

ARISTOCLES' REFUTATIONS OF PYRRHONISM*
(Eus. *PE* 14.18.1–10)

I

It has been generally agreed for some time that the best piece of extant evidence for Pyrrho's thought is contained in a section of Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* (14.18.1–4 = T53 Declava Caizzi) where Eusebius cites Aristocles of Messene's περί φιλοσοφίας book eight, where Aristocles in turn cites Timon on Pyrrho. But there the agreement stops. The wealth of recent writing on this very short passage provides evidence of its difficulty. Ausland, Bett, Brennan, Brunschwig, and Stopper have all within the last ten years or so offered their own various interpretations of these dozen lines of Greek text.¹

The major interest in this passage has been as a source for early Pyrrhonism, and the major difficulty in interpreting it is to decide how it represents the scope of Pyrrho's scepticism. Are we justified in seeking a full or even partial exposition of the sort of epistemological reasoning which would eventually come to form Aenesideman or Sextan scepticism? Or is it easier to reconcile a narrower scope of scepticism with both this text and the various other testimonia concerning Pyrrho's life and thought? This debate is then made to hang to a great extent on one particular textual emendation of τό for τοῦτο. I return to this below.

The interpretative debate over this passage has reached something of an *impasse*. By now the two major camps have each outlined their arguments, counter-arguments and preferences. Little can be added from the analysis of these twelve lines alone, and the reader may be relieved to learn that I will not, I hope, be adding overly to the discussion of that brief passage. Instead I propose to try to offer a new perspective on the debate by turning my attention to the immediately subsequent text, in which Aristocles offers a sustained attack on the position he has just outlined. This attack covers some eight pages of text in the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of Eusebius but has never, so far as I am aware, been the subject of an extended analysis.

At the very least it is plausible that the various counter-arguments which Aristocles employs are aimed at the Pyrrhonist position as he understands it. If so, then Aristocles'

* My thoughts on this subject have benefited from discussion with David Sedley, Fernanda Declava Caizzi, Tad Brennan, Gisela Striker, Robert Wardy, and especially Jacques Brunschwig. This paper developed from a section of my Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation: 'An archaeology of *ataraxia*: Epicurus and Democriteanism'. A version of it was presented to the Cambridge B Club in May 1999.

¹ Ausland (1989), Bett (1994b), Brennan (1998), Brunschwig (1994) and (1997), and Stopper (1983).

counter-arguments offer a valuable commentary on the disputed text which deserves to be given its due weight in the more general discussion of the nature of early Pyrrhonist philosophy. It will be of further interest to investigate whether the refutations which he offers are merely presented in an unordered and haphazard fashion, or whether some structure might be identified. This might also shed some light on Aristocles himself, his philosophical outlook, and its relation to other Peripatetic and Aristotelian texts.

Here are a few meagre biographical details.² Little is known of Aristocles of Messene. His dates are obscure. At one time it was thought that he was the tutor of Alexander of Aphrodisias, but work by Paul Moraux has now stripped him of that honour and granted it instead to one Aristotle of Mytilene.³ This has allowed Aristocles to be dated rather earlier than was previously thought. Evidence from the text copied by Eusebius offers two clues. The Peripatetic Apellicon is named at 15.2.13, to give a *terminus post quem* of 88–84 B.C.E (the date of Apellicon's death). Also, and perhaps more intriguingly, Aristocles refers to Aenesidemus who ἐχθὲς καὶ πρώην revived Pyrrhonism in Egyptian Alexandria (14.18.29). Unfortunately for us, not only is Aristocles' reference rather vague, but the dates of Aenesidemus are themselves uncertain.⁴ In general, however, it can be agreed that Aristocles was writing some time in the late first century B.C.E, or early in the first century C.E.

Aristocles' entry in the Suidas tells us that he was a Peripatetic, and that he wrote a work *Peri philosophias* in ten books, a work *on whether Homer or Plato is more virtuous (spoudaioteros)*, some *Tekhnai rhetorikai*, an *On Sarapis*, and nine volumes of ethical works. The Suidas also records that in these works (perhaps referring to the *Peri philosophias* alone) 'he denounces all philosophers and all their opinions.' The sections extracted by Eusebius for the fourteenth book of his *Praeparatio evangelica* come, as the heading to section 17 records, from the eighth book of the *Peri philosophias* and were presumably used by Eusebius since they provide him with a picture of the interminable quarrels and irreconcilable disagreements to be found in ancient pagan philosophy, and which he wishes to contrast with the stable and co-operative nature of Christian philosophy (14.1.2–4; 14.3; and esp. 15.1.1–8).⁵ Eusebius

² Little work has been done on Aristocles since the publication of three articles by Trabucco in the late fifties and early sixties, and a piece by Ferrari some ten years later: Trabucco (1958), (1958–9), (1960); Ferrari (1968) 201–8. Recently things have been improved by Paul Moraux, as part of his work on Aristotelianism (Moraux (1984) 83–207), and by an Oxford D.Phil. thesis completed in 1996 by Maria-Lorenza Chiesara Bertola entitled 'Aristocles of Messene and the Pyrrhonians' which usefully collects and discusses all the identifiable fragments of Aristocles' work.

³ Moraux (1967), (1984) 83–92, (1985). There are further biographical details in S. Follet s.v. *Aristocles de Messene* in R. Goulet ed. *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* (Paris, 1989), and Gottschalk (1987) 1162–4.

⁴ Declava Caizzi (1992). Mansfeld (1995). On the phrase ἐχθὲς καὶ πρώην, Russell (1990) 294 concludes that it is often used to refer to a rather remote period (cf. Plut. *Amat.* 715F): 'They are deliberate untruths, introduced to add strength to disapproval. Old things are good, modern developments bad; and the implication is that, as any novelty is to be despised, so all deplorable things must be new.'

⁵ Cf. Ausland (1989) 362–4.

is not averse to altering the order of the material from Aristocles, however, presenting the views of the Eleatics first (they were perhaps the last to appear in Aristocles), and perhaps delaying the Epicurean position on the criteria of choice and avoidance until the end, since he wishes to pass on from the Aristoclean material into a more extended critique of the general Epicurean world view. (For more discussion of the arrangement of material in Eusebius and Aristocles see the Appendix below.)

II

I now turn to the section of Aristocles' work which deals with Pyrrhonism and those notorious lines.

Pyrrho of Elis himself left nothing in writing, but his pupil, Timon says that someone who is going to be happy must look to these three things. First, how things are by nature. Second, what attitude we should adopt in respect of them. Finally, what the result will be for people thus disposed. He says that Pyrrho declared all things to be equally indifferent, indeterminate, and unjudged, and [Timon says] that for that reason neither our senses nor our opinions are reliably true or false. And so we ought not to trust them but should be without opinion, unbiased, and unshaken, saying about each thing that it no more is than is not, or both is and is not, or neither is nor is not. (14.18.1–4)

The first question to ask, indeed the question which has until now exercised most commentators, is what sort of philosophical discussion we have here. Is Aristocles doing epistemology, or metaphysics, or some combination of the two? Aristocles clearly considers himself in some way to be making an epistemological point with his material. From what we can gather about this book of the *Peri philosophias* Aristocles introduced his philosophical predecessors by listing them according to their views on the possibility of knowledge. The section on the Pyrrhonians, probably the first of the sections in Aristocles' text, is introduced as being *περὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν γνώσεως: εἰ γὰρ αὐτῶν μηδὲν πεφύκαμεν γνωρίζειν κτλ.* But the material we find introduced in this section does not appear to be straightforwardly epistemological. Timon's introduction to the exposition has a distinctly ethical feel: *δεῖν τὸν μέλλοντα εὐδαιμονήσειν εἰς τρία ταῦτα βλέπειν.*⁶ The ethical feel is then mixed with metaphysical speculation since in searching for happiness, we are told to ask three things, the first of which is how 'things' *πέφυκε* and the second how one should behave depending on the answer to the first question.

