally interpreted in the manner in which they are translated above<sup>46</sup>, as the absence of activity, desire, knowledge, contention, affairs, heart-mind, naming, emotions or facts, and words, Ames and Hall caution us about the liabilities of interpreting these expressions in this way when they write:

It would be a mistake to interpret the modes of disposition named by the *wu*-forms as passive. The deferential activities underlying these modes are shaped by the intrinsic excellences of those things calling forth deference.<sup>47</sup>

Since knowing (*zhi* 知) and doing (*xing* 行) are construed as continuous and interdependent in the Chinese tradition, and both the Daoists and the Pyrrhonists consider knowledge as an activity and a practice, Ames and Hall's interpretation of the *wu*-forms as involving the cultivation of a disposition for living in the world can perhaps be adjusted and adapted to apply with equal effectiveness to the writings of the ancient Greek skeptics. While it is important to note that the Greek skeptics in their extant writings do not seem to have pursued this line of inquiry very far, we might consider understanding notions such as *akatalēpsia* (non-cognition), *ataraxia* (imperturbability), *aphasia* (non-assertion), *adiaphoria* (no differences of value), *apragmosynē* (detachment from worldly matters), *akatalēpsia* (non-cognition), *apatheia* (lack of emotion), *agnoein* (not perceiving or knowing) in a non-literal sense as referring, like the *wu*-forms, to "modes of disposition". Sextus hints at just such an approach when he limits the recommendation of *epochē* to dogmatic opinions and suggests a moderation of *pathē*

---

<sup>46</sup> Avoiding the literal interpretations of these terms since they can be misunderstood as indicating passivity or quietism, we might re-translate them as follows: *wu wei* 無爲 (non-assertive or non-coercive activity), *wu yu* 無欲 (objectless desire), *wu zhi* 無知 (unmediated knowing or realization; unprincipled knowing), *wu zheng* 無爭 (striving without contention), *wu shi* 無事 (to be non-intervening in affairs), *wu xin* 無心 (unmediated thinking and feeling), *wu ming* 無名 (naming without fixed reference), *wu qing* 無情 (unmediated experience), and *wu yan* 無言 (non-referential speaking). See Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 39-48, 67-68.

(feelings, affect) with respect to everything else: “We always say that as regards belief the Skeptic’s goal is *ataraxia*, and that as regards things that are unavoidable it is having moderate *pathē*.”<sup>48</sup> If we extend the approach of the *wu*-forms that avoids understanding the negative vocabulary literally as recommending absolute passivity to these terms, *apatheia*, for example, becomes *metriopatheia* (moderate *pathē*) or the absence of any emotion that is contrary to the process of open-minded inquiry, and *apragmosynē* involves not complete and total detachment from practical action but a disposition whereby only practical action that involves one in dogmatic commitment is avoided. It should be noted that while withholding assent softens cognitive categories, it does not necessarily abandon them altogether.

Moreover, Ames and Hall acknowledge that the Daoists, like the Pyrrhonists, are concerned with overcoming disturbance: “[...] what is the source and nature of the disturbance that the cultivation of the Daoist disposition is meant to overcome? [...] agitation in the heart-and-mind is not narrowly ‘psychological,’ but is more accurately conceived of as of broad ethical concern: How should we act and what should we do?”<sup>49</sup> Chung-ying Cheng 成中英 has elaborated on this interest in overcoming disturbance in his description of Chinese divination methods. According to Cheng, divination (*bu* 卜, *zhan* 占, *shi* 筮) aims to predict, evaluate, and recommend. As such, divination is not merely descriptive of the current situation that defines this particular moment in cosmological terms

---

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.*, 52.

<sup>48</sup> *phamen de achri nun telos einai tou skeptikou tēn en tois kata doxan ataraxian kai en tois katēnankasmenois metriopatheian.*

*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.12.25. Greek text from Bury, *Sextus Empiricus I*, 18 and English translation from Mates, *op. cit.*, 92.

<sup>49</sup> *Daodejing*, 39. See also Roger T. Ames, “Introduction” to D.C. Lau 劉殿爵 and Roger T. Ames, trans., *Yuan Dao: Tracing Dao to Its Source* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998) 48.



but is also ‘prescriptive’ to the extent that its practice involves making a recommendation of a course of action.<sup>50</sup> This understanding of morality as practical action is directed at cultivating a condition of the heart-mind that is peaceful (*he* 和), free from fear (*wu ju* 無懼), and free from anxiety (*wu you* 無憂).<sup>51</sup> Harmony (*he* 和), construed both cosmologically and socially, can also be described in these negative terms.<sup>52</sup> Thus, far from dogmatically *prescribing* quietism or passivity, the “*wu*-forms” recommend approaches to practical action that are appropriate to particular situations.

### 6.3 PLURALISM

The negative expressions of both the Pyrrhonists and the Daoists can serve as a ground for pluralism. However, it must be noted that the extant Pyrrhonist writings do not seem to address pluralism explicitly, despite the fact that non-dogmatic pluralism is a possible direction for the Pyrrhonist to take. Philosophical pluralism is the idea that there are a plurality of different standpoints, attitudes, approaches, perspectives, and ‘positions’ each of which may be valid in some sense and in some degree, and yet none of which is immune from criticism. ‘Pluralism’, in the sense in which I am using it here, is not to be

---

<sup>50</sup> The word, ‘prescriptive’ is useful here for its relationship to ‘descriptive’, but in general, the meaning is not changed significantly if we understand it as ‘recommending’ rather than ‘prescribing’, which has the virtue of preserving the non-assertive qualities of aporetic skepticism.

<sup>51</sup> It is written in the *Xicizhuan* 繫辭傳 (*Commentary on the Appended Phrases*) of the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*) that:

作易者，其有憂患乎？(*Xici* 2.7)

Those who created the *Changes*, did they have a sense of anxiety and disturbance?

Chinese text from Guo Jianxun 郭建勳 and Huang Junlang 黃俊郎, eds., *Xinyi Yijing Duben* 新譯易經讀本 [*Yijing: A New Annotated Reader*] (Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1996) 550.

It might be interesting to translate *wu ju* 無懼 and *wu you* 無憂 as “*wu* 無-forms”: fear and anxiety, respectively, that do not impede one’s *de* 德 (excellence, character, virtue, power, attributes).

<sup>52</sup> Cheng, Philosophy 771: “Seminar in I-Ching [*Yijing* 易經]”, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, October 2, 2001. It should be noted that Cheng construes the *Yijing* as central to the development of Chinese philosophy, including both Confucianism and Daoism. If this is accurate, his observations about Chinese divination should be relevant to the interpretation of Daoist philosophical texts.

confused with an extreme version of epistemological relativism or relativism of truth.

Harvey Siegel defines 'epistemological relativism' as follows:

For any knowledge-claim  $p$ ,  $p$  can be evaluated (assessed, established, etc.) only according to (with reference to) one or another set of background principles and standards of evaluation  $s_1, \dots, s_n$ ; and, given a different set (or sets) of background principles and standards  $s'_1, \dots, s'_n$ , there is no neutral (that is, neutral with respect to the two (or more) alternative sets of principles or standards) way of choosing between the two (or more) alternative sets in evaluating  $p$  with respect to truth or rational justification.  $p$ 's truth and rational justifiability are relative to the standards used in evaluating  $p$ .<sup>53</sup>

This definition asserts that there is no neutral way of judging between conflicting alternatives. Although this claim can be stated non-dogmatically by adding the qualifier, 'it seems to me that', it should be clear that pluralism is not fundamentally interested in developing a theory of relative truth to resolve such conflicts once and for all, but rather is interested in approaching such questions by studying the various alternative standpoints, occupying the different takes and angles in succession in an effort to arrive at an open yet adequate and efficacious understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. And unlike relativism, pluralism allows for contingent evaluative judgments to be made among systems. Various standards emerge out of practice, and such judgments can be provisionally made according to these standards.<sup>54</sup>

The well-known political philosopher, Sir Isaiah Berlin also distinguishes pluralism from relativism: "[...] pluralism is not relativism—the multiple values are objective, part of the essence of humanity rather than arbitrary creations of men's subjective fancies."<sup>55</sup> He writes further,

If pluralism is a valid view, and respect between systems of values which are not necessarily hostile to each other is possible, then toleration and liberal consequences

---

<sup>53</sup> *Op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> I am indebted to Eliot Deutsch for this understanding of pluralism. Eliot Deutsch, *Philosophy* 790: "Seminar in Comparative Philosophy: Nature and Methods of", University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, January 12, 1999, March 2, 1999.

<sup>55</sup> Isaiah Berlin, "Pluralism" in *The New York Review of Books*, May 14, 1998, 57.

follow, as they do not either from monism (only one set of values is true, all the others are false) or from relativism (my values are mine, yours are yours, and if we clash, too bad, neither of us can claim to be right).<sup>56</sup>

In its avoidance of any final commitment to any one of the particular perspectives and in its open-mindedness and tolerance of diversity, pluralism has much in common with the on-going and continuous (dare I say processive?) investigations of non-dogmatic skeptics. In addition, Berlin's observation that tolerance and liberal consequences follow from philosophical pluralism gives support to Chad Hansen's idea that Zhuangzi's skepticism can give rise to political liberalism, as discussed in the previous chapter.

