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SEXTUS EMPIRICUS' MORAL SCEPTICISM REVISITED

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Abstract: Pyrrhonism, named after the scepticism of Pyrrho of Elis, as one of the significant philosophical doctrines in the history of philosophy, was revived by Aenesidemus and Agrippa, and defended by Sextus Empiricus, its last follower, against criticisms in the theoretical and practical contexts. Pyrrhonian scepticism, based on three tenets as the state of equipollence, suspension of judgment and *ataraxia*, accepts adherence to appearances as a practical guide for life. The aim of this study is to discuss Sextus' objections regarding two main problems, the nature of good and evil and the art of living, elaborated in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Ethicists* and contemporary remarks on the subject. Thus, it will be addressed whether the sceptic way of life prescribed by Sextus is compatible with his theoretical framework and therefore, whether it can be applied in practice.

Keywords: Pyrrhonian Scepticism, Suspension of Judgement, Appearances, The Nature of Good and Bad, The Art of Living

SEXTUS EMPIRICUS'UN AHLAKİ KUŞKUCULUĞUNA YENİDEN BAKIŞ

Öz: Felsefe tarihinin önemli felsefi öğretilerden biri olarak kabul edilen Elisli Pyrrhon'un kuşkuculuğundan adını alan Pyrrhonculuk, Aenesidemos ve Agrippa ile yeniden canlandırılmış, teorik ve pratik bağlamda eleştirilere karşı son temsilcisi, Sextus Empiricus tarafından savunulmuştur. Eşgüçlülük, yargıyı askıya alma ve sükûnet (*ataraxia*) olmak üzere üç ilke üzerinden temellendirilen Pyrrhoncu kuşkuculuk, görünüşlere bağlı kalmayı yaşam için pratik bir yol gösterici olarak kabul eder. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Sextus'un *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* ve *Against the Ethicists* adlı eserlerinde detaylandığı iyinin ve kötünün doğası ile yaşam sanatı olmak üzere başlıca iki sorunla ilgili itirazlarını ve konu ile ilgili çağdaş yorumları tartışmaktır. Böylelikle, Sextus'un reçete ettiği kuşkucu yaşam tarzının onun sunduğu teorik çerçeveye uyumlu olup olmadığı ve dolayısıyla pratiğe uygulanıp uygulanamayacağı ele alınacaktır.

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Pyrrhoncu Kuşkuculuk, Yargıyı Askıya Alma, Görünümler, İyinin ve Kötünün Doğası, Yaşam Sanatı

1. Introduction

The inquiry of practical philosophy in ancient Greece and the Hellenistic period is mostly about how to attain happiness. Socrates, within this context, celebrates virtue as a key to a happy life. The virtuous is the one who has the knowledge of acting correctly. One, says Socrates, should cultivate virtues in the pursuit of happiness or of flourishing. The revival of Socratic doctrines in Socratic schools manifests how his ideals concerning virtue and moral end are strongly committed by his students and followers. In the Hellenistic period, the roads lead again to Socrates and Socratic schools, and practical philosophy was crowned by the Epicureans, Stoics and Peripatetics. Cyrenaic hedonism is softened by Epicureanism and the austerity of the Cynic doctrine is cured by Stoicism. The Hellenistic period also witnesses the enhancement and defense of Pyrrhonism by the followers of Pyrrho of Elis. One of the most striking features of Hellenistic moral philosophy is that it is therapeutic in character. Lucretius, for instance, advances Epicurean atomist metaphysics and forms it as a philosophy of consolation in order to set humankind free from the fear of death and terror of the gods. From the Stoics, likewise, we obtain the recipe for the arduous and difficult path of virtue and the difficulties to be overcome along it. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, the two most famous philosophers of the late Stoa, suggest living in accordance with nature and embrace death in order to live a tranquil and content life.