We are told in answer to the first question that things are 'equally indifferent, indeterminate, and unjudged' (*ἐπ' ἰσης ἀδιάφορα καὶ ἀστάθημητα καὶ ἀνεπίκριτα*).

⁶ Cf. Democritus B3.

However, whether this is a description of how things are objectively, in nature, or a description of how things are in relation to our sensory and cognitive access to them is determined by whether one accepts the manuscript reading of διὰ τοῦτο at 3.2 or agrees with Zeller to emend this to διὰ τό. This is a crucial interpretative decision. The manuscript reading gives a Pyrrho who was prepared to make a dogmatic statement about the way the πράγματα are which entails a reconsideration of our reliance on sense-perception. The emendation gives a more familiarly sceptical Pyrrho who argues against our ability to make definite pronouncements about the nature of the world on the basis of our uncertain perceptual access to it. But this is still not, notice, a Pyrrho entirely consonant with the elaborate scepticism found in Sextus. Even with the emendation Pyrrho has offered a dogmatic assertion – not now an assertion that the world is of a particular nature, but that our senses and opinions *do not* reliably tell the truth about the world.

There are good reasons for accepting this emendation, besides the perceived resulting homogenisation of subsequent philosophical history. It removes what is a not unthinkable corruption given the occurrence of διὰ τοῦτο in the following line. It also, one could claim, restores syntax by avoiding a clumsy asyndeton. It has been maintained in response, however, on the part of those who want to retain the manuscript reading, that while the Greek as it stands is clumsy, it might not be intolerably so.⁷ The construction is unstylish, but it is not impossible. Stylistic and syntactical considerations, therefore, cannot decide the issue.

The other major consideration advanced in favour of the emendation is that it is the only way to restore philosophical sense to the argument. Stopper, for example, dubs the argument as it stands a ‘zany inference as a little reflexion will show’ from *adiaphoria* to the rejection of sense-evidence.⁸ Instead, it is claimed, we should prefer the more familiar inference from a claim about the uncertain truth values of our sense impressions and opinions to the indifferenciability of the world.

In either case, notice, Aristocles’ version of Timon’s summary leaves out some important argumentative work. On the manuscript reading we have no evidence of *why* all things are ‘indifferent’. This is left simply as a grand metaphysical pronouncement in answer to the first of Timon’s questions: ‘How are things by nature?’ But similarly with the emended text the Pyrrhonians have some argumentative work to do in order to sustain the claim about the unreliability of our senses and opinions.⁹ Neither alternative provides an entirely self-contained argumentative unit.

As is well known, the quest for a thoroughly and familiarly sceptical Pyrrho not only requires that one accept a textual emendation here, but has also led to debate over the

⁷ See Brunschwig (1994) 201 n.19 for possible parallel uses.

⁸ Stopper (1983) 293 n.53.

⁹ Brunschwig (1994) 196.

text and interpretation of Timonian fragments. The fragments in question are those numbered 67 and 68 by Diels, and taken from the *Indalmoi*, which also as they stand imply a certain dogmatism in early Pyrrhonian thought. In 67, someone (often thought to be Timon) asks Pyrrho the secret of his success in attaining such a tranquil disposition. In 68, the response reads:

ἢ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω, ὡς μοι καταφαίνεται εἶναι,
 μῦθον ἀληθείης ὀρθὸν ἔχων κανόνα,
 ὡς ἢ τοῦ θείου τε φύσις καὶ τὰγαθοῦ ἀεὶ,
 ἐξ ὧν ἰσότατος γίνεται ἀνδρὶ βίος.

If indeed Pyrrho is speaking here then the fragment promises a definitive statement on the ‘nature of the divine and the good’. If it is assumed that this would contravene the image of Pyrrhonian scepticism which emerges elsewhere then the fragment must be explained away or modified by alternative punctuation (e.g. removing the comma after line 3) or the positing of a lacuna, or some other complex story about the relationship between Timon fr. 67 and 68.¹⁰ However, it has not yet been demonstrated that our interpretation should understand Pyrrho in such a way as to preclude him having a teachable conception of the ‘nature of the divine and the good’.

An instructive note of caution is sounded by Sextus’ own reaction to the fragment. It is cited at *M.* 11.20 as a corroboration of Sextus’ statement that κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον τούτων ἕκαστον ἔχομεν ἔθος ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἢ ἀδιάφορον προσαγορεύειν, καθάπερ καὶ ὁ Τίμων ἐν τοῖς Ἰνδαλμοῖς ἔοικε δηλοῦν, ὅταν φῆ κτλ. Fragment 68 is intended to be an example of the Pyrrhonist practice of describing the moral value of each thing simply ‘as it appears’ without any commitment to the object in question having such a value φύσει. However, Sextus’ phrasing sounds a note of caution: ἔοικε δηλοῦν. Understandably so. Although Timon seems to be agreeing with Sextus’ proposal by using the verb καταφαίνεται (which occurs only here in Sextus’ works), the reference to the φύσις of the divine and the good is distinctly un-Sextan.¹¹ It appears that modern commentators’ unease with this fragment standing as an example of good Pyrrhonist thought is paralleled in Sextus’ own reaction. But the story of Sextus’

¹⁰ Burnyeat (1980a) removes the comma from Timon fr. 68 Diels to remove the dogmatic statement concerning the nature of the divine and the good, but recognises that Pyrrho might have held a ‘meta-dogmatic’ claim that tranquillity is good (allowing for the apparent dogmatism of fr. 71 Diels and here in Eusebius). Stopper (1983) 270 posits a lacuna between 68.3 and 4. Ausland (1989) 428ff. rejects Stopper’s suggestion and cites fr. 67 and 68 in support of his primarily ethical/practical Pyrrho. Reale (1981) 308, *contra* Burnyeat. Görler (1985) 330 thinks that the lack of a verb after 1.3 ‘ist nicht unerträglich’. He also notes in the apparatus to *SE M.* 11.20 that θείου τε *fortasse* Θείου ὅστι *scribendum*. Bett (1994a) argues against Burnyeat’s interpretation but for his repunctuation and suggests that 68 (‘dogmatic through and through’ 320) is spoken by an (as yet) uncomprehending Timon. (Cf. Bett (1997) 60). I find this improbable. Sextus cites this passage as evidence of the attitude of the mature, and competent sceptic. It is unlikely that he would knowingly cite the words of a pre-philosophical Timon to corroborate his own position. Cf. Görler (1994) 740–3.

¹¹ Bett (1994a) 314, (1997) 61.

reception of Timon and Timon's Pyrrho and the scholarly unease which it has generated is not a story I wish to tell here. I point to these passages only as a parallel area in which a desire to homogenise the history of Pyrrhonian scepticism runs into textual and interpretative difficulties.¹²

I can see no compelling reason to emend the Aristoclean text from τοῦτο to τό. As far as the other sources of information on Pyrrho – particularly the biographical sources – show, there is little reason to think that he took a position which closely resembled Sextan Pyrrhonism, nor indeed that he was particularly interested in epistemology at all. The honour of turning Pyrrhonism along the path toward Sextus goes to Timon. Epicurus, for example, and the early Epicureans show no knowledge of Pyrrho as an epistemologist. At least, there is no evidence from Plutarch's work *Against Colotes* that Pyrrho or the Pyrrhonians were one of the Epicureans' targets. The attacks on scepticism which can be found in Epicurean texts are generally thought to be aimed at Democriteanism.¹³

III

It seems to me that Aristocles' refutations of the Pyrrhonist position are entirely consonant with the text as it stands, unemended. If it is to be claimed that the text nevertheless must be emended then Aristocles himself stands committed of a gross *ignoratio elenchi* and it turns out that our earliest and perhaps best source for the arguments underlying early Pyrrhonism systematically misunderstood the position he had himself outlined. But if his refutations are well-aimed, then it follows that the thesis they attack should be that of Pyrrho and Timon which Aristocles himself has just outlined. Of course, although I shall argue that his refutations are consonant with the text he read and reproduced, the possibility remains that he might have received a corrupted text. That is to say, it is possible that τοῦτο is a corruption for τό which occurred before the text of Timon reached Aristocles. In that case, Aristocles' refutations are refutations of a textually corrupt argument, and therefore cannot help in reconstructing Pyrrho and Timon's original position. I recognise that this possibility cannot be rejected conclusively – nor can it be verified. However, it is clear from this section of Aristocles' work that he is well-informed about and well-read in a number of early Pyrrhonian works. He refers not only to Timon's *Python* (14.18.14.1), but also to the *Silloi* (16.1), to Antigonus of Carystus' biography of Pyrrho (26.1), and to Aenesidemus' *Outlines* (11.1). He is not, in other words, reliant on this single brief text for his knowledge of Pyrrhonism; he picks this text as the target for his refutations because it seems to him to summarise the major argument for the Pyrrhonian position.