While the issue of pluralism does not really come up in the ancient Greek skeptical literature, it is widely agreed that the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* contains a significant dimension of pluralism. For example, Steven K. Coutinho writes, "There is indeed a strong element of *pluralism* in Zhuangzi's version of Daoist philosophy—萬物自化, 萬吹不同—and this pluralism does indeed arise out of a profound respect for difference."<sup>57</sup> Ames and Hall also suggest a pluralist interpretation: "When the *Zhuangzi* observes that 'we are one with all things 萬物與我爲一,' this insight is a recognition that each and every phenomenon is continuous with every other phenomenon within one's field of experience."<sup>58</sup> Hansen, on the grammatical basis that plurals are not marked and that there are no definite or indefinite articles in Classical Chinese, has suggested that we interpret *dao* 道 as a plural in the *Zhuangzi* and understand the text as suggesting that there are a plurality of *daos* rather than just one.<sup>59</sup> He argues that past interpreters have claimed

---

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>57</sup> *Op. cit.*, 16. The quotation, 'wan wu zi hua, wan chui bu tong 萬物自化, 萬吹不同' can be translated, "the myriad thing and events transform of themselves and the myriad blowings are not similar."

<sup>58</sup> Ames and Hall, trans., *Daodejing*, 17.

<sup>59</sup> Hansen, "A Tao of Tao in Chuang-tzu" in Mair, *op.cit.*

that Zhuangzi's *dao* was that of a single metaphysical entity, THE *Dao*, but he believes that Zhuangzi's *dao* was primarily linguistic and ethical in the sense that it provides guidance to human beings on the question of how to live well. For Hansen, *dao* is only derivatively metaphysical, so he translates it as 'prescriptive discourse' or 'guiding discourse' in order to convey both its linguistic and ethical aspects.<sup>60</sup> Hansen's novel idea that we understand 'dao' in the plural is consistent with the rules of Classical Chinese grammar, and resolves an inconsistency that arises in any account of Zhuangzi's philosophy that attempts to read a Platonic two-worlds metaphysics with its distinction between a transcendent reality and a multiplicity of appearances into the text. Some interpreters who construe Zhuangzi as a pluralist or a relativist have suggested that for him, *dao* is a singular and absolute transcendent metaphysical entity.<sup>61</sup>

The pluralism at issue in the *Zhuangzi* involves the harmonization and mutual accommodation (*he* 和) of different perspectives. To quote from the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), the many perspectives are "*he er bu tong* 和而不同" (in harmony and yet not similar).<sup>62</sup> It is written in '*Xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊' ("Wandering without a Destination") that:

小知不及大知。<sup>63</sup>  
 Petty understanding does not reach great understanding.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See also Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*. But, as noted above, Hansen tends to de-emphasize non-linguistic, non-discursive, and embodied praxes.

<sup>61</sup> Herbert A. Giles seems to take this kind of approach when he writes (commenting on 7/2/90-92): "Our refuge is in God alone, the Infinite Absolute. Contraries cannot but exist, but they should exist independently of each other without antagonism. Such a condition is found only in the all-embracing unity of God, wherein all distinctions of positive and negative, of right and wrong, of this and of that, are obliterated and merged in ONE." See Giles, *op. cit.*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> See *Analects* 13.23. Compare with Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998) 168-169, and Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius: Analects* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003) 149-150.

<sup>63</sup> 1/1/10.

<sup>64</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 44 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 30.

But this is an explanation from within the perspective of petty understanding as will be made clear below. In the ‘*Qiwulun* 齊物論’ (“Discussion on Giving Parity to Things and Events”), it is written:

大知閑閑。小知閒閒。大言炎炎。小言詹詹。<sup>65</sup>  
Great understanding (*da zhi* 大知) is broad and expansive.  
Petty understanding (*xiao zhi* 小知) is narrow and confining.  
Great words (*da yan* 大言) are rare and valued.  
Petty words (*xiao yan* 小言) are verbose and incoherent.<sup>66</sup>

Although these passages draw a contrast between great understanding (*da zhi* 大知) and petty understanding (*xiao zhi* 小知), it is not the case that great understanding is to be extolled more highly than petty understanding, or that the one is conceived of as vanquishing the other. Instead, both great understanding and petty understanding are accommodated as different perspectives on the same phenomena. David McCraw points out, “Maybe this can-can dumb-dumb rhyme intends to demolish any discrimination between ‘great’ and ‘petty’.”<sup>67</sup> Although *xiao zhi* is limited, it is not an unhappy condition in itself. Unhappiness ensues when one’s perspective broadens and one learns that one’s understanding is small. This is the respect in which “petty understanding does not reach great understanding.” In this way, *da zhi* offers a broader epistemology of pluralism that necessarily accommodates *xiao zhi*. For Zhuangzi, there is a non-cognitive element involved in *xiao zhi* becoming *da zhi*. As it says in the text, “*Dao tong wei yi* 道

---

<sup>65</sup> 3/2/9-10.

<sup>66</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 50 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 37. This section of the text is undoubtedly corrupt, as Ames pointed out in his review of Graham’s translation in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 42, Number 3, May 1983, 617, noted in David McCraw, “Pursuing Zhuangzi as Rhymester: A Snark-hunt in Eight Fits”, 34 and 38, n. 25.

<sup>67</sup> McCraw, *op. cit.*, 34. ‘Demolish’ is arguably too strong a word here, as it seems to attribute to Zhuangzi an overly destructive and assertive agenda.

通爲一。 ”<sup>68</sup> (*Dao* 道 interpenetrates the alternatives and they become one). This open-ended pluralism is an example not only of epistemology but also of ethics in so far as it includes recommendations for how to act. Epistemology in the Chinese tradition has an effect on the world in that it develops an accommodating, harmonizing point of view that serves as a recommendation for how to conduct one’s life.

Many of the passages from the *Zhuangzi* quoted in Chapter 4 as examples of non-dogmatic skepticism in the text make specific recommendations of pluralism. The refrain, ‘*mo ruo yi ming* 莫若以明’ (nothing is like using illumined awareness)<sup>69</sup> in the ‘*Qiwulun*’ recommends harmonizing competing judgments of *shi* 是 (affirmation) and *fei* 非 (denial) by means of *ming* 明 (illumination, clarity, brightness, acuity), which I have translated as ‘illumined awareness’. Perhaps this awareness recommended by the text should be taken as awareness of the plurality of perspectives, so as to enable one to avoid making dogmatic judgments from within one perspective with the additional belief that these judgments are fixed, final, complete, or universally true. Graham claims that the sentences “Be aware,” “Mirror things as they are,” and “Respond with awareness” are the closest thing Daoism has to moral imperatives.<sup>70</sup> Graham makes the pluralistic dimension of this awareness clear in the following quotation:

[...] I require not only facts but awareness [...], and for that I must try to achieve independence of my personal and present viewpoint, reduce it to equality with other viewpoints. My whole understanding of the human world requires that in thought and imagination I am constantly shifting between and responding from different viewpoints, here or there, remembered or anticipated, individual or collective, my own or someone else’s, hypothetical, fictional, or simply indefinite; it is only in action that I have to settle

---

<sup>68</sup> 4/2/35.

<sup>69</sup> 4/2/27, 4/2/31.

<sup>70</sup> See “Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of ‘Is’ and ‘Ought’” and *Reason and Spontaneity*. Graham actually describes the Daoist recommendation of awareness as an imperative, but I take issue with that term since it seems to contravene the inconclusive or non-dogmatic content of the recommendation.

in a present viewpoint, whether personal ('I') or social ('We'). The different viewpoints, although not of course equally informative, are equal in the sense that whether 'Be aware' obliges me to take one of them into account depends on its relevance to choices, not on its nearness to 'here', 'now' or 'I'.<sup>71</sup>

So the *Zhuangzi* recommends cultivating an illumined awareness (*ming*) of the plurality of perspectives on a given phenomenon among the changing circumstances and phenomena we experience, so as to enable us to keep in mind that the perspective from which we are viewing it is just one of many points of view, conceived spatially, temporally, and otherwise, and as such is unlikely to reflect a fixed, complete, final, or universal perspective, for the perspective one takes is itself subject to change and transformation.

#### 6.4 CONCLUSION: THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION OF ZHI 知

The Chinese character 'zhi 知' has an interesting etymology. Its phonetic component, 'shi 矢', which also contributes to the meaning of the character as a whole, means "arrow or dart", "to display", and "straightforward". The semantic component is 'kou 口', which is a pictograph of a mouth or other opening such as a gate or crack. Cheng has claimed that 'zhi' originally had the meaning of "mastery" or "control" and involved having authority to do the 'right' thing.<sup>72</sup> The binomial, 'zhidao 知道' usually translated as "to know" can be explained as "having a mastery of *dao*".<sup>73</sup> As pointed out above, the Chinese conception of knowing is a practice and a process. Wang Yangming

---

<sup>71</sup> Graham, *Reason and Spontaneity*, 15.

<sup>72</sup> Cheng, *Philosophy* 771: "Seminar in I-Ching [*Yijing* 易經]", University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, November 9, 2001.