As another therapeutic approach, scepticism which has its roots in the philosophy of Pyrrho prescribes for an unperturbed life and shows the ways how to get rid of anxiety and turmoil by suspending judgement and withholding belief. The portrayal of Pyrrho (B.C.E. 360-275), in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, is exact manifestation of how his doctrine embodies his own life. As one of the main tenets of Pyrrho's scepticism, the suspension of judgement enables one to state that "nothing is honorable or disgraceful, or just or unjust; and likewise, in every case nothing is so in truth, and people do everything by law and custom, since everything is no more this than that" (Laertius, 2020, p.389). As Pyrrho's own life also confirms these ideas, those who read Laertius' doxography see how theory sheds light on practice in Pyrrho. In history of philosophy, the sceptical tradition is generally classified into four periods: Practical scepticism (Pyrrho and Timon), Critical scepticism (Arcesilaus and Carneades), Revision of Pyrrhonism (Aenesidemus and Agrippa), and Empirical scepticism (Sextus Empiricus). Sextus, well-known for his sceptical arguments against dogmatism and his resolute defense against the criticisms of Pyrrhonism, is accepted as the last follower of Pyrrhonian scepticism. When the Roman period and Pyrrhonism are mentioned together, he is the first name that flashes into minds. Although we know almost nothing about his life, we are familiar with his philosophical doctrines from his works which have survived until today.

2. The General Outline of the Sceptical Inquiry

Sextus lays out the general outline of scepticism in his famous work, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. He does not hide his admiration for Pyrrho and expresses the commitment of Pyrrho to scepticism as “more thoroughly and more conspicuously than his predecessors” (Sextus, 1933, p.7). Sextus defines scepticism as quite “an ability, or mental attitude” which involves in setting out oppositions and because of the equipollence of the opposed claims, it directs one to suspend one’s judgement by which afterwards one finds *ataraxia* or quietude (Sextus, 1933, p.7). Thus, the key concepts of scepticism can be classified into the ability to oppose, state of equipollence, suspension of judgement and *ataraxia*. An instance, says Sextus, can clarify the sceptical position. All sceptics share same experience which Apelles the painter, once had. Apelles intends to represent foam at the canvas while painting a picture of a horse. However, after some unsuccessful attempts, he fails to represent it. He suddenly throws the brush with frustration to the canvas and creates the foam unintentionally. The sceptical inquiry is exactly the same as the experience of Apelles in the sense that

the Sceptics were in hopes of gaining quietude by mean of a decision regarding the disparity of the objects of sense and of thought, and being unable to effect this they suspend judgement; and they found that quietude, as if by chance, followed upon their suspense, even as a shadow follows its substance. (Sextus, 1933, p.21)

There is a strong analogy between the unexpected or surprising outcome of Apelles’ experience and the inquiry of a sceptic. This means that although in the first place, the sceptics hope to achieve tranquility they suspend their judgment as they could not achieve it. However, the surprising result is *ataraxia*, initially desired.

Scepticism, claims Sextus, is not only a philosophical doctrine but also a conduct of life. A sceptic might conduct her everyday life by adhering to appearances without holding any beliefs about objects themselves. In other words, a sceptic “states what appears to himself and announces his own impression in an undogmatic way, without making any positive assertion regarding external realities” (Sextus, 1933, p.11). The adherence to appearances, therefore, is counted as one of the main criteria for the sceptical inquiry. There are two scopes of that criterion: the epistemological and practical. The first involves “standard regulating belief in reality or unreality” and the other sets the boundaries of action in the conduct of life (Sextus, 1933, p.17). The sceptical criterion which is connected to ordinary life has a practical meaning.

[I]f one defines “doctrinal rule” as “procedure which, in accordance with appearance, follows a certain line of reasoning indicating how it is possible to seem to live rightly and tending to enable one to suspend judgement” then we say that he has a doctrinal rule. For we follow a line of reasoning which, in accordance with appearances, points us to a life conformable to the customs of our country and its laws and institutions, and to our own instinctive feelings. (Sextus, 1933, p.13)

