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SEXTUS WAS NO EUDAIMONIST

by

JOSEPH B. BULLOCK

Under the Direction of Dr. Tim O'Keefe

ABSTRACT

Ancient Greek philosophical schools are said to share a common structure in their ethical theories which is characterized by a eudaimonistic teleology based in an understanding of human nature. At first glance, the skepticism of Sextus Empiricus as described in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* seems to fit into this model insofar as he describes the end of the skeptic as *ataraxia,* a common account of the expression of human happiness. I argue that this is a misunderstanding of Sextus's philosophy for several reasons. "The end of skepticism" cannot be eudaimonistic or teleological in the way that other ancient ethical theories are typically understood; moreover, *ataraxia* is not an end derived from a theory about human nature. For these reasons, the skeptical way of life is radically different than the ethical theories proposed by other schools. I argue that this difference is a result of the character of the skeptical enterprise which involves the implicit rejection of norms in both the epistemological and the ethical spheres.

INDEX WORDS: Sextus Empiricus, Eudaimonism, Eudaimonia, Ancient ethics, Hellenistic ethics, Pyrrhonism, Ancient skepticism, Normativity

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JOSEPH B. BULLOCK

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2008

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2008

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τῷ λογῷ τῷ ἀπατεῶνι

εἰ γὰρ τοιοῦτος ἀπατεών ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὥστε καὶ τὰ φαινόομενα μόνον οὐχὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῶν ὑφαρπάζειν, τῶς οὐ χρὴ ὑφορᾶσθαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἀδήλοις, ὥστε μὴ κατακολουθοῦντας αὐτῷ προπετεύσται;

- Sextus Empiricus, *PH* I 20

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acad.	Cicero, *Academica*
Cat.	Aristotle, *Categories*
DF	Cicero, *De finibus*
DL	Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*
EN	Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
KD	Epicurus, *Principle Doctrines*
LS	Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*
M	Sextus Empiricus, *Against the professors*
PA	Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*
PH	Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*
Phys.	Aristotle, *Physics*
TD	Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*

Chapter 1 – Classifying Sextus

Many scholars of ancient philosophy claim that the ancient Pyrrhonian skeptic Sextus Empiricus subscribes to a eudaimonistic ethical framework.[1] Some of these scholars argue that Sextus shares assumptions common to other ancient ethical theories; for example, Julia Annas argues that the Pyrrhonian position fits into the typical ancient ethical framework, albeit in a way that is distinctively its own.[2] For other scholars, the claim that Sextus seeks *eudaimonia* seems so obviously true that the thesis is offered without any argument at all. Myles Burnyeat says that "tranquility of mind (*ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance)…is the sceptic spelling of happiness (*eudaimonia*)" as though this is plain from the text.[3] I intend to argue that such a position is a misreading of Sextus. Sextus was not a eudaimonist.

Ancient ethical theories – especially those of the Hellenistic philosophical schools – are said to share a common structure or set of assumptions; they are commonly called eudaimonistic ethics.[4] These theories are often opposed to modern consequentialist and deontological

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[1] A brief note on terminology: As this thesis is interested primarily in characterizing the philosophy of Sextus Empiricus, I do not make broader assertions about Pyrrhonian skepticism or ancient skepticism in general. As such, when I use 'the skeptic' and 'skepticism' or 'the Pyrrhonian' and 'Pyrrhonism' and other such cognates throughout this work, I intend to refer specifically to the Sextan variety of Pyrrhonian skepticism. I use these terms as short-hand in order to improve style and readability. Some scholars also distinguish between different periods in Sextus's own thought. For example, Annas and Barnes claim that the ethical portion of the work *Adversus Mathematicus* (*M*) "obtrudes relativism into an otherwise coherently sceptical text" and should be read as "a temporary aberration on Sextus' part" (Annas and Barnes 1985, 164). Elsewhere Annas argues that in *M*, Sextus confuses moral absolutism with moral objectivism (Annas 1986, 9). More explicitly, Bett claims that Sextus should be read diachronically with the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH*) as a later development. This developmental reading is meant in part to explain the differences between *M* and *PH* (Bett 2000, 5,6, 211-213). For an alternative interpretation to the developmental reading, see Hankinson (1997), 12-14. I do not mean to take a stand on this aspect of Sextan scholarship, and I do not think it relevant to my thesis since my argument shows that Sextus was not a eudaimonist whether one takes a diachronic reading or not.