<sup>73</sup> Cheng has also pointed out that 'zhidao 知道' can be construed as "knowing how to express oneself" or "knowing how or what to say", understanding 'dao' as "to speak" and drawing particular attention to the 'kou 口' ("mouth") component of the character 'zhi 知'. *Philosophy* 672: "Taoism [Daoism]" seminar, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, January 27, 1999.

王陽明 (1472-1529) drew attention to this fact with his observation that there is a continuity between knowing and doing (*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一) in the classical Chinese tradition. Hall and Ames write:

[...] *zhi* 知, is conventionally translated “to know, to realize, to be wise, wisdom,” and is to be distinguished in several ways from knowing as a primarily theoretical activity. First, the etymology of *zhi* 知, according to Bernhard Karlgren is probably the combination of “person” (*ren* 人) and “mouth” (*kou* 口) [...], suggesting that *zhi* is a sociological rather than psychological event. *Zhi* is a communal achievement that emerges out of effective communication.<sup>74</sup>

Although the sociological element in the etymology of the character is doubtless of great significance to the communal aspects of traditional Chinese philosophy, I would be disinclined to reject its psychological aspects completely.

Knowing is creative in so far as one realizes, initiates, and actualizes processes and events in the world from a condition of heightened awareness or consciousness. As Hall and Ames claim:

*Zhi* is always characteristic of a particular, unfolding human situation that cannot be reduced to mental states. It is not an abstractive process, but a profoundly concrete activity that seeks to maximize existing possibilities and contributing conditions. Knowing is getting the most out of any situation. It is to “actualize” or “realize” the world. As such the “realizer” is not independent of the realized circumstances, but rather is a constitutive element in the creative enterprise of making a world.<sup>75</sup>

The Chinese conception of knowing also involves a significant affective component.

*Chih* [*Zhi*], the staple verb for “to know,” overlapped in philosophical writing with words for “to recognize” and “to know how” and, as a noun for “knowledge,” with “empathy” and “wisdom.”<sup>76</sup> Most authors interested in epistemological matters found no reason to draw a rigid line between “wise” and “knowledgeable,” between those who understand and those who use information effectively.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han*, 30.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> The character, ‘*zhi* 知,’ when read in the fourth tone, can mean “wise” or “wisdom”. On occasion, a ‘*ri* 日’ (“sun”) component is added to distinguish ‘*zhi* 知’ (“knowing”) from ‘*zhi* 智’ (“wise”), though the distinction is very fluid.

<sup>77</sup> Lloyd and Sivin, *op. cit.*, 210.



Since the Pyrrhonists recommend the adoption of a philosophical *attitude*, there is not merely a cognitive, but also a psychological and even a somatic shift involved. So it seems fair to say that there is an affective component involved in the Pyrrhonist attitude toward empirical knowledge as well. While there is a significant cognitive dimension involved in Daoist approaches to knowing, Zhuangzi redirects us from cognitive understanding to a more comprehensive perspective that also encompasses feeling, which is experienced most poignantly through the body's physical responses.

We can therefore understand the term, '*qing* 情,' which refers both to reality and the facts of a situation, on the one hand, and human (emotional) responses to it, on the other, as an epistemic category, a way of knowing. The term, '*qing*' means both the facts of a situation and the emotional responses that are stimulated by them in human beings.

Tang Yijie 汤一介 defines the term as follows:

在于人的天性，“感物而动”而发之于外的，表现出来的人的感情。  
Based on natural human *xing* [性, natural tendencies or dispositions], *qing* is human emotion (*ganqing*) that is “aroused into action by contact with things” and expressed externally.<sup>78</sup>

When understood as emotions, feelings, passions, or sentiments, *qing* has traditionally been divided into the seven *qing* (*xi* 喜 [happiness], *nu* 怒 [anger], *ai* 哀 [sorrow], *ju* 懼 [fear], *ai* 愛 [love], *wu* 惡 [hate], and *yu* 欲 [desire]), the six *qing* (*xi* 喜, *nu* 怒, *ai* 哀, *le* 樂 [enjoyment], *hao* 好 [like], and *wu* 惡 [hate]), and the five *qing* (*xi* 喜, *nu* 怒, *ai* 哀, *le* 樂, and *yuan* 怨 [resentment]).

---

<sup>78</sup> Tang Yijie 汤一介, “*Shi 'Dao shi yu qing' 释“道始于情”*”, 2. English translation from “Emotion in Pre-Qin Ruist Moral Theory: An Explanation of ‘*Dao Begins in Qing*’” by Brian Bruya and Hai-ming Wen 温海明 in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 53, Number 2, April 2003, 272.

Interestingly, however, *qing* occurs in Chapter 5, ‘*Dechongfu* 德充符’

(“Excellence Completes the Tally”) of the *Zhuangzi* as a *wu*-form. That chapter

concludes with a dialogue between Zhuangzi and Hui Shi 惠施 (Huizi 惠子) on *qing*:

惠子謂莊子曰。人故无情乎。莊子曰。然。惠子曰。人而无情。何以謂之人。莊子曰。道與之貌。天與之形。惡得不謂之人。惠子曰。既謂之人。惡得无情。莊子曰。是非吾所謂情也。吾所謂无情者。言人之不以好惡內傷其身。常因自然而不益生也。惠子曰。不益生何以有其身。莊子曰。道與之貌。天與之形。无以好惡內傷其身。今子外乎子之神。勞乎子之精。倚樹而吟。據槁梧而瞑。天選子之形。子以堅白鳴。<sup>79</sup>

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, “Can people really be without *qing* 情?” Zhuangzi said, “It is so.” Huizi said, “If people lack *qing*, how can they be referred to as people?” Zhuangzi said, “*Dao* 道 gives them appearance, *tian* 天 gives them form. How can we not call these people?” Huizi said, “If they are already called people, how can they be without *qing*?” Zhuangzi said, “Affirming and denying (*shifei* 是非) is what I call *qing*. What I refer to as *wu qing* 无情 (unmediated experience) describes people’s not using their preferences and dislikes to harm their bodies internally, daily according with what is so of itself (*ziran* 自然) and not augmenting life.” Huizi said, “Without augmenting life, how can one have a body?” Zhuangzi said, “*Dao* gives one appearance, *tian* gives one form. Do not allow your preferences and dislikes to harm your body internally. Now you put your spirit (*shen* 神) on the outside, exhaust your seminal essence, prop yourself on a dry tree and fall asleep. *Tian* selected your form, and you cry out about the hard and the white.<sup>80</sup>

In this passage, Huizi and Zhuangzi seem to be coming from two very different perspectives on what is rhetorically and philosophically persuasive. Huizi, in his logical approach to philosophical inquiry and debate appears to be attempting to locate a distinguishing characteristic that makes human beings what they are and at the same time distinguishes them from all non-human beings. Aristotle has been influential in pointing to human beings’ capabilities of rational thought and receptiveness to grammar as “essential characteristics” of what it is to be a human being. Thus, when the Greeks

---

<sup>79</sup> 14/5/55-15/5/60.

wanted to define a term such as ‘*anthropos*’ (human being), their approach was to give an account of the essence (*logos tēs ousias*) of what it is to be a human being. Huizi seems to be taking a similar approach in his attempts to define what is involved in being a person (*zuo ren* 做人).

Zhuangzi, on the other hand, seems to be approaching Huizi’s query from a very different point of view. Rather than understanding the presence of *qing* (*you qing* 有情) or its absence (*wu qing* 无情) as a defining or essential characteristic of a person (*ren* 人), Zhuangzi is interested in the question of self-cultivation and what it means to have a certain kind of disposition in one’s interactions with and experience of the phenomena (things and events) we encounter in the world. Thus, when Huizi asks about the logical possibility of a person’s lacking *qing*, he seems to be seeking to understand its presence as an essential characteristic of human beings and when Zhuangzi responds that it is possible for a person to lack *qing*, he is describing the possibility of a person cultivating a disposition for living in the world that involves unmediated experience of its many processes and events. Keeping in mind Ames and Hall’s approach to the *wu*-forms, we might consider translating ‘*wu qing* 无情’, at least in Zhuangzi’s use of the term in this context, as “unmediated experience”. Thus, Zhuangzi appears to be suggesting a non-cognitive, unmediated, non-conceptual, and non-discursive approach to Huizi’s question.

As the discussion continues, the two friends find that their approaches continue to be at cross purposes. When Zhuangzi describes *wu qing* (unmediated experience) as not allowing one’s preferences and dislikes to harm one’s body internally, spontaneously

---

<sup>80</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 82 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 75. There is attributed to Gongsun Long 公孫龍 an essay by the title, ‘*Jianbolun* 堅白論’ (“Discourse on Hard and

according with what is so of itself (*ziran* 自然) on a daily basis and not using artificial methods to augment one's life (*yi sheng* 益生), Huizi cannot see how one can be understood as having a body without augmenting life. Take the example of eating as a possible example of "augmenting life". Zhuangzi should not be read as including fulfilling one's bodily needs for food, water, and so on in his understanding of augmenting life. But Huizi seems to take Zhuangzi's suggestion quite literally to include such basic natural needs. On this literal reading, Zhuangzi's suggestion is incoherent because it advocates ignoring one's basic needs. But Zhuangzi's point is fundamentally about using one's preferences (which are emotionally based) as a means of artificially adding to the natural process of life something unneeded which has the effect of squelching one's ability simply to "respond without storing" (*ying er bu cang* 應而不藏). The passage concludes with Zhuangzi expressing frustration at Huizi's over-reliance on debating procedures and the limitations this places on him in terms of understanding Zhuangzi's point.