Sextus appeals to the modes of Aenesidemus in order to explicate how a sceptic can live with the adherence to appearances. The ten modes of Aenesidemus, which form the

basis for the sceptical argumentation, give reasons why one should stay away from a conclusive judgment. These modes enable one to question subjects respectively on variations of animals, differences in human beings, differences in the sense organs, circumstances, positions, distances, and places, admixtures, quantities and compounds of the objects, relativity, frequency and rarity of occurrence and lastly customs, laws, legendary beliefs and dogmatic conceptions (Sextus, 1933, pp.25-85). Aenesidemus categorizes the ten modes in accordance with subject who judges, object which is judged and both subject and object together. As for the tenth mode, one cannot state the real nature of things instead, assert the characteristics of things with respect to a specific law, custom, habit and a particular conduct. The modes which are different ways of argumentation and provide the basis for the suspension of judgment, engender indecision by laying emphasis on relativity and contingency of perception and knowledge.

The five modes posed by a later sceptic, Agrippa, have certain impact on the sceptical investigation as well as the ten modes of Aenesidemus. Agrippa seizes upon the five modes as equivalent to the ten modes as neither of them precedes the other. The five modes are respectively argument from discrepancy, infinite regress, relativity, argument against hypothesis and argument by circularity. These five modes lead one to suspend her judgement by means of which one neither posits nor rejects anything. The modes of Aenesidemus and Agrippa "induce the suspension of judgment much as a lullaby induces sleep or a scary story induces panic" (Kjellberg, 1996, p.7). They form the main framework for Sextus regarding several fields of philosophy like epistemology, logic, physics and moral philosophy.

3. The Nature of Good and Evil

The third book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Ethicists* form the main structure of Sextus' theory of morals and both works similarly manifest the specific interest of Sextus about several accounts regarding things good, evil, indifferent by nature and the art of living. He pays special attention to the tenth mode of Aenesidemus in the sense that it has a vital importance in forming a moral argument against dogmatic moral theories. Habits, laws, mythological beliefs, rules of conduct and dogmatic conceptions sketch out the tenth mode. Sextus first predicates the opposition between these five concepts like a habit to another habit, a law to another law, a mythological belief to another one and so on. A behavior, for instance, considered normal in a culture might be judged as shameful in another one. There might be contrast of a rule of conduct with a law or a mythological belief with a dogmatic conception. It follows that one cannot state the real nature of things but only characteristics of them regarding a law, habit and a particular conduct, therefore; one should suspend her judgement related to nature of things (Sextus, 1933, pp.85-93).

Sextus starts out with the definitions of the good given by the dogmatists respectively. It is Stoics' contention that the good is nothing other than utility and the utility means no other than virtue and the right action. Besides, for an Epicurean, a thing is called as good which contributes to happiness while for the Peripatetics, the good is taken as an

end chosen for its own sake. These definitions, says Sextus, indicate the disagreement between dogmatic doctrines regarding the nature of the good. Although the good is defined as being useful, choice worthy and subsidiary to happiness, there is nothing related to its real essence, but its only accidental property is stated. He argues that we are not able to know the property of something unless we know its essence or nature.

For just as the man who has no notion of "horse" has no knowledge of what "neighing" is and cannot arrive thereby at a notion of "horse", unless he should first meet with a neighing horse, so too one who is seeking the essence of the good, because he has no knowledge of the good, cannot perceive the attribute which is peculiar to it alone in order that he may be enabled thereby to gain a notion of the good itself. For he must first learn the nature of the good itself, and then pass on to apprehend that it is useful, and that it is choiceworthy for its own sake, and that it is productive of happiness. (Sextus, 1933, pp.443-4)

Furthermore, for Sextus, Stoic virtues such as wisdom, justice, courage and temperance do not result in being useful. In other words, virtues cannot provide with utility in general meaning rather they can address to acquire only some of the things useful in our life. The Stoics cannot get away with a result due to their definition of the good that "none of the things useful in life results from it [virtue] ... but simply utility" (Sextus, 1936, p.401). The contrary of the good which participates in vice is called the evil and there also stands the 'indifferent' between the good and evil. Indifferents like wealth, beauty, poverty, illness and fame can also be divided into three categories as preferred indifferents, non-preferred indifferents and neutral ones. While wealth and health are considered as preferred indifferents, poverty and illness are regarded as the non-preferred. However, health is considered to be good for the Academics and Peripatetics while for the Stoics, it is a preferred indifferent as it brings on neither happiness nor unhappiness. For the Epicureans, likewise, pleasure is assumed to be good even though it is regarded as bad by the Cynics and as indifferent by the Stoics. It is Sextus' contention that the Stoic claim regarding preferred and non-preferred indifferents might easily be rejected by referring to circumstances and time. At one time and circumstance an indifferent might be preferred while another it might be rejected.