¹² Compare the argument of Bett (1997) that there are different levels of suspension of belief in different works of Sextus, and that *M.* 11 in particular is rather more dogmatic than other books.

¹³ Vander Waerd (1989) 230–1, 234ff.; Sedley (1998) 85–9.

So let me begin to present Aristocles' strategy for attacking Pyrrho and Timon's position. The argument in the disputed portion of text is summarised at *PE* 14.18.5.2 and 7.1 with the same direction of inference as before:

5.2: ἐπεὶ τοίνυν ἐπ' ἴσης ἀδιάφορα πάντα φασὶν εἶναι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο κελεύουσι μηδενὶ προσιθῆσθαι.

7.1: εἰ ἐπ' ἴσης ἐστὶν ἀδιάφορα πάντα καὶ διὰ τοῦτο χρὴ μὴδὲν δοξάζειν
...

As Brunschwig notes, διὰ τοῦτο in these phrases refers not to the disputed inference (3.1–3) but to the following one (3.3–4): διὰ τοῦτο [that our senses do not tell the truth or lie] οὐκ μὴδὲ πιστεύειν αὐταῖς δεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀδοξάστον [εἶναι].¹⁴ But still I think that these summaries might offer some illumination of the disputed inference.

If we accept Zeller's emendation, in his summary at 5.2, and 7.1 Aristocles omits the first unargued assertion 'that our senses and opinions provide no reliable information' from which ἀδιαφορία was derived and merely repeats the second inference from ἀδιαφορία to an injunction not to place trust in the senses or opinion. It seems more likely to me, however, that he would omit the intermediate than the starting premise, which would be the case if the manuscript reading is retained. Reading διὰ τοῦτο, the summary begins by asserting the same first premise as in the original argument, namely that things are equally ἀδιάφορα and then, missing out the inference to the senses' unreliability, passes straight to inferring that it is therefore not a good idea to trust the senses or opinions. On Zeller's suggestion, the weak point in the argument is the unargued premise 'that our senses neither tell the truth nor lie'. Aristocles does *not* attack this point, however, but focuses on the assertion of ἀδιαφορία in his critique at 6.1 (καὶ μὴν εἰ καὶ δῶμεν αὐτοῖς ἐπ' ἴσης ἀδιάφορα πάντα εἶναι ...), at 7.1, at 17.1–2 (πῶς οὐκ ἐπ' ἴσης ἀδιάφορα τὰ πράγματα ... δύναται ἄν εἶναι), and, as we shall see, generally in all of his arguments in this section. This seems to me to be a good indication of what Aristocles saw as the major premise of Pyrrho/Timon's argument.¹⁵ From this the uselessness of the senses is inferred.

Proponents of the emendation are not beaten by these objections, but they are forced to make explicit a further consequence of their interpretation. On their reading Aristocles performs a *modus tollens* attack in his refutations; he demonstrates the absurdity of the conclusion 'that things are indifferntiable', and takes this as a refutation of the starting position from which this indifferntiability is inferred, namely the thesis that our senses and opinions do not reliably tell the truth.

¹⁴ Brunschwig (1994) 196 n.12.

¹⁵ Moraux (1984) 159–63 discusses Aristocles' critique. There are very brief remarks in Trabucco (1960) 125–7. Tsouna (1998) 62–72, 151–4 has a discussion of Aristocles' attack on Cyrenaicism.

A consequence of this general approach is that the adjective ἀδιάφορα in all of this section of the text must be read modally ('indifferentiable'), since this is all that can legitimately be inferred from the premise of our senses' and opinions' unreliability; no pronouncement is possible on the nature of 'things' independently of our uncertain access to them. This modal understanding might be possible for the instances which I have noted so far, since they all use the adjective ἀδιάφορα,¹⁶ but it is not clear to me that such a modal force can be carried by the bare positive verb διαφέρειν. Yet Aristocles is quite happy to switch to using this form in his attempts to show the self-refutation of the Timonian thesis.

At 14.18.5ff. he offers the first attempt. This sets the general pattern for most of what follows in Aristocles' attack, and also, I think, offers strong support for retaining the disputed MSS reading of τοῦτο. The refutation runs as follows:

Either A:

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|----------------------------------|----|--|
| If Pyrrho and Timon wish to show | 1. | that the many are wrong to think that the <i>onta diapherei</i> |
| Pyrrho and Timon must say | 2. | that there are people who think falsely about <i>ta onta</i> |
| and | 3. | that they themselves tell the truth about <i>ta onta</i> |
| but if 2 and 3, | 4. | So there will be truth and falsity. ¹⁷ |
| and if 4, | 5. | They are themselves wrong to think that <i>ta onta</i> do not <i>diapherei</i> (i.e. not 1). |

Or B:

- | | | |
|----------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| If not 1. then | 6. | On what grounds do they reproach us? |
|----------------|----|--------------------------------------|

This offers a dilemma to Pyrrho and Timon. Either (A) they are sure that we the majority are wrong, in which case they seem to allow some distinction among the ὄντα (1–5), or (B) they do not, in which case they have no cause to rebuke us (6). In either case they cannot sustain their thesis in a dialectical exchange.¹⁸

If Aristocles thinks that this amounts to a refutation of Timon's thesis (namely ἐπ' ἴσης ἀδιάφορα τὰ πράγματα), then regardless of the force of the refutation, it is clear that the proposition contained in 5. (namely μὴ διαφέρειν τὰ ὄντα) is offered as an

¹⁶ Barnes' investigations into the use of ἀνεπικρίτως in Sextus – the only one of these three alpha-privative adjectives to be regularly used by the later Pyrrhonist – has shown that this is clearly *non*-modal: Barnes (1990a) 101–3, (1990b) 18–20.

¹⁷ Note that Aristocles does not infer: 'so truth and falsity are *differentiable*'.

¹⁸ Cf. Aristocles against Protagoras *ap. Eus. PE* 14.20.3: ἔπειτα δέ, πῶς ἔλεγον εἶναι σοφοὺς ἑαυτούς, εἰ δὴ πᾶς τις αὐτὸς ἑαυτῶ μέτρον ἐστὶ τῆς ἀληθείας; ἢ πῶς ἐλέγχουσι τοῦς ἄλλους, εἴπερ ἐκάστω τὸ φαινόμενον ἀληθές ἐστιν ...;

equivalent to that thesis. This equivalent proposition seems clearly to be metaphysical, not epistemological, and to carry no modal significance. For οὐ διαφέρεει τὰ ὄντα to mean ‘the things which are are undifferentiable’ is implausible. Rather than a *modus tollens* attack focused on the conclusion of the Pyrrhonians’ argument, Aristocles therefore produces a series of *peritropê* attacks on the Pyrrhonians’ opening thesis of indifference.