Since Zhuangzi in this passage seems to recommend that we cultivate a disposition of *wu qing*, it may seem peculiar to attribute an affective dimension to his attitude toward empirical knowledge. Part of this apparent contradiction is obviated by understanding *wu qing* as a *wu*-form, which is not to be understood literally as the absence of all feeling or facts, but rather as describing a disposition of unmediated experience. Tang Yijie, in support of this reading, has gone so far as to suggest that Zhuangzi did not recommend *wu qing*:

---

White"), which Zhuangzi is probably mocking here.

庄子并不主张无情，而只主张“无欲”。故对“情”与“欲”之意义不可不辨。<sup>81</sup>  
[...] Zhuangzi did not favor emotionlessness [*wu qing*], but rather desirelessness [*wu yu*],  
and therefore he could not help but distinguish *qing* from desire.<sup>82</sup>

In addition, there are also several positive uses of ‘*qing*’ in the Inner Chapters, which  
give credence to the idea that the non-dogmatic attitude toward empirical knowledge  
found in the *Zhuangzi* can be considered as involving affect and emotion:

行事之情而忘其身。<sup>83</sup>

Act on the *qing* of the situation and forget yourself.<sup>84</sup>

是恆物之大情也。<sup>85</sup>

This is how you make ordinary the great *qing* of things and events.<sup>86</sup>

夫道有情有信。<sup>87</sup>

*Dao* 道 has both *qing* and credibility.<sup>88</sup>

In a similar fashion, if we interpret ‘*wu zhi* 无知’ (unmediated knowing or  
realization) in the manner suggested by Ames and Hall rather than as ignorance or the  
absence of knowledge, we need not claim that Zhuangzi was an advocate of an anti-  
intellectual practice of abandoning knowledge altogether. Ames and Hall treat this  
particular *wu*-form as follows:

*Wuzhi* 無知, often translated as “no-knowledge,” actually means the absence of a  
certain kind of knowledge—the kind of knowledge that is dependent upon ontological  
presence: that is, the assumption that there is some unchanging reality behind appearance.  
[...] It is [...] *unprincipled* knowing. Such knowing does not appeal to rules or  
principles determining the existence, the meaning, or the activity of a phenomenon.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Tang Yijie, *op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Bruya and Wen, *op. cit.*, 279.

<sup>83</sup> 10/4/43.

<sup>84</sup> Compare with Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 70 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 60.

<sup>85</sup> 16/6/26.

<sup>86</sup> Compare with Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 86 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 81.

<sup>87</sup> 16/6/29.

<sup>88</sup> Compare with Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 86 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 81.

<sup>89</sup> Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 40-41.

Thus, Zhuangzi, like the Pyrrhonists, is able to present a qualified and non-dogmatic attitude toward knowledge. He does this at the beginning of the ‘*Dazongshi* 大宗師’

(“The Great Master”) chapter:

知天之所爲。知人之所爲者。至矣。知天之所爲者。天而生也。知人之所爲者。以其知之所知。以養其知之所不知。終其天年而不中道夭者。是知之盛也。雖然。有患。夫知有所待而後當。其所待者。特未定也。庸詎知吾所謂天之非人乎。所謂人之非天乎。且有真人而後有真知。何謂真人。古之真人。不逆寡。不雄成。不謀士。若然者。過而弗悔。當而不自得也。若然者。登高不慄。入水不濡。入火不熱。是知之能登假於道者也若此。<sup>90</sup>

Knowing what *tian* 天 does, knowing that which people do, this is the utmost. One who knows what *tian* does lives according to *tian*. One who knows what people do uses the knowing of his knowledge to nurture the non-knowing of his knowledge. Such a one finishes out his natural years and does not die an early death in the middle of the way (*dao* 道). This is the flourishing of knowledge. This being so, there is a concern, for knowledge has that upon which it depends and only then fits the facts (*dang* 當). But what it depends upon is not yet fixed. How do I know that what I refer to as of *tian* is not of people, and that what I refer to as of people is not of *tian*? First there is an authentic person (*zhenren* 真人) and only then is there authentic knowing (*zhenzhi* 真知). What is referred to as a *zhenren*? The authentic persons of old did not oppose the few, did not regard success as the male (strongest), and did not contrive affairs.<sup>91</sup> Such persons when they made mistakes (missed opportunities) did not regret it. When they succeeded, they were not self-complacent (self-possessed). Such persons when they climbed high would not tremble, when they entered water would not get wet, and when they entered fire would not get hot (burned). The ability of a person of authentic knowledge to attain to way-making (*dao*) is like this.<sup>92</sup>

In order to understand what is involved in the provisional and non-dogmatic formulation of knowing that is provided in this passage, we must first acquire an understanding of the term ‘*zhen* 真,’ which modifies both ‘*zhi* 知’ and ‘*ren* 人’ in this passage. Interestingly, the word does not occur at all in the Confucian classics and can thus probably be regarded as a Daoist term of art, at least originally. And as far as can be ascertained, ‘*zhen*’ is not to be found on the oracle bones, and is thus not one of the oldest Chinese characters.

<sup>90</sup> 15/6/1-6.

<sup>91</sup> Reading ‘*shi* 士’ as ‘*shi* 事’.

<sup>92</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 84 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 77.

In the *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 lexicon, compiled by Xu Shen 許慎 (30 – 124 CE)

in 120 CE during the Eastern Han 漢 period, ‘*zhen*’ is explained as follows:

真僊人變形而登天也

*Zhen* is mountain recluses<sup>93</sup> changing form and ascending to *tian*.

Xu Hao 徐灝 (1810-1879) in his *Shuowen Jiezi Zhujian* 說文解字注箋 quoted the thirteenth-century scholar, Dai Tong 戴侗, who claimed that Lie Yukou 列禦寇 (Liezi 列子) and Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (Zhuangzi) used ‘*zhen*’ to mean “pure and unadulterated” rather than in the sense of its *Shuowen* definition as “changing one’s form and ascending to *tian*”. Ames has observed that the notion of transformation is embedded in the very structure of the character itself: “The character, *zhen* 真, meaning ‘authentic’ or ‘genuine,’ is classified under the radical *bi* 匕 [in the *Shuowen*], which means ‘to transform’ (*hua* 化).”<sup>94</sup> Although ‘*zhen*’ is often translated as “true”, it overlaps with this concept only in the sense of authenticity or genuineness. Since ‘*zhen*’ anciently has this association with transforming one’s form and ascending to *tian*, translating it as ‘true’ is philosophically misleading in so far as the Western concept of truth often involves the opposite associations of stability, permanence, and universal application. ‘*Zhen*’ is sometimes contrasted with ‘*wei* 偽’ (“artificial, inauthentic, simulated, spurious, counterfeit, cheat”) or ‘*jia* 假’ (“false, simulated,

---

<sup>93</sup> The term, ‘*xian* 僊’ more commonly written ‘*xian* 仙’ is difficult to translate. The standard rendering is “immortal”. I follow Daniel Coyle in translating it as ‘a recluse of the mountains’ and note with approval his associating it with both “one who dwells in the mountains” and “one who is firm or long-lasting like a mountain”. See Coyle, “On the *Zhenren*” in Ames, *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*, 199 and 206-207, n. 9.

<sup>94</sup> Ames, “Knowing in the *Zhuangzi*: ‘From Here, on the Bridge, over the River Hao’” in Ames, *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*, 225. See also Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han*, 64. It should be noted that the *Shuowen* employed a system of 540 radicals, whereas in modern dictionaries, this has been reduced to 214. Interestingly, in modern dictionaries, the character is classified under the ‘*mu* 目’ (“eye”) radical, despite the fact that ‘*bi*’ is still a radical in the 214 radical system. This further suggests that one uses one’s eyes to judge the authenticity or genuineness of an object.

artificial, fake”). Both of these words overlap with the English word, ‘false’ only in this sense. Neither ‘*zhen*’ nor ‘*wei*’ or ‘*jia*’ was regularly used to describe the truth or falsity of propositions. This fact contributes further to the idea discussed above that Chinese philosophies in general did not expend much energy developing theories of propositional knowledge.<sup>95</sup>

With these philological details in the background, the concept of *zhenren* is best understood as a Daoist model of the exemplary, realized, and virtuosic person. As such the *zhenren*’s open-minded approach to knowing is practical, embodied, and directed toward particular situations. As is stated in the passage above, authentic persons neither accept accolades for success nor blame for failure. In high places, they do not succumb to fear, and in general are not concerned that harm will come to their persons. The imperturbability of the *zhenren* is developed further with the claims that the authentic person can enter water without getting wet and fire without being burned. These miraculous attributions suggest some sort of practice, or at least the beginnings of such a practice.