[I]f the rich were being threatened with attack by a tyrant while the poor were being left in peace, everyone would prefer to be poor rather than rich, so that wealth would be a thing rejected. Consequently, since each of the so-called indifferent some say that it is good, others bad, whereas all alike would have counted it indifferent had it been naturally indifferent, and there is nothing that is naturally indifferent. (Sextus, 1933, p.457)

Another criticism, says Sextus, can also be raised on the same subject. The things from nature are expected to affect people in the same way, therefore, when the dogmatist affirms that the things good and evil by nature exist, she assumes that human beings are all alike. As fire heats and snow chills by nature, they appear heating and chilling to all. However, "none of the so-called 'goods' ... moves all men as being good; therefore, no natural good exists" (Sextus, 1933, p.449). How then, does one discern anything good from evil? It might be either through sensible evidence or reasoning. For Sextus, it cannot

be through sensible evidence because of the fact that same thing is not perceived same by all. Besides, it cannot be through by reasoning insofar as everyone has different reasoning in accepting something good or evil.

In *Against the Ethicists*, he questions the possibility of happy life in case that the things good and evil exist by nature. According to the dogmatist schools, it is possible for one to live a happy life by attaining good and avoiding evil. Nevertheless, the sceptics assert that the existence of good and evil causes perturbation which later results in an unhappy life. The individual cannot preclude herself from perturbation which is “consequence due either to an eager pursuit of certain things or to an eager avoidance of certain things” (Sextus, 1936, p.439). The desire of a good thing not only causes perturbation but possession or acquisition of it also generates distress. If one acquires wealth, first she will be relieved from her previous distress caused by his efforts for acquiring it. Yet, a fortune through a great struggle would make one feel uneasiness and distress because of the possibility of losing it. One could get rid of such an anxiety only by accepting that none of the things are good and evil by nature on the path of happy life (Sextus, 1936, p.449). As for the question whether the sceptics live unperturbed life, Sextus is quite well-prepared and without hesitation states that although the sceptics sometimes suffer from perturbation which is caused by hunger, thirst, cold, heat and diseases, what they face, is much moderate because what perturbs them has a remedy.

A thorough analysis shows that Sextus’ arguments regarding things good and bad by nature do not go along the same line in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Ethicists*. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, the suspension of judgement should be the main tenet after elaborating multitude of conflicting views concerning the subject. He states that “the Sceptic, seeing so great diversity of usages, suspends judgement as to the natural existence of anything good or bad or (in general) fit or unfit to be done, therein abstaining from the rashness of dogmatism” (Sextus, 1933, p.483). In *Against the Ethicists*, when inquiring good, bad and indifferent, even if Sextus holds to suspension of judgment, eventually takes a stand like a negative dogmatist by stating that there is nothing good and bad by nature. Although here we encounter a Sextus who sticks to the method like in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* the end of the discussion turns into the statement that nothing is by nature good or bad. R. J. Hankinson attempts to reconcile negative dogmatic conclusion of Sextus with the general aim of Pyrrhonism:

But does the Sceptic not urge us not to believe anything to be good or bad by nature? Indeed: but that does not amount to thinking that nothing as a matter of fact is good or bad by nature: not believing p is not the same as believing not-p. (Hankinson, 1995, p.244)

In fact, as Sextus stated, the main concern of Pyrrhonism is ‘how things are’, so they do not question how things appear. For Richard Bett, in both works Sextus maintains that “the skeptic refrains from positing anything that is good or bad by nature; and ... it is this that is crucial for understanding the Pyrrhonist’s own practical attitudes” (Bett, 2019, p.154). The critical role of suspension of judgment is precisely that it saves the sceptic from getting confused between alternatives, the trouble of choosing and anxiety.