[2] Annas 1993, 207-213, 244-248, 351-363. See also, Brennan (1999), 80,1.

[3] Burnyeat 1998a, 29,30. In a footnote, Burnyeat also says that "the claim that sceptic *ataraxia* alone is *eudaimonia* is argued at length in *M* XI 110-167." Of course, equating *ataraxia* and *eudaimonia* does not commit Burnyeat to the claim that Sextus was a eudaimonist. But I will argue that Sextus does not even equate them in his account of the skeptical life.

[4] When I use the term "ancient" in the context of this thesis to describe ethical theories, I mean primarily theories starting with Plato (or Socrates if he can be said to have an ethical position distinct from Plato) and including those philosophers and schools leading up to Sextus Empiricus (since I am primarily interested in discussing those who would have influenced Sextus and those against whom he is reacting). I will be focusing especially on Aristotle and

approaches to ethics.[5] As 'eudaimonistic,' these ethical theories emphasize happiness as our ultimate aim, our goal as humans. The conventional wisdom says it is rare to find an ancient thinker or school that does not share these foundations.[6]

A cursory reading of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* suggests that the skepticism of Sextus Empiricus fits into the eudaimonistic paradigm. He claims that the skeptic has a *telos*, an end, which is *ataraxia* or tranquility (*PH* I 25). As I will explain, tranquility was a common Hellenistic way to cash out the concept of *eudaimonia*. Sextus even argues that the one who suspends belief will be happy and that it is not possible to be happy if one assumes that things are good or bad by nature (*M* XI 140-167). These passages and others like them suggest that Sextus has what can be characterized as a eudaimonistic ethical theory. Thus, Pyrrhonian skepticism falls under the rubric shared by other ancient ethical theories.

But such a conclusion is too hasty. Sextus is also quite clear that having any philosophical theory at all – including an ethical theory in particular – runs contrary to the skeptical way of life. And even if we try to construct an ethical theory on his behalf, it cannot be characterized as eudaimonistic in the same way that other ancient theories have been. When Sextus is most interested in presenting a way of life, that is, in the first book of *PH*, he gives little indication how we ought to live. His primary concern is with our cognitive commitments and not with our behaviors, choices or dispositions more broadly construed. Sextus says almost nothing about virtue, and most of what he does say is not prescriptive; he typically argues that we should

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the Hellenistic schools that were in some way responding to the Platonic and Aristotelian positions. As such, I do not mean to include the Pre-socratics, nor do I mean to include later Roman thinkers like St. Augustine.

[5] See Annas (1993), 439-455. Of course, there are also many modern virtue-ethical approaches which were developed in reaction to consequentialist and deontological approaches. However, Annas opposes the typical ancient ethical approach that she characterizes to all modern approaches including the virtue-ethical theories.

[6] The Cyrenaics are sometimes cited as the sole outliers. For example, Julia Annas says that the Cyrenaics "are the only school explicitly to reject the importance of achieving an overall final end" (Annas 1993, 227). She goes on to argue that the Cyrenaics are the sole group to depart from the ancient eudaimonistic ethical framework on the basis of their claim that our end is particular pleasure and happiness is simply constituted by those pleasures. cf. *DL* II 87-88.

suspend judgment as to whether a particular character trait is good or bad.[7] These brief observations raise questions about the apparently obvious character of Sextus's ethics. If Sextus presents us with an ethical position at all, in many ways it is quite different from other ancient thinkers.