Breathing and perhaps meditation practices are also at the forefront of the second description of the *zhenren*:

古之真人。其寐不夢。其覺无憂。其食不甘。其息深深。真人之息以踵。衆人之息以喉。屈服者。其嗑言若哇。其耆欲深者。其天機淺。<sup>96</sup>

The authentic persons of old in their sleeping did not dream, and in their waking were without anxiety (*wu you* 无憂). Their food did not have flavor, and their breath was deep, deep. The authentic person’s breath is from his heels; the multitude’s breath is from the throat. Submissive, their words come out as if they are being choked. Whose desires for sensory gratification are deep, his *tianji* 天機 (the trigger, spring, or mechanism that releases the natural spontaneity of *tian*) is shallow.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> The later Mohists and the Lineage of Names are two important exceptions to this generalization.

<sup>96</sup> 15/6/6-7.

<sup>97</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 84 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 77-78.



In sleeping authentic persons do not dream and they are without anxiety in their waking hours. They do not perceive the flavor of their simple food and their breath is so deep that it originates not from the diaphragm but from the heels. If their *tianji* 天機 is deep, then their desire for sensory pleasure is shallow.

The description of the authentic person continues with the development of the idea that life and death are two equally important aspects of experience:

古之真人。不知說生。不知惡死。其出不訢。其入不距。然而往。然而來而已矣。不忘其所始。不求其所終。受而喜之。忘而復之。是之謂不以心損道。不以人助天。是之謂真人。若然者。其心志。其容寂。其顙顙。淒然似秋。煖然似春。喜怒通四時。與物有宜而莫知其極。<sup>98</sup>

The authentic persons of old did not understand delighting in life or resenting death. In their coming into the world they were not happy, and in their leaving it, they did not decline. They suddenly went and suddenly came. They did not forget their own beginnings and did not seek their natural ends. They received it [life and death] and delighted in it; they forgot it and returned to it. This is called not using the heart-mind and its processes of thinking and feeling to damage way-making, and not using what is of people to help *tian*. Such is called the authentic person. Ones who are like this, their heart-minds stop<sup>99</sup>, their appearance is quiet; their foreheads are wide without worries. Cold, they seem like autumn, warm, they seem like spring. Evenly happy and angry throughout the four seasons, they do what fits with things and events and no one knows their limits.<sup>100</sup>

The *zhenren*, like Ziyu 子輿 and Zilai 子來 whose terminal and disfiguring illnesses are described later in the same chapter, has come to accept life and death as part of a continuous process where neither is superior to the other. The process of life and death is one where things come into and go out of existence spontaneously. Authentic persons' awareness of this situation leads them to equanimity in their reflections on life and death. Therefore, they are even-tempered and imperturbable throughout the changing seasons of the year and

---

<sup>98</sup> 15/6/7-11.

<sup>99</sup> Reading 'zhi 止' for 'zhi 志'. Another alternative is to read 'wang 忘' (forgetting) for 'zhi 志'.

<sup>100</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 85 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 78.

thereby act in accordance with the changing circumstances and phenomena they encounter.

In this way, their limits are unfathomable.

The authentic person is also described as follows:

古之真人。其狀義而不朋。若不足而不承。與乎其觚而不堅也。張乎其虛而不華也。邴邴乎其似喜乎。崔乎其不得已乎。濔乎其進我色也。與乎止我德也。厲乎其似世乎。警乎其未可制也。連乎其似好閉也。乎忘其言也。[...] <sup>101</sup>故其好之也一。其弗好之也一。其一也一。其不一也一。其一與天爲徒。其不一與人爲徒。天與人不相勝也。是之爲真人。 <sup>102</sup>

The authentic persons of old, their appearance was lofty and not collapsed; they seemed to be insufficient and accepted nothing (not in need of adding to it). Broad-minded, they were independent and not stubborn. Open, they were empty and yet not ostentatious; joyous they seemed happy. Active, they were not able to stop. Kindly, it showed in their faces. Broad-minded, they depended on their excellence (*de* 德). Stern, they seemed to pay attention to the affairs of their age. Lofty, they had not yet been able to restrain themselves. Distant, they seemed to like being closed off, and tacitly they forgot their words. [...] Therefore their preferences were continuous and their dislikes were continuous. That continuity is itself continuous. That non-continuity is also continuous. Continuity is of a kind with *tian*; non-continuity is of a kind with people. *Tian* and people do not compete for victory with each other. This is called the authentic person. <sup>103</sup>

Lofty and distant, deficient and empty, independent, malleable, and open-minded in their thought, they are not ostentatious or enraptured, and seem closed off. They seem to be unrestrained in their activity, do not fear death, and understand knowledge as the need to contend pragmatically with the characteristics of the age. Their particular excellence (*de* 德) accords with what is so of itself spontaneously. Wordlessly recognizing the diversity of things and events in the world, the *zhenren* treats them as equal (*qiwu* 齊物). Seeing the continuity between their likes and dislikes, they recognize the ‘meta-continuity’ of not only that continuity but also its non-continuity. Coming to see continuity as connected with *tian*

<sup>101</sup> Omitting 16/6/17-19, which, it has been suggested, is a Legalist interpolation into the text.

<sup>102</sup> 15/6/14-16/6/20.

<sup>103</sup> Compare with Graham, *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*, 85 and Watson, *op. cit.*, 79-80.

and non-continuity as connected with people, they authentically know *tian ren he yi* 天人合  
— (the continuity between the human and the natural, spiritual worlds).<sup>104</sup>

Authentic knowledge (*zhenzhi*) arises throughout the process of attainments  
involved in becoming a *zhenren*. On the concept of *zhenzhi*, Charles Le Blanc writes:

For the human mind, being itself in continuity with nature, has the capacity ‘to know’, ‘to become’ and ‘to reproduce’ the cosmic process, not through divinely granted revelation, reflection or contemplation, but on the affective and participative level of being. In this sense true knowledge (*chen-chih* [*zhenzhi* 真知]) is not a mirror-image — neither a representation of ‘what’s out there’ nor a focal or peripheral vision of the intellect — but rather a direct and immediate *affectus* of things themselves, an affinitive correspondence and union that precedes any reflected awareness of it.<sup>105</sup>

Authentic knowledge can be equated with the great knowledge (*da zhi*) mentioned above.

On this reading both authentic knowledge and great knowledge avoid the trappings and entanglements of fixed epistemological positions arrived at through disputation (*bian*), which may themselves be regarded as petty knowledge (*xiao zhi*).<sup>106</sup> The *zhenren* does not favor one of these over the other, but in accord with his open-minded pluralism and tolerance of diversity accepts both together. Another possible reading is to construe *zhenzhi* as the unprincipled knowing entailed by *wu zhi*.<sup>107</sup> This approach amplifies rather than contradicts the one above.

Thus the authentic person or Daoist sage is able to use the aporetic or non-dogmatic framework of his skepticism to recommend a provisional and contingent account of empirical knowledge as an embodied praxis that is always under development and is never

---

<sup>104</sup> For further descriptions of the spiritual achievements of the *zhenren*, consult the first chapter of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, entitled ‘*Yuandao* 原道’. For a complete translation of this chapter, see Lau and Ames, *op. cit.*

<sup>105</sup> Charles Le Blanc, *Huai nan Tzu: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1985) 207-208.

<sup>106</sup> Cheng, Philosophy 672: “Taoism [Daoism]” seminar, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, March 7, 1999.

final. This recommendation of how to act in the light of the manifold of changing circumstances brings a freedom from anxiety (*wu you*) that one can experience to its utmost by being open and adaptable to the flux and flow of phenomena.

---

<sup>107</sup> David McCraw, Chinese 753T: "Research Seminar in Chinese Literature: Traditional/Seminar in Daoist Philosophical Texts", University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, March 6, 2003.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, R.E. "Plato's Earlier Theory of Forms" in Gregory Vlastos, ed. *The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971, 1980.
- Allinson, Robert E. *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation: An Analysis of the Inner Chapters*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989a.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Understanding the Chinese Mind: The Philosophical Roots*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989b.
- Ames, Roger T. "Confucius and the Ontology of Knowing" in Gerald J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch, eds. *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 265-279.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Images of Reason in Chinese Culture" in *Alternative Rationalities*. Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, no date, 27-36.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Mencian Conception of *Ren xing* 人性: Does it Mean 'Human Nature'?" in Rosemont 1991, 143-175.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Death as Transformation in Classical Daoism" in Jeff Malpas and Robert C. Solomon, eds. *Death and Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1998, 57-70.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Knowing in the *Zhuangzi*: 'From Here, on the Bridge, over the River Hao'" in Ames 1998, 219-230.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction" to Lau and Ames 1998, 1-58.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mencius and a Process Notion of Human Nature" in Alan K.L. Chan, ed. *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002, 72-90.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "*Qi* 氣 and Correlative Cosmology: An Interpretive Context", 1-70. Unpublished draft, 2001.
- Ames, Roger T. and David L. Hall, trans. *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_, trans. *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant": A*