4. The Art of Living

The idea of the art of living, dating back to Socrates and taken over as a practical guide for a good life by the Epicureans, Peripatetics and Stoics, is another subject of Sextus' critical stance. Both in *Against the Ethicists* and *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus introduces various dissenting remarks on dogmatic doctrines regarding the art of living. Firstly, his inquiry into the subject focuses on whether an art of living exists.

Do the dogmatists, asks Sextus, agree upon a precise meaning of the art of living? If an art of living is aimed to achieve wisdom, is everyone to be counted as sage? What is the product of the art of living? Firstly, he contends that one should look at whether the art of living has a precise nature and what it means for the dogmatists. The Stoics posit the art of living as a manner or conduct of life, but it also involves in virtue or human excellence. It relates to one's happiness or contentment as well. Here is the crucial point: wisdom and virtue have a practical meaning for the Stoics and living a virtuous life is more substantial than conceiving its nature and meaning. For the Epicureans and Peripatetics, likewise, the art of living is a way directed to one practical end, namely, happiness. The main problem, says Sextus, is that the Stoics, Peripatetics and Epicureans are not able to agree on the precise nature of the art of living.

All, probably, agree that the good is useful and that it is choiceworthy ... and that it is productive of happiness; but when asked what the thing is to which these properties belong, they plunge into a truceless war, some saying it is virtue, others pleasure, others painlessness, and others something else. And yet, if the essence of the good had been proved from the foregoing definitions, they would not have been at feud as though its nature were unknown. (Sextus, 1933, p.445)

As the Stoics persistently indicate the crucial role of wisdom in the cultivation of happiness the Stoic conception of 'sage' becomes another controversial subject that Sextus scrutinizes. Seneca states the role of wisdom in *Of a Happy Life*:

Wisdom does not teach our fingers, but our minds: fiddling and dancing, arms and fortifications, were the works of luxury and discord; but wisdom instructs us in the way of nature, and in the arts of unity and concord, not in the instruments, but in the government of life; not to make us live only but to live happily. (Seneca, 1984, p.15)

Although a sage is depicted as virtuous and content the Stoics express the rarity even they do not refer themselves to be sages. Such a statement raises a suspicion about whether any Stoic sage had ever existed. Sextus states that if one wants to teach something first she must possess it. When this is the case, the Stoics fail to teach virtue or human excellence as a way to be sage due to the fact that they themselves do not even possess it. Sextus goes further and says that "those who assert that the virtuous life is naturally good might be refuted by the fact that some of the sages choose the life which

includes pleasure, so that ... is contradicted by the divergence of opinion amongst the Dogmatists themselves" (Sextus, 1933, p.461).¹

He, then, criticizes the Stoic definition of art which is a system of apprehensions with exercise; neither an apprehensive presentation nor any assent exists. Therefore, one cannot affirm the existence of a system of apprehensions. Every art or science is apprehended by its product but "there is no special product of the art living; for anything you might mention as its product – such as honouring parents, paying back deposits, and all the rest—is found to be common to ordinary folk as well" (Sextus, 1933, p.487). This means that as an ordinary person can also act in the same way with a sage there are no distinctive actions inherent in the sage. For John Sellars, Sextus "argues against the conception of virtue or wisdom as primarily a disposition concerned with how someone acts, as opposed to a conception concerned with what an individual does" (Sellars, 2003, p.97). It should also be noted that for the Stoics wisdom is not only grounded on specific kind of actions but underlying motivation and disposition behind an action matter.

Given that we accept the existence of the art of living how do we explain its emergence? Is it by nature or by learning? If it exists naturally then all people should possess the art of living due to being human. From the statements of the dogmatists regarding the rarity of the wise and the virtuous it can be deduced that every individual is not able to attain the art of living naturally. The dogmatists, then, contradict with themselves. Sextus states that the art of living, on the other hand, is not product of teaching and learning. If the dogmatists assume it as a product of teaching, they must agree upon the matter of teaching, the method of learning, the teacher and the learner.