One might wonder why anyone would care whether Sextus is a eudaimonist or not. If 'eudaimonism' is simply a label for all ancient ethical theories, we need not put much stock in this thesis, one way or the other. However, if eudaimonism means something philosophically concrete, we should consider what it means and whether particular positions, like Sextus's, fit that meaning. Insofar as Sextus differs from other ancient thinkers with regard to his ethics we will better understand Sextus, but we will also better understand the character of ancient ethical philosophy, for example, that it is not as homogeneous as some scholars make it out to be. Moreover, by investigating what makes Sextus different, I hope to raise interesting philosophical issues that could contribute to modern ethical discussions. In particular, the skeptical way of life raises questions about the relationship between ethics and epistemology: How does the normative nature of rationality relate to normativity in ethics? Does the rejection of normativity in one of these domains imply the rejection of normativity in the other? And is it possible to live (ethically) in light of such rejection?

In order to establish that Sextus was no eudaimonist, I will begin by describing what makes an ethical theory eudaimonistic. As such, in the next chapter, I intend to establish what scholars of ancient philosophy generally mean when they talk about a eudaimonistic ethical theory and more particularly what one might mean when arguing that Sextus has such a theory. This section includes a discussion about how ancient ethical theories are teleological; how

[7] For arguments against courage, see *PH* III 216, 7. For arguments against piety, see *PH* III 218-226. For an interesting discussion on how the skeptic can achieve virtuous living without belief, see Thorsrud (2003), 230-5 and Thorsrud (forthcoming), ch. 9.

ataraxia fits as a specification of *eudaimonia*; and how this relates to a particular conception of nature, especially human nature. The goal of this chapter is to establish the criteria by which to judge whether an ethical philosophy is eudaimonistic.

The third chapter is a close reading of Sextus Empiricus, focusing on those passages that are relevant to the thesis, especially *PH* I 25-30, entitled "What is the *telos* of Skepticism." I also consider other passages in which Sextus talks about his goal(s) (e.g. *PH* I 3), or about *ataraxia* (e.g. *PH* I 12) or about the nature of good and evil (e.g. *PH* III 168-238). The purpose of this chapter is to describe Sextus's claims about the skeptical life, considering the arguments and interpretation for how Sextus meets the eudaimonistic criteria.

My consideration of the skeptical life will lead to a series of arguments showing that Pyrrhonian skeptics do not fit into the typical ancient ethical framework. The fourth chapter argues that the skeptical way of life fails to meet the criteria in at least four ways. First, the end of the Pyrrhonian skeptic is not directed at a goal in the way that a eudaimonistic theory requires. Second, for the skeptics, *ataraxia* is neither identical with nor constitutive of happiness as *eudaimonia* is typically understood. Third, the skeptic's view of the end (tranquility) is not motivated by an understanding of human nature, what it is to be human. And finally, the skeptic cannot maintain her skepticism while proposing a theory of the good human life. For all of these reasons, I argue that skeptical ethics are not eudaimonistic.

I will complete the thesis by suggesting why Sextus's ethical position – if he can be said to have one at all – has the character that it does; ultimately, the skeptical way of life depends upon the skeptic's epistemological strategy. In particular, through the skeptical *dunamis* of opposing argument to argument and appearance to argument and appearance to appearance, the skeptic implicitly raises questions about the rational norms that ground the epistemological

enterprise and as a result she implicitly undermines any philosophical basis for a eudaimonistic ethical position. Both Sextus's ethical position and his epistemological position display an implicit rejection of norms; the skeptic undermines the rules that guide the domain in question. In epistemology, the norms of reason and rational discourse guide the claims that we make regarding what we know or do not know. Likewise, norms regarding what is good or bad guide our ethical theories. In both realms, insofar as the repeated rejection of norms places the domain as a whole in question, Sextus's approach can be interpreted as a critical rejection of normativity. Yet this rejection is not one that is explicit; Sextus cannot consistently claim he rejects all ethical or epistemological norms since such a claim would be based upon another norm. Rather, he *implicitly* rejects these norms by repeatedly attacking each norm individually. Sextus claims that this approach frees him from the shackles of philosophical bondage; it frees him – ethically - to live a moderate and tranquil life (one that in certain respects does not question the norms of his society at all insofar as he continues to live an ordinary life).