- Philosophical Translation*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2003.
- Ames, Roger T. and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans. *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1998.
- Annas, Julia and Jonathan Barnes. *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_, trans. *Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Scepticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 2000.
- Balfour, Frederic Henry, trans. *The Divine Classic of Nan-hua; Being the Works of Chuang Tsze, Taoist Philosopher*. Shanghai & Hongkong: Kelly & Walsh [Yokohama: Kelly & Co., London: Trübner & Co.], 1881.
- Barnes, Jonathan. "Scepticism and Relativity" in *Philosophical Studies*, Volume XXXII (1988-90), 1-31.
- Bayley, James E., ed. *Aspects of Relativism: Moral, Cognitive, and Literary*. Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1992.
- Bearn, Gordon C.F. "The Horizon of Reason" in Krausz 1989, 205-231.
- Berkson, Mark. "Language: The Guest of Reality—Zhuangzi and Derrida on Language, Reality, and Skillfulness" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996, 97-126.
- Berlin, Isaiah. "Pluralism". *The New York Review of Books*, May 14, 1998, 57-58.
- Bett, Richard. *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Bevan, Edwyn. "The Sceptics" in Edwyn Bevan. *Stoics & Sceptics*. Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1913, 121-152.
- Blackburn, Simon. "Errors and the Phenomenology of Value" in *Essays in Quasi-Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 149-165.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "How to Be an Ethical Anti-Realist" in *Essays in Quasi-Realism*, 166-181.
- Brennan, Tad. *Ethics and Epistemology in Sextus Empiricus*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999.
- Bruya, Brian, trans. *Zhuangzi Speaks: The Music of Nature*, by Tsai Chih Chung. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Dao of Zhuangzi: The Harmony of Nature*, by Tsai Chih Chung. New York: Anchor Books, 1997.
- Bueno, Otávio. "How to Be a Pyrrhonist about Empirical Knowledge". Paper presented in the "Society for Skeptical Studies" panel at The American Philosophical Association Eastern Division One Hundredth Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., December 27, 2003.
- Burnyeat, M.F. "Conflicting Appearances" in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Volume LXV, 1979, 69-111.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed" in Godfrey Vesey, ed. *Idealism Past and Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 19-50.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?" in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes 1980, 20-53. Reprinted as "Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?" in Burnyeat 1983, 117-148, and as "Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?" in Burnyeat and Frede 1997, 25-57.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Later Greek Philosophy" in *The Philosophical Review*. Volume LXXXV, Number 1, Whole Number 452, January 1976, 44-69.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Plato's Theaetetus" in *The Philosophical Review*. Volume LXXXV, Number 2, Whole Number 453, April 1976, 172-195.
- Burnyeat, Myles, ed. *The Skeptical Tradition*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Theaetetus of Plato*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1990.
- Burnyeat, Myles and Michael Frede, eds. *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- Bury, R.G., trans. *Sextus Empiricus I: Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1933.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sextus Empiricus II: Against the Logicians*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1935.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sextus Empiricus III: Against the Physicists, Against the Ethicists*.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1936.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sextus Empiricus IV: Against the Professors*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1949.

Callahan, William A. "Cook Ding's Life on the Whetstone: Contingency, Action, and Inertia in the *Zhuangzi*" in Ames 1998, 175-196.

Chan, Wing-tsit 陳榮捷, trans. "The Mystical Way of Chuang Tzu" in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, 177-210.

Cheng Chung-ying 成中英. "Nature and Function of Skepticism in Chinese Philosophy" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 27, Number 2, April 1977, 137-154.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Chinese Philosophy and Symbolic Reference" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 27, Number 3, July 1977, 307-322.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics: Confucian and Taoist Insights into the Nature of Reality" in Allinson 1989b, 167-208.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Origins of Chinese Philosophy" in Brian Carr and Indira Mahalingam, eds., *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 1997, 493-534.

Cook, Scott, ed. *Hiding the World in the World: Uneven Discourses on the Zhuangzi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Zhuang Zi and His Carving of the Confucian Ox" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 47, Number 4, October 1997, 521-553.

Cooper, John M., ed. *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

Cornford, F.M. *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_, trans. *Theaetetus* in Hamilton and Cairns 1961, 845-919.

Coutinho, Steven K. *Dichotomies and Penumbrae: The Significance of Boundaries in Early Chinese Thinking*. Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Hawai'i, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation, and Paradox*. Aldershot: Variorum, Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming.



- Coutinho, Steve. "The Abduction of Vagueness: Interpreting the *Laozi*" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 52, Number 4, October 2002, 409-425.
- Coyle, Daniel. "On the *Zhenren*" in Ames 1998, 197-210.
- Creel, Herrlee G. "On Two Aspects in Early Taoism" in Herrlee G. Creel. *What is Taoism? and Other Studies in Chinese Cultural History*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970, 37-47.
- de Bary, William Theodore, Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷, and Burton Watson, comp. "Skepticism and Mysticism in Chuang Tzu" and "Selections from the Chuang Tzu" in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, 62-85.
- Descartes, René. *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences*, translated by Robert Stoothoff in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Donald Murdoch, trans. *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 20-56.
- Dewey, John. "The Problem of Truth" in Debra Morris and Ian Shapiro, eds. *John Dewey: The Political Writings*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993, 10-19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth" in Jo Ann Boydston, ed. *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953*, Volume 14: 1939-1941. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988, 168-188.
- Diels, Hermann and Walther Kranz. *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker I-III*. Berlin-Charlottenburg: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1952.
- Ding Fubao 丁福保. *Shuowen Jiezi Gulin* 說文解字詁林.
- Dummett, Michael. *Truth and Other Enigmas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Edwards, Steven D. *Relativism, Conceptual Schemes and Categorical Frameworks*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1990.
- Eno, Robert. "Cook Ding's Dao and the Limits of Philosophy" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996, 127-151.
- Fine, Gail. "Protagorean Relativisms" in J.J. Cleary and W. Wians, eds. *Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 1995, 211-243.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Conflicting Appearances: *Theaetetus* 153d-154b" in C. Gill and M. McCabe, eds. *Form and Argument in Late Plato*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, 105-133.

Fowler, Harold North. *Plato II: Theaetetus, Sophist*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1921.

Frede, Michael. "The Skeptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge" in Michael Frede. *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 201-222. Reprinted as "The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge" in Burnyeat and Frede 1997, 127-151.

Freeman, Kathleen. *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948, 1952.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Companion to Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Second Edition, 1959, 1966.

Fu Sinian 傅斯年. "On the Authorship of *Ts'i-wu-lun* in *Chuang-tzū*" in *Bulletin of Academia Sinica* 6/4, 1936, 557-567.

Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭, trans. *A Taoist Classic: Chuang-Tzu*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1933, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume I: The Period of the Philosophers (from the beginnings to circa 100 B.C.)*, translated by Derk Bodde. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume II: The Period of Classical Learning (from the Second Century B.C. to the Twentieth Century A.D.)*, translated by Derk Bodde. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953, 1983.

Garner, Dick. "Skepticism, Ordinary Language and Zen Buddhism" in *Philosophy East and West*. Volume 27, Number 2, April 1977, 165-181.

Garner, Richard. *Beyond Morality*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Value of Value". Unpublished paper.

Gifford, N.L. *When in Rome: An Introduction to Relativism and Knowledge*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.

Giles, Herbert A., trans. *Chuang Tzū: Mystic, Moralizer, and Social Reformer*. Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., 1889, 1926. Reprinted as *Chuang Tzū: Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961.

- Giles, H.A., trans. *Teachings and Sayings of Chuang Tzū*, edited by Lionel Giles. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001. Reprint of Giles, H.A., trans. *Musings of a Chinese Mystic*, edited by Lionel Giles. New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1909.
- Goldman, Alvin I. *Epistemology and Cognition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Gottlieb, Paula. "The Principle of Non-Contradiction and Protagoras: The Strategy of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IV 4" in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium on Ancient Philosophy*. Volume 8, 1992, 183-198.
- Graham, A.C. "Chuang-Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal" in *History of Religions*, Volume 9, Numbers 2-3, November 1969-February 1970, 137-159. Reprinted in Roth 2003, 104-129.
- \_\_\_\_\_, trans. *The Book of Lieh-tzú: A Classic of Tao*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "How Much of *Chuang Tzū* 莊子 Did Chuang Tzū Write?" in Graham 1986, 1990, 283-321. Reprinted in Roth 2003, 58-103.
- \_\_\_\_\_, trans. *Chuang-Tzū: The Inner Chapters*. London: Mandala, 1991, 1981. Reprinted, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Textual Notes to *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*" in Roth 2003, 5-57. Originally published as *Chuang-tzu: Textual Notes to a Partial Translation*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of 'Is' and 'Ought'" in Mair 1983, 3-23. Reprinted in Roth 2003, 157-180.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reason and Spontaneity*. Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Two Notes on the Translation of Taoist Classics" in Roger T. Ames, Chan Sin-wai, Mau-sang Ng, eds. *Interpreting Culture Through Translation: A*

*Festschrift for D.C. Lau.* Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1991.  
Reprinted in Roth 2003, 130-156.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Reflections and Replies: Roth" in Rosemont 1991, 279-283.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Conceptual Schemes and Linguistic Relativism in Relation to Chinese" in Eliot Deutsch, ed. *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, 193-212.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Poetic and Mythic Varieties of Correlative Thinking" in *Unreason within Reason.* La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1992, 207-223.