It might nevertheless be objected that Aristocles, in arguing that Pyrrho must allow that τὰ ὄντα *do* διαφέρεει, is entitled to proceed to argue that Pyrrho must agree that τὰ ὄντα are *differentiable*, but again I think that the expression of the phrase: ἀξιοῦντες μὴ διαφέρεειν αὐτά [sc. τὰ ὄντα], strongly suggests that this is offered as a thesis endorsed by Aristocles’ opponents and not merely an intermediate step on the way to refuting some thesis involving *undifferentiability*. There is no evidence in the presentation of these arguments that Aristocles intended his refutations to be aimed at such an intermediate step. If anything, some of the refutations proceed by showing that in fact the Pyrrhonians do make differentiations, so there are by nature differentiations in the world upon which the Pyrrhonians in fact rely, and *therefore* the opening thesis is false (e.g. 14.18.9.7–8). In this case, unless Aristocles is convicted of *ignoratio elenchi* we must assume that he does indeed rightly consider the above argument to counter the exposition of Pyrrho and Timon’s thought which precedes it. So Aristocles wrote τοῦτο not τό in the disputed inference, and his refutations proceed accordingly.

IV

This form of self-refutation (*peritropê*) is familiar from a number of ancient texts. Often it does not claim that the thesis itself involves a logical self-contradiction. Instead it claims that the thesis cannot be sustained in a debate. I am ‘overturned’ if it is a consequence of my thesis that I cannot even attempt to convince anyone else that my thesis is correct. Examples of such arguments are legion and can be found in texts as chronologically diverse as Plato’s *Theaetetus*, Epicurus *On nature*, Cicero’s *Academica*, and Sextus Empiricus.¹⁹

I have identified some seven distinct arguments employed by Aristocles against the Pyrrhonian thesis in this section before he turns to more *ad hominem* attacks on Aenesidemus’ modes, Timon’s poetry and Pyrrho’s own lifestyle as revealed by the biography by Antigonos of Carystus. All of them (besides the long ‘elenctic apodeixis’ which I shall discuss in **V** below) are designed to show that the very presentation of the thesis of ἀδιαφορία or the considerations used to generate it require there to be real distinctions in the world, and therefore are incompatible with the thesis itself. I have already outlined the first of these arguments. The next two are more compressed.

¹⁹ See Burnyeat (1976a), (1976b), (1978), (1997); Sedley (1983b).

The first (18.6) reads:

Even if we were to grant to them that all things are equally indifferent, it is clear that they themselves would not differ from the many. What then would be their wisdom? And why does Timon abuse all the others, and praise only Pyrrho?

This last consideration is expanded later in Aristocles' critique (18.16–17), by reference to Timon's abuse of all other philosophers besides Pyrrho in his satirical work, the *Silloi*. This *ad hominem* consideration sharpens the general point that if the thesis of *adiaphoria* is true then Pyrrho and Timon can claim no special expertise. By doing so they wish to distinguish themselves from everyone else – precisely what their thesis cannot allow. This much was at least implicit in the previous refutation.

Next Aristocles presents an even more radical consequence of the Pyrrhonian thesis:

If things do not differ and so we should not form opinions, then these too would not differ. I mean 'differ' or 'not differ' and 'have an opinion' or 'not have an opinion'. Why are these sorts of things any more than they are not? Or, as Timon says, why yes and why no and why why itself? (18.7.1–5)

So Aristocles, rather than turning the thesis against itself in the sense that it cannot be asserted as a true view of the world, turns the thesis against its very elements. If the Pyrrhonians want to maintain their absolute *adiaphoria* then there is no more reason to say 'differ' rather than 'not differ', since differing and its contradictory do not themselves differ. So if the thesis is true, there is no distinction which can be made between any of the elements of the thesis and its contradictory. If things are *adiaphora* there was no more reason for Timon to say that all things are *adiaphora* than there was for him to say the opposite. That he did say what he did, Aristocles implies, suggests that Timon must think some things are exempt from his thesis, and *eo ipso* his universal declaration of indifference is false.

This compressed and, at first glance, opportunist argument points the way to Aristocles' longest sustained attack, where he marshals Aristotelian weaponry to show that the possibility of saying anything meaningful at all depends on the negation of the Pyrrhonians' thesis.

But before then Aristocles returns to the theme of the Pyrrhonians' claim to know something most people do not, while simultaneously (ἀμα 18.7.7,8) insisting that knowledge of the world is impossible. In essence there is nothing new in this argument. It reprises the considerations of the first, but perhaps does so more elegantly. The repeated ἀμα points to the inconsistency of the sceptics' position, and Aristocles emphasises one half of this inconsistency by repeating various words which connote the *authority* which his opponents claim for their theory (διακελευόμενοι, κελεύοντες, λέγοντες ... ὡς δέοι, ἀξιοῦσι, πείθεσθαι ... κελεύουσιν, ἐλέγχουσιν).

Already we can see the general tactic which is being adopted. Aristocles insists that there can be no insulation of the starting thesis from itself, nor from any conclusions drawn from it. Given the vagueness of the group to which it is supposed to apply (*'pragmata'*) it is not particularly surprising that Aristocles made this move. Aristocles does, however, allow himself one crucial addition to the Pyrrhonian thesis as he himself presents it. While Timon says that Pyrrho declared how *'pragmata are by nature'*, throughout his refutations Aristocles presents the Pyrrhonian thesis as claiming that ALL *pragmata* are indifferent. Once he has introduced a note of universality to the thesis then Aristocles feels more justified in producing counter-arguments which show that some one particular thing or concept, or group of things or concepts cannot be indifferent.

Aristocles might also have been encouraged into producing self-refutational arguments by the sceptics' use already by this date of the famous metaphor of the self-purging purgatives, to which he refers at 14.18.21. This metaphor clearly describes the thought that the Pyrrhonian arguments are meant also to apply to themselves, offering an irresistible invitation to the hostile reader to search for traces of self-refutation. The metaphor cuts off the possible escape-route of some form of 'meta'-dogmatism, of exempting some level of assertion from the doubt applied to every lower level as a result of the thesis that higher level contains.²⁰ Presumably this metaphor was introduced into Pyrrhonian thought in order to counter the criticism that the sceptic had allowed himself to believe at least one thing (in this case that all *pragmata* are indifferent and so on), which might have appeared to be somewhat naively dogmatic in contrast to the extreme scepticism which followed from it. I suspect that the metaphor of the purgative drugs is not Pyrrho's own, nor does it derive from Timon. It is certainly prominent by the time of Sextus,²¹ but Aristocles offers us a *terminus ante quem* for its appearance. It is therefore, if I am right, a product of the period between the first phase of Pyrrhonism and Aristocles, and a result of earlier attacks on Pyrrhonian scepticism. I find it plausible to think that it was introduced by Aenesidemus whom Aristocles notes as having 'recently' revived Pyrrhonism.²²

But whatever the historical origins of the manoeuvre, as soon as he has mentioned this possible escape-route for the sceptics, Aristocles closes it. The self-purging drugs metaphor simply does not work, he claims. First, he reacts by saying that the metaphor is just foolish; the sceptics would be better off if they said nothing at all. He explains and justifies this reaction by suggesting that although the drug in the metaphor is expelled, and thus presumably succumbs to its own self-application, this will not do for an argument which is supposed to apply generally to all our perceptions and all our beliefs. He says:

²⁰ Compare the tactic of Antipater outlined by Burnyeat (1997) 285–90.

²¹ See *PH* 1.206, 2.188; *M.* 8.480–1; and McPherran (1987).

²² Ferrari (1968) 206–8; Sedley (1983a) 11–14; McPherran (1987) 294 suggests this was a counter to the New Academy. Chiesara Bertola (1996) 285. Cf. Photius *Bibl.* 170a11–12. Aristocles generally throughout this section makes no effort to outline, or is entirely oblivious to, any historical and philosophical distinctions between Pyrrho, Timon, and Aenesidemus. Perhaps he is taken in by, or is consciously manipulating, the later Pyrrhonians' own preoccupation to foist their particular philosophical outlook onto the 'founder' of the movement.