Chapter 2 – What Makes Ethics Eudaimonistic

I take it that an ancient eudaimonistic ethical theory has at least four distinctive aspects. First, it must be teleological, meaning that our life is to be directed toward some (ultimate) end. Second, it specifies that *happiness* is that ultimate end, where happiness is understood as a quality of one's entire life.[8] Third, such a theory conceives of the end as *natural* in the sense that it comes from a consideration of what it is to be human. Our human nature determines what our end is, what happiness is for us. Finally, these theories are just that – theories – which implies that they make claims about 'the way things are' in some systematic sense. These four criteria are not exhaustive, but they are necessary for an ancient theory to be considered properly eudaimonistic.

I do not wish to suggest that I capture the essential core of "typical" ancient ethical theories with these four criteria. Ancient eduaimonistic ethical theories include many other important aspects; for example, virtue plays a central role in many such theories.[9] However, the criteria that I have presented here are significant in any discussion of the character of Pyrrhonian ethics; and I present them as a plausible account of *some* of the commonly shared characteristics of ancient ethics. Moreover, I cannot argue for each characteristic in this limited space, beyond citing a few examples. However, I do not believe that my thesis depends on establishing them since these characteristics are also mentioned and cited by other scholars in the field.

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[8] It might seem strange to include 'happiness' in a list that specifies criteria for being a 'eudaimonistic' theory. The second criterion seems sufficient to make a theory eudaimonistic. However, it is not the case that any theory that claims that people want to be happy is eudaimonistic; more is required. cf. *EN* 1095a15-30. At the same time, the point is well taken that the name of the second criterion could be confused with the thing for which it is a criterion. Unfortunately, 'eudaimonistic' is the commonly accepted name for the type of theory I have in mind and it is much less verbose than the 'typical ancient ethical theory' turn of phrase. In order to keep the second criterion distinct, I will refer to it using the term 'happiness' in order to distinguish it from 'eudaimonistic' which refers to the theory as a whole.

[9] See Annas (1993), ch. 2.

I. The Teleological Criterion

Consider the teleological criterion first. Aristotle starts his ethics with the end: "The good has been rightly defined as 'that at which all things aim'" (*EN* 1094a 2,3).[10] Aristotle goes on to claim that each art and science has a particular end proper to it with some ends pursued for the sake of others. This raises the possibility of an ultimate end which is pursued for its own sake and for which all other ends are pursued. The ultimate end is the "supreme good" (*EN* 1094a 23). On this view, ethics is concerned with more than simply particular ends. What matters is our ultimate end; the aim – the *telos* – of our entire life is something toward which our life is or should be headed (*EN* 1094a 19).

While Aristotle was the first to formulate a systematic account of ethics in such clear teleological terms, he was by no means the first to think about living life guided by an ultimate end. In Plato's *Gorgias*, this same theme is developed as Socrates says, "…for Polus and I both thought, if you recall, that we should surely do all things for the sake of what's good….So we should do the other things, including pleasant things, for the sake of good things, and not good things for the sake of pleasant things" (499e8, 500a3,4).[11] In arguing against Calliclean hedonism, Socrates appeals to an ultimate end – the good – for the sake of which we do everything else. We do not try to get pleasure for pleasure's sake, but because we believe it to be good, that is, good for us. The good, or at least the apparent good, structures how we live, what we do, the types of projects that we pursue.[12]

[10] I will use the Thomson and Tredennick translation of the *The Nicomachean Ethics* (2004).
[11] All citations to Plato are from Cooper (1997).
[12] In the *Republic*, the good takes a significantly more metaphysical role, being characterized not only as the *telos*, but also as the first principle (*archê*) of everything we know. As Socrates says, "Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it, although the good is not being, but superior to it in rank and power" (509b4,5).

In Hellenistic philosophy, the teleological structure of ethics is retained. Torquatus – the Epicurean spokesman in *De Finibus* – says, "We are investigating, then, what is the final and ultimate good. This, in the opinion of every philosopher, is such that everything else is a means to it, while it is not itself a means to anything" (*DF* I 29).[13] In Greek, the final end is commonly defined as 'the ultimate object of desire', *to eschaton ton orekton*.[14] Thus, in the Hellenistic period (and following), ethical philosophy provides an account of the 'ultimate' aim that structures or organizes all of our motivations and directs them toward that same final end.[15]

Ancient ethical theories are teleological insofar as they claim that our lives are or should be directed toward an ultimate end; and they provide an account about what our ultimate good is. As ultimate, the end structures and organizes one's entire life. By providing an account of what the ultimate end of human life is, these theories indicate how we ought to live our lives; in other words, they have normative force.