Sextus' critical attitude towards the dogmatic views about things good and bad by nature and the art of living results in some objections. For some scholars, the viability and defensibility of practical side of Pyrrhonian scepticism seem to be at stake. Sellars, for instance, claims that the arguments of Sextus against the dogmatists concerning the art of living are not "decisive" because "in many of them Sextus appears to be quite categorical in his claim that an art of living does not exist, a categorical claim that appears to go against the Sceptical method of the suspension of judgement" (Sellars, 2003, p.100). In other words, Sextus seems to fail to apply the sceptical method while justifying his arguments against the dogmatic views about the art of living. If he had applied the sceptical method properly, as Sellars contends, his attitude on this subject would have turned out agnosticism (Sellars, 2003, p.101). Bett, on the other hand, remarks a different aspect of the same subject. For him, "Sextus' arguments mostly either revolve around the concept of *technē* itself, with no particular ethical implications, or have to do with the supplementary question whether, even if there were *technē* for life, it would be teachable" (Bett, 2010, p.187). Bett's claim seems to be right in the sense that Sextus is interested in articulating his objections concerning the art of living by exactly appealing to one of Agrippa's modes, namely, discrepancy.

¹ Here, Sextus means Cyrenaic theory of pleasure. The basic discourse of Cyrenaic morality is based on the fact that the highest good is pleasure.

The sceptical procedure, as stated before, involves that all arguments can be opposed by equally strong arguments. The only way to attain quietude or *ataraxia* is to suspend judgement about the nature of things. However, for some critics such a procedure precludes one's actions by annihilating belief and assent, so it seems to be incompatible with ordinary life. This opens the door to the *apraxia* (inactivity) objection and so, leaves scepticism with some questions and put it in a difficult position in need of defense. Since the revival of Pyrrhonian scepticism in modern philosophy, philosophers, often appealing to Sextus, have inquired into the theoretical and practical framework of Pyrrhonian scepticism. One of the famous objections concerning the incompatibility between Pyrrhonian doctrine and its practice in ordinary life belongs to David Hume. In *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, he states the following:

[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 ... It is true; so fatal an event is very little to be dreaded. Nature is always too strong for principle. 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 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 ... When he awakes from his dream, he will be the first to join in the laugh against himself, and to confess, that all his objections are mere amusement, and can have no other tendency than to show the whimsical condition of mankind, who must act and reason and believe; though they are not able, by their most diligent enquiry, to satisfy themselves concerning the foundation of these operations, or to remove the objections, which may be raised against them. (Hume, 2007, p.116-7)

The failure of Pyrrhonism as a way of life, for Hume, is "its inability to translate into everyday life" on account of its excessive principles and when employed to ordinary life "it is just overwhelmed by our natural responses to the world we encounter and with which we interact" (Buckle, 2001, p.311). Like Hume, Myles Burnyeat points out the incompatibility between scepticism and action in his famous article, "Can the Sceptic Live his Scepticism?" Burnyeat claims that "the life without belief is not an achievement of will but a paralysis of reason by itself" (Burnyeat, 1980, p.42). Since scepticism involves in withholding any beliefs and assent regarding what is good and bad, it can be said that it has a paralyzing effect on moral agent. Burnyeat also endorses Hume's and ancient critics' comments regarding the sceptical ideal of life and asserts that "when one has seen how radically the sceptic must detach himself from himself one will agree that the supposed life without belief is not after all, a possible life for man" (Burnyeat, 1980, p.53). Michael Frede also promotes the picture of the sceptic that Hume sketches as "completely helpless in ordinary life" and urges on the inconsistency of the sceptical doctrine with ordinary life and "the skeptic refutes himself, when he insists on total suspension of judgment while, at the same time, constantly relying on all sorts of judgments in his actual life" (Frede, 1987, p.180). The portrayal of Pyrrho, then, in

Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, seems to be a proper description of how a sceptic's life is like.