The *logos* ought to remain in the soul, the same and constantly agreed to. Only this kind of *logos* would make people suspend judgement. (14.18.22.3–5)

His criticism, I take it, is aimed at what happens *after* the drug has been flushed away.²³ Does the sceptic still think that all things are *adiaphora*? If not he will no longer fail to hold beliefs about the world. If he does, then what sense is there in saying that the drug has been purged? The sceptics face a further dilemma. If they agree to the self-application of their thesis, then they owe us an explanation of how the sceptic still lives without beliefs without the presence at all in his soul of the *logos* 'that all things are *adiaphora*'.

V

Aristocles himself names two sources for the arguments which he employs against the various positions outlined in this discussion of the attitude of various schools to the criterion. In his attack on Metrodorus of Chios and Protagoras, both of whom he thinks took the view that one should place *pistis* only in the senses, he explicitly recalls one of the arguments used by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*: 'If that's the way things are, why pick "man" to be the measure of all things and not "pig" or "baboon"?' (14.20.3, *Theaet.* 161c5). Then he uses the argument that the Protagoreans cannot claim that they are *sophoi* if each and any person is the measure of things *for himself*. Relativism as a thesis cannot be claimed as a measure of philosophical distinction. For if it is true then no one is any wiser than anyone else (since no one is ever wrong).²⁴ This is essentially the same point as is made against Pyrrho and Timon. If their thesis is true then it removes *any* distinctions between *ta onta*, including the distinctions required if Pyrrho and Timon are to claim that they have a better view of reality than anyone else.

The other probable source for Aristocles' argumentative strategy is Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He introduces Pyrrho's thesis in 14.18.1 as 'that we are such by nature as to know nothing',²⁵ and immediately remarks that plenty of ancient thinkers also proposed such a view. Aristotle, he says, opposed them.²⁶ Within the argument between Aristocles and Pyrrho we can detect strong echoes of arguments used by Aristotle,

²³ McPherran (1987) 315–17 emphasises the passage of time prominent in the sceptics' metaphors: *first* the drug expels the humours, *then* it expels itself. McPherran argues that this avoids the sceptics' simultaneous assertion of *p* and $\neg p$ (i.e. the violation of PNC). Aristocles appears to accept this chronological claim, but presses his point nevertheless. What happens next, after the drug has been expelled? Why does the sceptic not revert to forming opinions?

²⁴ See Waterlow (1977) esp. 29–33, 35–6; McCabe (1998).

²⁵ It has been suggested that this is an oblique reference to the opening of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: πάντες ἀνθρώποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει: Chiesara Bertola (1996) 218. Cf. Trabucco (1960) 117.

²⁶ 14.18.2. So Aristocles notes that Aristotle's original opponents did not include Pyrrho (a chronological impossibility) and implies that he has himself subsequently identified Pyrrho's position as relevantly similar to those which Aristotle attacked as to justify his own use of Aristotelian tools of refutation. Gisela Striker suggested to me that Aristocles might be boasting here of having found an Aristotelian text relevant, he thinks, to these questions. Perhaps *Met.* Γ was not a widely read text in Aristocles' times.

particularly within book Γ and his defence of the Principle of Non-Contradiction. These echoes are strongest in the next of Aristocles' refutations, which is also the longest and the most elaborate.

Just as in the Aristotelian refutation (the 'elenctic apodeixis'), the context is dialectical.²⁷ Like Aristotle, Aristocles takes pains not to beg the question when demonstrating the falsity of his opponent's position by implicitly relying on the very conclusion of that refutation. Instead, Aristocles constructs a series of questions, each with alternative answers. One of the responses to each of the dilemmas leads to what Aristocles thinks is a killer blow to the Pyrrhonians. At each stage, one of the responses will lead to the conclusion that 'in that case there is no *logos* with him'. This Aristocles takes to be the marker of an untenable thesis, just as Aristotle brands someone who can be shown to fall into a similar predicament as 'living the life of a plant' (1006a14–15).²⁸ The possibility of there being a *logos* with someone is a necessary condition of a tenable thesis or, as Aristotle puts it, of living a human life.

Here is the outline of the argument, beginning with the first dilemma:

Those who think that all things are unclear must accept one of these alternatives. Either they are silent, or they speak and affirm something. So if they say nothing, clearly there would be no *logos* with such people. If they affirm then most generally they would say something is or is not, just as now, for example, they say that things are unknown and by convention [for everyone, and nothing is known].²⁹ (14.18.8)

The first dilemma is straightforward. Will the sceptics say something, or will they hold their peace? If the latter then there can be no *logos* with them. Aristocles then gives a brief account of what he means by the alternative, *apophainesthai ti*. He means something very general. If one *apophainetai ti* one generally says either something is or is not, one either asserts or denies something. One's statements are either positive or negative. What else emerges from this brief gloss is that Aristocles wants his dialectical partner to say *anything at all*, positive or negative.³⁰ He offers, merely as an

²⁷ Cf. Dancy (1975) 14, Lear (1980) 103–4.

²⁸ Aubenque (1985) 104; Cassin and Narcy (1989) 50.

²⁹ There is a textual problem here: $\pi\alpha\sigma\iota\upsilon\ \acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ ION, $\pi\alpha\sigma\iota$, $\langle\gamma\rangle\nu\omicron\sigma\langle\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu\rangle\delta'$ $\omicron\upsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ Estienne.

³⁰ Compare this to the interpretation of the argument in Γ 4 of Dancy (1975) or Cassin and Narcy (1989) (cf. Cassin (1992)), in contrast to that of Lear (1980) 104ff. or Irwin (1982), (1992). At *Met.* 1006a18–21 Aristotle claims that the starting point of his refutation is the need to *sêmeinein ti*, where this is contrasted with *legein ti*. Indeed *sêmeinein ti* is a necessary condition of *legein ti* – it probably means something like signifying by uttering a single word (e.g. 'man' – see 1006a31ff. and Alexander of Aphrodisias cited below n. 36). In contrast Aristocles seems to have in mind primarily signifying something by uttering a statement, e.g. 'all things are indifferent'. Whatever the correct interpretation of the kind of signification assumed by the *Metaphysics*' refutation, the bare requirement that the opponent try to say something meaningful is what Aristocles relies upon. Cf. Lear (1980) 112: '... in Aristotle's proof by refutation a valid point is being made which transcends the semantical context in which it occurs. *An assertion divides*

example of what he has in mind, the Pyrrhonian thesis that all things are *agnôsta and nomista pasi*. This does not have to be what his partner chooses to assert on this occasion. So for the first time Aristocles is moving away from deriving contradictory positions from the Pyrrhonian starting thesis itself. This is a more ambitious argument which attempts to show that saying anything at all is incompatible with that thesis. Something like this was hinted at before when Aristocles claimed that given *adiaphoria* no element in the Pyrrhonians' thesis 'is' any more than its contradictory. He now extends this point to cover anything at all the Pyrrhonian says.

So we return to the exchange.

Whoever thinks that is right either makes the thing clear and it is possible to understand what he says, or it is impossible. If he does not make it clear, then there would be no *logos* at all with such a person. (14.18.9.1–4)

Aristocles' opponent has now said something. But this is not yet enough. If he does not 'make clear' something and unless 'it is possible to understand him', again there can be no *logos* with him. We might ask what this 'making clear' would be. It seems to me that Aristocles is not particularly concerned in this passage to provide or to understand any particular theory of language, of signification, or of meaning. All Aristocles wants to say is that what the opponent says must be comprehensible. Nonsensical noise does not qualify, and if the opponent just babbles away this is no better than him saying nothing at all. Again there could be no *logos*. So Aristocles sets as a necessary condition of any discussion that there must be the possibility of communication between the participants of this exchange. Presumably Aristocles feels that this constraint would not irk the Pyrrhonians. After all they try to communicate their thesis to people, and more generally they talk to each other, write poems and the like. They seem quite happy with the need for communicability.³¹

Of course they might have opted out at this point, and agreed that there is no possibility of communication given their view of reality. We can supply an example of this kind of position in which no *logos* is possible. This would be the same sort of position as the radical Heracliteans of Plato's *Theaetetus* (179d-180d), a source which we know Aristocles plundered for his arguments.³² There, Theodorus complains that it is impossible to discuss Heracliteanism with the Heracliteans. They never give an account of themselves, nor can they ever be pupils or teachers. Instead they spring up

up the world: to assert that anything is the case one must exclude other possibilities. This exclusion is just what fails to occur in the absence of the law of non-contradiction, even when construed in its most general form: $\neg(P \& \neg P)$. One cannot assert P and then directly proceed to assert $\neg P$: one does not succeed in making a second assertion, but only in cancelling the first assertion. This is the ultimate reason why an opponent of the law of non-contradiction cannot say anything' (emphasis mine).