Granet, Marcel. *La pensée chinoise.* Paris: Albin Michel, 1934.

Groarke, Leo. *Greek Scepticism: Anti-Realist Trends in Ancient Thought.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.

Guo Jianxun 郭建勳 and Huang Junlang 黃俊郎, eds. *Xinyi Yijing Duben*  
新譯易經讀本 [*Yijing: A New Annotated Reader*]. Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju  
三民書局, 1996.

Guthrie, W.K.C. *The Greek Philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1950, 1975.

Hall, David L. and Roger T. Ames. *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Hall, David Lynn and Roger T. Ames. "Rationality, Correlativity, and the Language of Process" in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy.* Volume V, Number 2, 1991, 85-106.

Hallie, Philip P. and Sanford G. Etheridge, trans. *Sextus Empiricus: Selections from the Major Writings on Scepticism, Man, & God.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985.

Hamilton, Edith and Huntington Cairns, eds. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Hankinson, R.J. *The Sceptics.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

- Hansen, Chad. "A *Tao of Tao* in Chuang-tzu" in Mair 1983, 24-55.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Language and Logic in Ancient China*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy and 'Truth'" in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume XLIV, Number 3, May 1985, 491-519.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Guru or Skeptic? Relativistic Skepticism in the *Zhuangzi*" in Cook 2003, 128-162.
- Hanson, Norwood Russell. *Patterns of Discovery: An Inquiry into the Conceptual Foundations of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.
- Harbsmeier, Christoph. "Conceptions of Knowledge in Ancient China" in Lenk and Paul 1993, 11-30.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Marginalia Sino-logica" in Allinson 1989b, 125-166.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Mass Noun Hypothesis and the Part-Whole Analysis of the White Horse Dialogue" in Rosemont 1991, 49-66.
- Hare, R.M. *Plato*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Harris, James F. *Against Relativism: A Philosophical Defense of Method*. La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1992.
- Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 20  
 哈佛燕京學社引得纂處, 特刊第二十號. *A Concordance to Chuang Tzū*  
 莊子引得. May 1947.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, translated by Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Henderson, John B. *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Hicks, R.D., trans. *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Volumes I-II. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1925.
- Hopkins, Jasper, trans. *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia*. Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press,

1985.

- Huang Jinhong 黃錦鈺, ed. *Xinyi Zhuangzi Duben* 新譯莊子讀本 [*Zhuangzi: A New Annotated Reader*]. Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1974, 1996.
- Hughes, E.R. "Epistemological Methods in Chinese Philosophy" in Moore 1967, 77-103.
- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Antony Flew. La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1988.
- Hussey, Edward. *The Presocratics*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Company Limited, 1972.
- Hyland, Drew A. *The Origins of Philosophy: Its Rise in Myth and the Pre-Socratics*. Amherst: Humanity Books, 1973, 1998.
- Irwin, Terence. *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable *Dao*" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Volume LXI, Number 4, Winter 1993, 101-116.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996, 196-214.
- Jochim, Chris. "Just Say No to 'No Self' in *Zhuangzi*" in Ames 1998, 35-74.
- Jullien, François. *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, translated by Janet Lloyd. New York: Zone Books, 1995, 1999.
- Kahn, Charles H. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Karlgren, Bernhard. *Grammata Serica Recensa*. Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1957.
- Kasulis, Thomas P. *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.
- Ketchum, Richard J. "Plato's 'Refutation' of Protagorean Relativism: *Theaetetus* 170-171" in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. Volume X, 1992, 73-105.
- Kirk, G.S., J.E. Raven and M. Schofield. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 1957, 1983.
- Kirwan, Christopher, trans. *Aristotle: Metaphysics Books Γ, Δ, and E*. Oxford: Clarendon

Press, Second Edition, 1971, 1993.

Kjellberg, Paul and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds. *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Kjellberg, Paul. *Zhuangzi and Skepticism*. Ph.D. Dissertation: Stanford University, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Skepticism, Truth, and the Good Life: A Comparison of Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus" in *Philosophy East and West*. Volume 44, Number 1, January 1994, 111-133.

\_\_\_\_\_. "What is Zhuangzi's Problem?" (Presented as "Zhuangzi's Negative Project" at the 47th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, April 1995). Unpublished paper, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Sextus Empiricus, Zhuangzi, and Xunzi on 'Why Be Skeptical?'" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996, 1-25.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The End of Skepticism", Unpublished paper, 1998, 1-5.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Zhuangzi" in Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2001, 203-245.

Krausz, Michael, ed. *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.

Kraut, Richard, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1970.

Kupperman, Joel. "Spontaneity and Education of the Emotions in the *Zhuangzi*" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, 1996, 183-195.

Lau, D.C. 劉殿爵 and Roger T. Ames, trans. *Yuan Dao: Tracing Dao to Its Source*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1998.

Laudan, Larry. *Science and Relativism: Some Key Controversies in the Philosophy of Science*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Legge, James, trans. *The I Ching: The Book of Changes*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1882, 1963.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Writings of Kwang-Tze" in *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism*, Parts I-II. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1891, 1962, *Part I: The Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzū/The Writings of Chuang Tzū*: 125-392, *Part II: The Writings of Chuang Tzū*: 1-232.
- Le Blanc, Charles. *Huai nan Tzu: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1985.
- Lehrer, Keith. *Theory of Knowledge*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Why Not Skepticism?" in Louis P. Pojman, ed., *The Theory of Knowledge: Classic & Contemporary Readings*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993, 48-55. Reprinted from *The Philosophical Forum*. 2.3, 1971, 283-298.
- Lenk, Hans and Gregor Paul, eds. *Epistemological Issues in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Levett, M.J., trans. "The *Theaetetus* of Plato" in Burnyeat 1990, 249-351.
- Li Shenglong 李生龍 and Li Zhenxing 李振興, eds. *Xinyi Mozi Duben* 新譯墨子讀本 [*Mozi: A New Annotated Reader*]. Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1996.
- Liddell, H.G. and R. Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889, 1997.
- Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢. *Classifying the Zhuangzi Chapters*, translated by William E. Savage. The University of Michigan: Center for Chinese Studies Press, 1994.
- Lloyd, G.E.R. *Adversaries and Authorities: Investigations into Ancient Greek and Chinese Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Demystifying Mentalities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Magic, Reason and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Lloyd, Geoffrey and Nathan Sivin. *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Loewe, Michael, ed. *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*. Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1993.



- Long, A.A. *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Company Limited, Second Edition, 1974, 1986.
- Long, A.A. and D.N. Sedley. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Volume 1: *Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Volume 2: *Greek and Latin Texts with Notes and Bibliography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Loy, David. "Zhuangzi and Nāgārjuna on the Truth of No Truth" in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996, 50-67.
- Lynn, Richard John, trans. *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Mackie, J.L. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. London: Penguin Books, 1977.
- Mair, Victor H., ed. *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_, trans. *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Bantam Books, 1994. Reprinted, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.
- Makeham, John. "Between Chen and Cai: *Zhuangzi* and the *Analects*" in Ames 1998, 75-100.
- Mandelbaum, Maurice. "Subjective, Objective, and Conceptual Relativisms" in Meiland and Krausz 1982, 34-61.
- Mates, Benson, trans. *The Sceptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Mathews, R.H. *Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931, 1943.
- McCraw, David. "Pursuing Zhuangzi as Rhymester: A Snark-hunt in Eight Fits". *Sino-Platonic Papers*, Number 67, April 1995, 1-38.
- McDowell, John, trans. *Plato: Theaetetus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.
- Meiland, Jack W. and Michael Krausz, eds. *Relativism: Cognitive and Moral*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982.

- Möller, Hans-Georg. "Zhuangzi's 'Dream of the Butterfly'—A Daoist Interpretation" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 49, Number 4, October 1999, 439-450.
- Moore, Aubrey. "Note on the Philosophy of Chuang Tzū" ("Note on the Philosophy of Chaps. i-vii") in Giles 1889, 1926, xviii-xxviii.
- Moore, Charles A. *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, University of Hawaii Press, 1967.
- Mote, Frederick W. *Intellectual Foundations of China*. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, Second Edition, 1971, 1989.
- Munro, Donald J. *The Concept of Man in Early China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969.
- Needham, Joseph. *Science and Civilisation in China. Volume 2: History of Scientific Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956, 1969.
- Needham, Joseph and Christoph Harbsmeier. *Science and Civilisation in China. Volume 7, Part I: Language and Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, translated by Marianne Cowan. Regnery Gateway, 1962.
- Oshima, Harold H. "A Metaphorical Analysis of the Concept of Mind in the *Chuang-tzu*" in Mair 1983, 63-84.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Palmer, Martin with Elizabeth Breuilly, Chang Wai Ming, and Jay Ramsay, trans., *The Book of Chuang Tzu*. London: Arkana/Penguin Books, 1996.
- Patrick, Mary Mills. *Sextus Empiricus and Greek Scepticism*. Cambridge: Deighton Bell & Co., 1899.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Greek Sceptics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1929.
- Peters, F.E. *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon*. New York: New York University Press, 1967.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*. New York: Schocken Books, 1975, 1995.
- Pulleyblank, Edwin G. *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*. Vancouver: UBC Press,

1995.