He [Pyrrho] followed the same ideas in his conduct of life as well: never getting out of the way of things, never taking precautions, confronting everything that came along, be it wagons, cliffs, dogs, or anything else, and not trusting his senses on anything. Yet he was kept safe from harm ... by his companions who followed him around. (Laertius, 2020, p.390)

Although this account about Pyrrho is widely accepted, Aenesidemus attempts to reconcile the philosophical view and ordinary life of Pyrrho by stating that he "advanced arguments for suspending judgment in philosophy but did not abandon foresight in his actions" (Laertius, 2020, p.390).

Katja Maria Vogt has a moderate approach than other critics concerning the incompatibility between scepticism and action. She states different versions of the charges against Sextus in order to point out such an incompatibility as plant charge, inconsistency charge and paralysis charge (Vogt, 2010, p.166). For plant charge, the sceptic is no more than a plant without assenting because "not desiring one thing and avoiding another is virtually to reject life, and to be reduced to a plant" (Vogt, 2010, p.172). As for inconsistency charge, it is based on that a sceptic sometimes assents certain things. We can induce from Sextus' statement in *Against the Ethicists* that the sceptic accepts or refuses to the order of a tyrant by relying on ancestral laws and customs which in fact indicates that there is a deliberate choice (Sextus, 1936, p.465). Paralysis charge, on the other hand, states the fact that the sceptic is left in a position where she cannot choose anything without a practical criterion. This charge refers "the problem how the sceptic can discriminate between various alternative actions, so as to perform one particular action, rather than being pulled towards several actions at once" (Vogt, 2010, p.172).

In fact, Sextus tries to clear the ground with his own way by showing how living in accordance with the appearances does not imply to be inactive. The sceptics regulate their ordinary life in accordance with the constraint of passions and laws, customs and institutions of their country. "[T]his regulation of life is fourfold, and that one part of it lies in the guidance of Nature, another in the constraint of the passions, another in the tradition of laws and customs, another in the instruction of the arts" (Sextus, 1933, p.17). Several conclusions can be drawn from the fourfold sceptical guideline. It seems that none of the sceptics are committed to things which are good and evil by nature. They prefer to follow the general rules, customs and laws of society which they belong. A sceptic, just like other people, suffers from cold, hunger and thirst, that is from bodily needs. Although she has feelings of shame and disappointment like any other ordinary individual she is not much affected with these unpleasant sensations and can be free from perturbation by withholding any beliefs regarding good and bad since there is no certain thing to be chosen or avoided. Vogt, as a defense regarding inconsistency charge, claims that Sextus, by narrowing down the appearances, distinguishes the impressions

that guide one to accommodate herself to ordinary way of life. This by itself results in a practical criterion (Vogt, 2010, p.173-4). So,

[w]hen complying with the tyrant's demands, or resisting him in what looks like bravery, the sceptic will adhere to the ideas his parents raised him with; and it is a matter of chance what these ideas are. The sceptic thus is able to discriminate, and to perform one rather than the other action. At the same time, even "hard cases" can be accounted for without ascribing any kind of assent (in the dogmatist's sense: i.e. regarding what is valuable, to be done, the case, etc.) to the sceptic, thus saving him from the Inconsistency charge. (Vogt, 2010, p.175)

On the other hand, as Harald Thorsrud states, the fourfold regulation of life can be appealed in order to explain some facts, however, although "we are naturally guided to perceive and think ... it is implausible to suppose that nature guides us to approve some forms of rational inference and reject others" (Thorsrud, 2019, p.23). In fact, says Thorsrud, behaviors that we all do automatically without thinking in our daily life fall into Sextus' fourfold regulation; so, "[a]cting in accordance with such appearances is not specifically skeptical accomplishment" (Thorsrud, 2019, p.18).

As a response to paralysis charge, Vogt tries to pull the sceptics out a dark well by stating that "custom and training explain why the sceptic does some things, but not others" (Vogt, 2010, p.174). However, for some critics, the sceptics fall into the well again by following customs and laws because withholding any belief will indispensably lead the sceptics to "a paradoxical conformism to whichever *nomoi* the Pyrrhonist finds in the society around him" (Sharpe and Ure, 2021, p.107). The reason why it is paradoxical is that the sceptic follows the laws and customs despite she does not have belief. Aristocles of Messene² already accuses Pyrrhonians as being naïve since living in accordance with nature, laws and customs without any beliefs and assent cannot be adopted. He questions what kind of moral actor a sceptic can become by adhering only to customs, conventions and laws.