³¹ Cf. Arist. *Met.* 1062a11–13.

³² See also Arist. *Met.* 1062a31–1062b11 for *peritropê* arguments against the Heracliteans.

individually and spontaneously. The Pyrrhonians, of course, do not hold a radical flux theory of reality. As far as we can tell their premise is not that reality is too unstable to be described but that there are not sufficient (or indeed any) distinctions in reality to allow one to describe one thing rather than another. The predicament to which these views can be reduced is the same, therefore, but the starting points are not.

One could also compare the route out of this refutation available to Protagorean relativism.³³ Protagoras in effect denies the existence of a single public realm about which both participants in the discussion are talking. Each subject's world is strongly relativised to him.³⁴ The Pyrrhonians do not take this route, and are therefore left trying to maintain the possibility of public shared discourse while simultaneously holding that all things are indifferent. They clearly owe an explanation of how communication is still possible given their view of reality, and Aristocles for one is convinced that no such explanation is possible.

So if the Pyrrhonian did not finish his dialogue with Aristocles there, he must agree that he *sêmeinei* something to his partner. He engages in some sort of communication. The argument continues:

If he means something then he generally would say either an indefinite or a definite [number or group] of things. And if indefinite then there would be no *logos* with him, because there can be no knowledge of the indefinite. But if what has been made clear is a definite number or one thing alone, whoever says that makes a distinction and determines. So how could all things be unknown and unjudged? (14.18.9.4–8)

Now Aristocles asks what he *sêmeinei*, *apeira* or *peperasmena*? Immediately the first option is disallowed on the grounds that there can be no *gnôsis* of the *apeiron*. While this is a good Aristotelian principle (*Phys.* 187b7–9, 207b25–32; *Met.* 999a26–8.; *APo.* 86a5–6), its introduction here is somewhat abrupt. If it is supposed to mean that the dialectical partner could not comprehend such an object (and therefore the discussion could not proceed), then this might fit Aristocles' needs. Aristotle himself, however, is rather clearer on this point. *Metaphysics* 1006b2–9 explains why Aristotle's opponent must allow that 'man' signifies one, or at least a definite number of things:

I mean, for example, if he were not to say that man means one thing, but many things, of one of which the *logos* is biped animal, then there would also be many more others, but they would be definite in number. But if he were not to allow

³³ For the link made between Protagoreanism and Pyrrhonism in Aristocles see Decleva Caizzi (1981a) 219. Aristocles links Protagoras with Metrodorus of Chios, both of whom, he says, think we should place *pistis* in the senses. Metrodorus is then made the inspiration of Pyrrhonian thought (*PE* 14.19.8–9).

³⁴ For a discussion of how even this might not make the Protagorean immune from Plato's charge of self-refutation see Burnyeat (1976b).

this, but says it means an indefinite number, then it is clear that there would be no *logos* [sc. with him].³⁵ For not meaning one thing is not meaning at all, and when names do not mean anything then discussion is removed, discussion with others and in truth with oneself.³⁶

For Aristotle, it is a precondition of discussion that one signify one thing by what one says, even if what one says *could* mean more than one thing. In this case, it would be possible to spell out or enumerate which of the possible significations of 'man' is required in the context.³⁷ But if 'man' had an indefinite number of possible significations then, so Aristotle thinks, no such clarification can be attempted. In that case if I say 'man' I could mean (literally) any number of things, including (importantly) 'not man'. I might as well just babble.

In any case, Aristocles then thinks he has pushed his opponent all the way to agreeing that in order to engage in some kind of conversation he must *sêmeinei* some definite group of things, or one thing only. Here Aristocles declares a victory: 'The person saying this defines and discerns something. So how could all things be *agnôsta* and *anepikrita*?' By expressing some definite group of things, or one thing only, indeed any group of things or any single thing, the Pyrrhonian has contravened his starting thesis. He has discriminated one part of reality from another. But Aristocles has shown that he *must* do this if he is at all to be able to engage in meaningful communication. So the Pyrrhonian had better stop talking. One cannot communicate with a Pyrrhonian. And Pyrrhonians certainly should not be able to talk to each other.³⁸

The next argument (14.18.9.8–12) cuts off the only remaining escape route for the Pyrrhonian.

But if he were to say that the same thing both is and is not, first truth and falsehood would be the same, and he will say and not say some thing and using *logos* he will remove *logos*.³⁹ Further he will say that we should believe him, while agreeing that he is lying.

Here Aristocles imagines the exasperated Pyrrhonian declaring in response to the claim that he has distinguished and delineated something that 'the same thing both is and is

³⁵ For this interpretation cf. *Met.* 1006a22–4.

³⁶ Cf. Alex. Aphrod. *In Arist. Met.* 277.14–279.14 especially 279, 4–7: εἰ τὸ ἀνθρώπος ἀπειρα σημαίνει, ἦτοι καὶ τὸν οὐκ ἀνθρώπον ὁ ἀνθρώπος σημαίνει (ἐν γὰρ τοῖς ἀπείροις καὶ τοῦτο), ὥστε ἔσται ὁ ἀνθρώπον εἰπὼν καὶ μὴ ἀνθρώπον σεσημακώς· ἢ εἰ τοῦτο ἄτοπον, ἔσται τῶν ἀπείρων τι πλεόν. Dancy (1975) 43–5, 85–7; Cassin and Nancy (1989) 195; Irwin (1982) 261.

³⁷ Alex. Aphrod. *In Arist. Met.* 277.29–31.

³⁸ Cf. McPherran (1987) 318 n. 55.

³⁹ Here Aristocles uses the phrase: λόγῳ χρωόμενος ἀναρῆσει λόγον, which is the formula also used by Alex. Aphrod. *In Arist. Met.* 274.25–7 to explain what Aristotle means by ἀναρῶν γὰρ λόγον ὑπομένει λόγον at 1006a26.

not'. The thought is that the Pyrrhonian might escape the charge of saying something determinate by insisting that whatever he says, he also says its negation. So when the Pyrrhonian says 'man is a biped', he allows that the same thing, 'man' both 'is a biped' and 'is not a biped'. Aristocles immediately responds that this will entail that the same thing is both true and false, in the sense that 'man is a biped' will be both true and false (since its negation is also true, and false!).⁴⁰ And if this is the case then the Pyrrhonian must agree that he is lying although he also says we should believe him. He cannot hold any thesis, then, because by this line of reasoning he must also agree that its negation is true.

So here Aristocles completes his illustration that if the thesis of *adiaphoria* is stubbornly maintained it amounts to a denial of the Principle of Non-Contradiction. If, even after the preceding elenctic demonstration that in order to engage in any kind of communication the Pyrrhonian must contradict his thesis, the opponent maintains his thesis by this last-ditch manoeuvre, then Aristocles shows that this simultaneous assertion of a proposition and its negation finally removes any authority the Pyrrhonian might want to claim for his original thesis of *adiaphoria*. The Pyrrhonian must assert both the thesis of *adiaphoria* and its negation.⁴¹

VI

It should be noted that despite the interest generated by the question whether Pyrrho himself sought to deny the Principle of Non-Contradiction, no-one has thought to consider Aristocles' refutation of the Pyrrhonians. Various people have speculated that Pyrrho might have read the Aristotelian critique, or perhaps heard about it through

⁴⁰ Cf. *PE* 14.20.8.