Putnam, Hilary. *Reason, Truth and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Many Faces of Realism*. La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1987.

Raphals, Lisa. "Skeptical Strategies in the *Zhuangzi* and *Theaetetus*" in *Philosophy East and West*. Volume 44, Number 3, July 1994, 501-526. Reprinted in Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996, 26-49.

\_\_\_\_\_. "On Hui Shi" in Ames 1998, 143-162.

Reding, Jean-Paul. "Gongsun Long on What is Not: Steps toward the Deciphering of the *Zhiwulun*" in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 52, Number 2, April 2002, 190-206.

Robinson, John Manley. *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

Robinson, T.M., trans. *Heraclitus: Fragments*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Roetz, Heiner. "Validity in Chou Thought: On Chad Hansen and the Pragmatic Turn in Sinology" in Lenk and Paul 1993, 69-112.

Rorty, Richard. "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in Krausz 1989, 35-50.

Rosemont, Jr., Henry. "Against Relativism" in Gerald J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch, eds. *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 36-70.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*. La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1991.

Roth, Harold. "Who Compiled the *Chuang Tzu*?" in Rosemont 1991, 79-128.

Roth, H.D. "*Chuang tzu* 莊子" in Loewe 1993, 56-66.

Roth, Harold D. *Original Tao: Inward Training and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Companion to Angus C. Graham's Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Colophon: An Appraisal of Angus Graham's Textual Scholarship on the *Chuang Tzu*" in Roth 2003, 181-219.
- Runzo, Joseph. *Reason, Relativism and God*. Houndmills: The Macmillan Press, 1986.
- Ryle, Gilbert. *Plato's Progress*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Saso, Michael. "The *Chuang-tzu nei-p'ien*: A Taoist Meditation" in Mair 1983, 140-157.
- Schofield, Malcolm, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes, eds. *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980
- Schwartz, Benjamin I. *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Schweder, Richard A. "Post-Nietzschian Anthropology: The Idea of Multiple Objective Worlds" in Krausz 1989, 99-139.
- Sedley, David. "The Protagonists" in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes 1980, 1-19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism" in Burnyeat 1983, 9-29.
- Sellmann, James D. "Transformational Humor in the *Zhuangzi*" in Ames 1998, 163-174.
- Shapin, Steven. *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Shaughnessy, Edward L., trans. *I Ching: The Classic of Changes*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.
- Siegel, Harvey. *Relativism Refuted: A Critique of Contemporary Epistemological Relativism*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987.
- Sivin, Nathan. "Chinese Conceptions of Time" in Nathan Sivin, *Science in Ancient China: Researches and Reflections*. Aldershot: Variorum, Ashgate Publishing, 1995b, 82-92.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Comparing Greek and Chinese Philosophy and Science" in Sivin 1995a, 1-11.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China: Researches and Reflections*. Aldershot: Variorum, Ashgate Publishing, 1995a.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "On the Limits of Empirical Knowledge in Chinese and Western Science"

in Sivin 1995a, 165-190.

\_\_\_\_\_. "On the Word 'Taoist' as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China" in Sivin 1995a, 303-330.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Taoism and Science" in Sivin 1995a, 1-72.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The First Neo-Confucianism: An Introduction to Yang Hsiung's 'Canon of Supreme Mystery' (*T'ai hsuan ching*, ca. 4 B.C.)" in Sivin 1995a, 1-42.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Myth of the Naturalists" in Sivin 1995a, 1-33.

Skaja, Henry G. "How to Interpret Chapter 16 of the *Zhuangzi*: 'Repairers of Nature (*Shan Xing* 繕性)" in Ames 1998, 101-124.

Slingerland, Edward, trans. *Confucius: Analects*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003.

Smith, Barbara Herrnstein. "Unloading the Self-Refutation Charge" in Roger T. Ames and Wimal Dissanayake, eds. *Self and Deception: A Cross-Cultural Enquiry*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Smyth, Herbert Weir. *Greek Grammar*, revised by Gordon M. Messing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920, 1956.

Sprague, Rosamond Kent, ed. *The Older Sophists: A Complete Translation by Several Hands of the Fragments in Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker Edited by Diels-Kranz with a New Edition of Antiphon and of Euthydemus*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1972, 2001.

Stevenson, C.L. *Facts and Values*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963.

Stough, Charlotte L. *Greek Skepticism: A Study in Epistemology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Striker, Gisela. "Sceptical Strategies" in Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes 1980, 54-83.

Swoyer, Chris. "True For" in Meiland and Krausz 1982, 84-108.

Tang Yijie 汤一介. "*Shi 'Dao shi yu qing'*" 释"道始于情", 1-6.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Emotion in Pre-Qin Ruist Moral Theory: An Explanation of 'Dao Begins in *Qing*'", translated by Brian Bruya and Hai-ming Wen 濫海明 [English translation

of “Shi

‘*Dao shi yu qing*’ 释“道始于情”] in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 53, Number 2, April 2003, 271-281.

Tiles, J.E. *Dewey*. London: Routledge, 1988, 1990.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Moral Measures: An Introduction to Ethics West and East*. London: Routledge, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Feature Review: An Ineffective Inoculation: *Aristotle in China: Language, Categories and Translation*. By Robert Wardy. Needham Research Institute Studies 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. xii + 170. Hardcover” in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 51, Number 4, October 2001, 545-553.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Feature Review: Turning to Others to Learn about Self” in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 52, Number 2, April 2002, 246-255.

Tiles, Mary. “Book Reviews: *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China: Researches and Reflections*. By Nathan Sivin. Aldershot, England: Variorum, Ashgate Publishing, 1995. Pp. xvii + 278” in *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 50, Number 2, April 2000, 308-309.

Tolland, Anders. *Epistemological Relativism and Relativistic Epistemology: Richard Rorty and the Possibility of a Philosophical Theory of Knowledge*. Goteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1991.

Treddenick, Hugh, trans. *Aristotle XVII: Metaphysics, Books I-IX*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1933.

Trowbridge, John. “The Relationship Between Skepticism and Epistemological Relativism in the ‘*Qi Wu Lun*’ Chapter of the *Zhuang Zi*”. M.A. Thesis: The Ohio State University, 1996.

Tuana, Nancy, ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

Unger, Peter. *Philosophical Relativity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Van Norden, Bryan W. “Competing Interpretations of the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*” in *Philosophy East and West*. Volume 46, Number 2, April 1996, 247-268.

Waley, Arthur, trans. “Chuang Tzu” in *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1939, 1982, 1-79.

- Waltham, Clae. *Chuang Tzu: Genius of the Absurd*, arranged from the work of James Legge. New York: Ace Books, 1971.
- Walzer, Richard and Michael Frede, trans. *Galen: Three Treatises on the Nature of Science*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985.
- Wang Xianqian 王先謙. *Zhuangzi Jijie 莊子集解 [Zhuangzi: Collected Explanations]*. Taibei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1974, 1992.
- Wang Zhonglin 王忠林, ed. *Xinyi Xunzi Duben 新譯荀子讀本 [Xunzi: A New Annotated Reader]*. Taibei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1978, 1995.
- Wardy, Robert. *Aristotle in China: Language, Categories and Translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Ware, James R., trans. *The Sayings of Chuang Tzu*. Taibei 臺北: Confucius Publishing Co. 文致出版社, 1970, 1983.
- Warren, James. *Epicurus and Democritean Ethics: An Archaeology of Ataraxia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Watson, Burton, trans. *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964. Reprinted also as *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings*, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Early Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962.
- West, M.L. *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Wheelwright, Philip. *Heraclitus*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959.
- Wilhelm, Richard, trans. *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, translated into English by Cary F. Baynes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, 1967, 1977.
- Wu Jingrong 吳景榮, ed., *The Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary 漢英詞典*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1979.

Wu, Kuang-ming 吳光明. *Chuang Tzu: World Philosopher at Play*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982.

---

. *The Butterfly as Companion: Meditations on the First Three Chapters of the Chuang Tzu*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Xie Bingying 謝冰瑩, et al., eds. *Xinyi Sishu Duben* 新譯四書讀本 [*Four Books: A New Annotated Reader*]. Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1987, 1988, 1995.

Xiong Lihui 熊禮匯 and Hou Naihui 侯迺慧, eds. *Xinyi Huainanzi* 新譯淮南子 [*New Annotated Huainanzi*], Volumes One-Two. Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1997.

Yearley, Lee. "The Perfected Person in the Radical Chuang-tzu" in Mair 1983, 125-139.

Yu Peilin 余培林, ed. *Xinyi Laozi Duben* 新譯老子讀本 [*Laozi: A New Annotated Reader*]. Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1973, 1995.

Yukawa, Hideki. "Chuangtse The Happy Fish" in Mair 1983, 56-62.

Zhuang Wanshou 莊萬壽, ed. *Xinyi Liezi Duben* 新譯列子讀本 [*Liezi: A New Annotated Reader*]. Taipei 臺北: Sanmin Shuju 三民書局, 1979, 1993.