One should consider also the following things: what sort of citizen, or judge, or counsellor, or friend, or simply human being would such a man make? or on what atrocity would the man not venture who thought that nothing was really honourable or shameful, or just or unjust? for one could not even say that such men are afraid of the laws and their penalties; for how could they, who are free from emotions and troubles, as they say? (Aristocles, 2001, p.27)

The subject of religion has also been the target of critiques against scepticism. As the sceptics affirm the existence and providence of gods undogmatically a sceptic engages, for Sextus, in religious rituals and pleases gods without holding any beliefs. Such a piety of a sceptic, says Thorsrud, appears to be insincere and grotesque.

² Aristocles of Messene, a Peripathetic philosopher, lived 1st century AD. As his fragments elucidate the doctrines of early Pyrrhonism they are accepted as valuable sources for like those of Diogenes Laertius.

If the sceptic has no belief about whether God exists or not, it is hard to see what significance there could be in her reverence she might just as well be preparing a meal or spinning aimlessly in circles. Her conformity to local religious customs appears to be a caricature of piety. (Thorsrud, 2009, p.189)

On the other hand, Bett classifies four categories of appearances into two as “natural” and “cultural” and considers the category to which laws and customs are included as the most important (Bett, 2019, p.158). Sextus just aims to save ordinary people from holding any beliefs concerning anything good or bad by nature; therefore, as in piety the sceptic accepts “piety in the conduct of life as good, but impiety as evil” (Sextus, 1933, p.17). However, says Bett, “this ‘acceptance’ cannot involve the endorsement of the propositions ‘piety is good’ and ‘impiety is bad’; those would be examples of the objectionable beliefs that he takes both theorists and ordinary people to hold” (Bett, 2019, p.159). So then, when it comes to ordinary practice of a sceptic, the dictates of law and custom should matter.

5. Conclusion

As Sextus states in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, holding any beliefs regarding the things that are good or bad by nature brings one nothing but only turmoil and anxiety. A sceptic could only suffer from what is unavoidable, namely, various affections. Therefore, in order to get rid of the state of anxiety and to attain the peace of mind by having moderate feelings, the sceptic does withhold certain beliefs about the nature of things. When she suspends her judgment on what is good and bad by nature she will be freed from things that prevent her from being happy in ordinary life. It is Bett’s contention that the sceptics seem to be better off than other people (Bett, 2019, p.151). Sextus already says why a sceptic is better off than other people: she is the one who could eventually achieve *ataraxia* or tranquility by suspending her judgment. The suspension of judgement enables her “moderation with regard to life’s inevitable unpleasantness, a second benefit stemming from the suspense of judgment is release from the tantalizing quest for truth” (Kjellberg, 1996, p.4). Besides, as she is said to be the devoted follower of fourfold guidance of appearances that will suffice her for the engagement of the ordinary life. As Burnyeat enounces, “[i]n its own way, Pyrrhonian scepticism offers a recipe for happiness to compete with the cheerful simplicity of Epicureanism and the nobler resignation of the Stoic sage” (Burnyeat, 1984, p.241). If we wish to attain the peace of mind or are in search of happiness, we can stay away from dogmatic rigorism by suspending our judgments about nature of things. Accordingly, we can experience the sceptic life practice that Sextus offers as a prescription for a tranquil life. Although the schools of philosophy in the Hellenistic period adopt different moral doctrines and recommend distinct moral prescriptions, what they all offer is some formulations for an happy life. When we leave ourselves to what our nature brings and laws or customs of our society dictate in the light of the prescription of Sextus, we cannot be sure how the sceptical end could be reached in the absence of belief and judgment. Even so, it seems that there is no harm in trying to hold on the sceptical remedy and follow therapeutic way of scepticism in order to cure rigidity of our dogmatic judgements.

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