⁴¹ It might be thought that the Pyrrhonians are immune to this argument since they do not assert anything. Instead they promote the notion of *ἀφασία*. Aristocles, of course, always allows that his opponent might not say anything at all, but claims that this is tantamount to admitting an untenable philosophical position. Sextus promotes *ἀφασία* also: e.g. *PH* 1.15; cf. Stough (1984) and Barnes (1982) 5. Nevertheless it seems to me that *PH* 1.193, or 1.197 where Sextus explicitly distinguishes *λέγειν τι* from *ορίζειν τι*, might well be the result of some modification to the sceptics' thought brought about by criticisms such as that of Aristocles (1.193): *ἄφασίαν παρὰ τὴν ἀφασίαν παραλαμβάνομεν οὐχ ὡς πρὸς τὴν φύσιν τοιούτων τῶν πραγμάτων ὥστε πάντως ἀφασίαν κινεῖν, ἀλλὰ δηλοῦντες ὅτι ἡμεῖς νῦν, ὅτε προσφερόμεθα αὐτήν, ἐπὶ τῶνδε τῶν ζητούμενων τοῦτο πεπόνθαμεν*. His refusal to make assertions is not a result of the nature of things being such that assertion is not possible. In the Aristocles text, Timon says that *ἀφασία* arises as a result of seeing how the *πράγματα* are by nature (14.18.4; the subsequent text has been suspected of corruption: see Moraux (1984) 156 n. 257). The reasons for Sextus' *ἀφασία* are not the same as for Timon's. Timon does not assert anything about the nature of things because he thinks they are by nature indifferent (this, note, he does assert, and this is sufficient for Aristocles' refutations to bite). This is quite compatible with Timon's statement in his *On senses* that 'I do not posit that the honey is sweet, but I agree that it appears so' (*ap.* DL 9.105). While this is also something Sextus would avow (*PH* 1.20), there is no reason to think that Timon's reasons for not asserting what the nature of honey is must be the same as Sextus'. Generally on the distinctions to be made, see Brunschwig (1997).

Aristotle's relative Callisthenes while on Alexander's expedition to the East.⁴² It is thought that Pyrrho then reasserted a denial of the Principle, despite the Aristotelian arguments.

Much of this discussion then hangs on the interpretation of Timon's injunction near to the end of Aristocles' summary:

... περὶ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου λέγοντας ὅτι οὐ μᾶλλον ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ οὔτε ἔστιν οὔτε οὐκ ἔστιν.⁴³

The crucial phrase in Aristotle's discussion is this:

οὔτε γὰρ οὕτως οὔτ' οὐχ οὕτως λέγει, ἀλλ' οὕτως τε καὶ οὐχ οὕτως καὶ πάλιν γε ταῦτα ἀπόφησιν ἄμφω, ὅτι οὔθ' οὕτως οὔτε οὐχ οὕτως.
(*Met.* 1008a31–3)

Aristotle charges that his opponent says:⁴⁴

- A: 1. neither 'X is F', nor 'X is not F'
but 2. 'X is and is not F'
and 3. 'X neither is F nor is it not-F'

But the Aristocles passage can be understood in two ways:

- B: about each thing one should say
1. 'X is no more F than not-F'
or 2. 'X is both F and not-F'
or 3. 'X is neither is F nor is it not-F'

On this understanding B2 contradicts Aristotle's denial of A2, and B3 contradicts Aristotle's denial of A3. However, there is another possible interpretation of the Aristoclean quotation:

⁴² E.g. Long (1981) 92 (although in n. 31 he is careful not to insist on a *dependence* between the texts); Berti (1981) 67; Reale (1981) 315. Stopper (1983) 273 suggests that Aristocles, a Peripatetic, might have had the *Met.* passage in mind at this point: 'It would not be implausible to suppose that it was Aristocles who gave the Aristotelian twist to Timon's exposition.' If Aristocles reached for his *Metaphysics* while constructing his refutations of Pyrrho, this has little to offer any speculations on the original Pyrrho-Aristotle relationship. Decleva Caizzi (1981b) 105 'È certamente possibile che la lettura di Aristocle possa suggerire, riecheggiando argomenti aristotelici, l'idea che Pirrone pensasse ad Aristotele e polemizzasse con lui; ma Aristocle non può in alcun modo essere usato a conferma della bontà dell'ipotesi, che deve cercare altrove gli argomenti su cui sostenersi. Nella tradizione postaristotelica a noi pervenuta, Aristocle compreso, nessuno ha interpretato la posizione di Pirrone come una risposta ad Aristotele.'

⁴³ Compare Favorinus' report that Pyrrho said: οὐ μᾶλλον οὕτως ἔχει τόδε ἢ ἐκείνως ἢ οὐδετέρως (*ap.* Aulus Gellius 11.5.4).

⁴⁴ On ἐστὶ in these formulations, see Bett (1994b) 158 n. 61.

- C: about each thing one should say:
- 1.. 'that it no more is F ...
 2. ... than not F'
 - or 3. ... than both F and not-F'
 - or 4. ... than neither F nor not-F'

This interpretation yields much less of a correspondence with the Aristotelian formulation and does not imply a denial of PNC.⁴⁵ If C is preferred it therefore becomes more likely that in these two passages we are dealing with similar, perhaps related arguments, and less likely that we can assert a strict dialectical relationship between the two.

From the extensive use which Aristocles makes of the Aristotelian defence of the Principle, we can certainly say that Aristocles at least thought that Pyrrho denied the Principle. But I am not convinced that we should make Timon's sanctioned *ou mallon* phrases Aristocles' primary exhibit. Not only are they potentially ambiguous and in all likelihood do not in themselves deny the Principle, but Aristocles himself makes no effort to point to them explicitly when he launches *any* of his refutations, let alone that based on Aristotle's argument.

Instead, as we have seen, Aristocles hangs all of the refutations on the Pyrrhonians' opening thesis that all things are *adiaphora*. It seems to me that he thinks that he can take this as itself implying a denial of the Principle, whether or not the Pyrrhonians came out and said that anything both is and is not F. The assertion of *adiaphoria*, as Aristocles understands it, means that Pyrrho is perfectly happy to say something is and is not F, for it implies that there is no distinction to be made between F-ness and its contrary. It is exactly this which underlies his dialectical refutation of the position. If the Pyrrhonians are to offer any sort of meaningful communication then they must assert or deny something, that is to say they must assert or deny something *rather than its contrary*. But if they are to do this they cannot respect their original thesis of *adiaphoria*.

Perhaps then Aristocles can be given an honourable mention in the history of this brand of argument. A good case can be made, I think, for seeing him as the person who first saw that this Pyrrhonian thesis of *adiaphoria* fell into the same trap as those various

⁴⁵ B2 does not deny PNC if X is both F and not-F, but not 'simultaneously and in the same respect'. Also, Brunschwig (1999) 244–6 argues that rather than intending to deny PNC it is a deliberately paradoxical formulation of the general avoidance of any assertion. He concludes that it is therefore not mandatory to accept formulation C. Version C is preferred to B by De Lacy (1958a) 64ff., Stopper (1983) 273, and Bett (1994b) 161. Cf. Annas and Barnes (1985) 11 and Robin (1944) 14. See Flintoff (1980) for possible roots in Indian thought. It might be thought that C requires the text to read οὐ μᾶλλον ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ ἢ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ ἢ οὔτε ἔστιν οὔτε οὐκ ἔστιν, two eta's being needed for the meaning 'or than'. Perhaps the duplication was avoided as unstylish; perhaps it is not necessary: the first ἢ of the three means 'than', and the next two mean 'or' – these latter introducing alternatives to the second of the *comparanda* in the οὐ μᾶλλον phrase. Even then one might expect οὐδὲ rather than ἢ since the whole phrase is negative. On Pyrrho's use of οὐ μᾶλλον see DL 9.76 (again from Timon's *Python*) and on Aenesidemus' use see Woodruff (1988).

positions which Aristotle had in mind when composing *Metaphysics* Γ. This, of course, has nothing to tell us about the relationship between Pyrrho and the *Metaphysics*. I personally find it hard to believe that Pyrrho was an avid reader of Aristotelian treatises, and I do not see why we should require Pyrrho to have read the *Metaphysics* before he could state his own position. The Pyrrhonian view can, of course, subsequently be juxtaposed to the Aristotelian account and Aristotelian tools can be brought to bear upon it. This is just what Aristocles did. He was no mere doxographer.⁴⁶

VII

The remaining arguments of this section need not delay us for long. The first claims that in order for the Pyrrhonians to know that all things are *adêla* they must first of all know what *to dêlon* is. For only then could they say that all things are not like that. So they must know what *to dêlon* is, and so they have at least one bit of knowledge.⁴⁷

The subsequent *ad hominem* refutations are essentially dramatisations of the moves already made, but they gain extra bite by being drawn from the Pyrrhonians' own works. Aristocles asks how Aenesidemus constructed his modes, and whether he claims to know that animals differ from humans. If not, how can he generate the required conflict of appearances, and how can he consistently claim that 'all things are unclear' (14.18.11–12)? Here, Aenesidemus offers a reason for the conclusion that 'all things are unclear' which is different from the starting premise of Pyrrho and Timon's argument, namely the relativity of sense perception.⁴⁸ Aristocles does not remark upon this distinction, but is only interested in the conclusion which Aenesidemus draws: ἄδηλα τὰ πράγματα. Throughout this section Aristocles makes no distinctions between the various individuals he groups as 'Pyrrhonians'. Next he moves on to abuse Timon and Pyrrho. Why did Timon slander other philosophers and praise Pyrrho (14.18.17–18)? Why did Pyrrho, as Antigonus of Carystus' biography relates, lose his equipoise when a dog rushed at him and when a friend failed to provide a promised victim for a sacrifice (14.18.26)? Since Aristocles draws extensively from Timon's verses and also from early Hellenistic biographical sources on Pyrrho, these *ad hominem* refutations are great reservoirs of information for anyone interested in writing the early history of Pyrrhonism. Aristocles often retains much more extensive and detailed accounts than are preserved, for example, in Diogenes Laertius.⁴⁹ As far as the philosophical refutation of Pyrrhonian thought is concerned, these sections of Aristocles are colourful illustrations of the general line of attack already outlined. They

⁴⁶ Recognised by Trabucco (1960) 139–40.

⁴⁷ For this argument cf. Lucr. *DRN* 4.469–75, and the distinction made by Sextus at *PH* 2.1–12 between *katalêpsis* and *noêsis* of a concept. The former entails acceptance of the concept, the latter only the 'entertainment' of an idea which one understands but to which one is not committed.

⁴⁸ For Aenesidemus scepticism see: Woodruff (1988).

⁴⁹ See e.g. Untersteiner (1971) and Brunschwig (1992).

do add, however, a moral dimension to Aristocles' criticism, by drawing out the consequences of the Pyrrhonians' position for the possibility of living a life as such a person. Aristocles elaborates his moral concerns about the Pyrrhonian position, which he thinks would leave its holder with no values whatsoever (*PE* 14.18.18–20). The beginning of this section sets the general tone.

‘What sort of citizen, or juror, or advisor, or friend, or man in general would such a person be? What evil would he not attempt, thinking that nothing is truly evil⁵⁰ or shameful or just or unjust?’

VIII

It is difficult to offer a global assessment of Aristocles as a philosopher or as an historian of philosophy since so little of what he wrote has survived for us to assess. However, in this brief section of his work retained in this book of Eusebius' *Praeparatio*, Aristocles has shown himself to be quite capable of using the tools of his Peripatetic school not only against the opponents whom Aristotle himself probably had in mind (Protagoras, for example), but also against the Hellenistic schools of Pyrrhonism, Cyrenaicism, and Epicureanism. So Aristocles is not just a storehouse of otherwise missing information about 'more important' philosophical positions. He offers an example of first century B.C.E./C.E Peripatetic engagement with the texts of their own school, and application of those texts against both current and not-so-current rival philosophies.

APPENDIX

The arrangement of material in Aristocles and Eusebius

In this reconstruction of Aristocles' progression, two contrasts are produced – between the Cyrenaics and the Pyrrhonians, and between Protagoras and Metrodorus of Chios and the Eleatics. The Epicureans are included where they are as an offshoot from the discussion of Protagoras and Metrodorus, since they too, when it comes to the question of τὰ ἔξω πράγματα think that all perceptions and *phantasiai* are true. They might well be who is intended by the remarks at 14.20.9–12.⁵¹ The relative positions of the Epicureans and Eleatics in Aristocles is not clear. Either Aristocles contrasted the epis-

⁵⁰ MSS κακόν. I am tempted to follow Ferrari (1968) 207 n. 2 and emend to καλόν to give two contradictory pairs of evaluative predicates, and to parallel closely the phrasing of DL 9.61.

⁵¹ Suggested by Chiesara Bertola (1996) 20, 157; cf. Moraux (1984) 195–8.

Aristocles περί φιλοσοφίας book 8		Eusebius <i>PE</i> 14.17–21
Pyrrho	μηδὲν καταληπτὸν εἶναι ἀποφηνάμενοι.	14.17
Cyrenaics	οἱ λέγοντες μόνα τὰ πάθη καταληπτὰ	14.18
Protagoras and Metrodorus (and Epicureans)	οἱ ἀξιοῦντες τῆ αἰσθήσει καὶ ταῖς φραντασίαις μόναις δεῖν πιστεύειν.	14.19
Epicurus	ἔνιοί φασὶ τῆς αἰδέσεως καὶ φυγῆς ἀρχὴν καὶ χριτήριον ἔχειν ἡμᾶς τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ τὸν πόνον.	14.20 (14.20.9–12)
Eleatics	... τὴν ἐναντίαν φωνὴν ἀφιέντες· οἶονταί γὰρ δεῖν τὰς μὲν αἰσθήσεις καὶ τὰς φραντασίας καταβάλλειν.	14.21

temological positions of Protagoras, Metrodorus, and Epicurus with the Eleatics and then added an appendix on Epicurean moral criteria,⁵² or he included the Epicurean moral criteria immediately after their epistemology and then passed to the Eleatics. I prefer the latter, since it seems to me that 14.17.9, at the end of the Eleatic section, is a summing-up of all the previous refutations and a statement of Aristocles' own position. Some prefer to include the section on Epicurean moral criteria immediately after the discussion of the Cyrenaics. It is remarked that the objections to the Cyrenaics are συγγενῆ to those made against Pyrrho, and also that Epicurus took his inspiration in ethics from Aristippus at 14.18.31.⁵³

An advantage both of the reconstruction given in the table above, and also of that which places 21 *after* 17, is that they suggest that Eusebius has made only one major change. He has promoted the Eleatics from being last (or next to last) in the discussion to being first. This presumably accounts for the hurried succession Eusebius lists at 14.17.10 from Xenophanes through the Abderite philosophers to Pyrrho, who now comes next. The major gain for him is that this leaves the Epicurean ethical criteria last, and this is the point from which he launches into an extended critique of the school in general (i.e. 14.22: against those who think that pleasure is the good (= Pl. *Phil.* 65b2–67b9); 14.23–6: against those who deny providence; 14.27: against those who think that god does not ἐργάζεσθαι).

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⁵² Chiesara Bertola (1996) 20, Brennan (1998) 428.

⁵³ Moraux (1984) 124–7.

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