One might object that an ethical theory is properly called "teleological" if it subscribes to an end, even if that end is not characterized as "ultimate" in the way that Aristotle describes. As I mentioned, the Cyrenaics are a clear example of this. In light of this objection to my characterization of the teleological nature of ancient ethics, when I discuss the teleological

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[13] I will use the Woolf translation of *On Moral Ends* (2001).

[14] Annas cites examples of this definition in Arius 76 21-4, Sextus *PH* 1 25, Arius 131.4 and Alexander *de An* II 150.20-21, 162.34. She goes on to describes 'the ultimate object of desire' like this: "This characterization of the end does not imply that there is any special kind of motivation that we have to our ends; rather, it implies that our motivations, of all kinds, are so structured that there is something 'ultimate' which forms them into an organized whole by being the end towards which they all tend. If our final end is in fact virtue, then virtue is our ultimate object of desire. This does not reduce virtuous motivation to wanting; rather it brings under the umbrella of desire the way we are motivated by the reasons of virtue" (Annas 1993, 35).

[15] The near consensus among ancients regarding this understanding of our end makes the Cyrenaics so striking when they claim that the *telos* is not a state (*katastēmatikos*) toward which we aim, but consists in particular pleasures; and that only particular pleasure is desirable for its own sake (*DL* II 87,8). It is for this reason that they do not fit with the typical notion of ancient ethics. Annas remarks that "the Cyrenaics alone among ancient schools rejected the importance of one's life as a whole for one's ethical perspective. What matters is the pleasure one can experience and this is one's end. The Cyrenaics seem to have made no serious attempt to argue that this kind of *telos* could meet the conditions of being complete and self-sufficient…" (Annas 1993, 230). cf. *EN* 1097b7-21. See also O'Keefe (2002), 404.

criterion in relation to Sextus, I will consider both questions: Does he claim that the skeptics have an ultimate end? If not, does the skeptic have an end such that her way of life can be considered teleological, even if it is not the ultimate means whereby she structures her life?

II. The Happiness Criterion

Ancient ethical theories are called eudaimonistic precisely because they take the ultimate object of desire to be happiness (*eudaimonia*). The idea that happiness is our end, our supreme good, can again be seen in Plato. In the *Symposium*, Socrates recounts a discussion with the priestess Diotima in which she explains to Socrates "the art of love" (201d5). Diotima argues that love is desire for the beautiful; it is a longing to possess what is good. "That's what makes happy people happy, isn't it—possessing good things. There's no need to ask further, 'What's the point of wanting happiness?' The answer you gave [i.e. 'he'll have happiness'] seems final" (205a). Thus, if I ask why you want to possess good things, the answer follows – to be happy. But if I ask you why you want to be happy, there is no further reason to be given. Happiness, *eudaimonia*, is something final; it is desired for its own sake. Thus, Plato formulates an account of the finality of *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle claims that everyone agrees that happiness is the final end, but that they all disagree about its constituents (*EN* 1095a 17-22). Even admitting that happiness denotes "living well or doing well" (*to d'eu zên kai to eu prattein*) (*EN* 1095a 20), he says that calling happiness "our supreme good" seems a platitude (*EN* 1097b 22,3).[16] In order to find what is distinctive

[16] "In ancient ethics, happiness is introduced via a broad notion of a life's going well, and as a thin specification of our final end. In fact, questions about our final end are sometimes not carefully distinguished from questions of happiness since it is taken for granted that happiness is just what we all think that our final end is" (Annas 1993, 44). One might wonder in light of this quote why distinguish between the criterion of teleology versus the criterion of happiness in terms of the character of ancient ethical theories? I grant that there is a sense that these two criteria can

about happiness, Aristotle appeals to our *ergon* (function) because the end of a substance is determined by its proper function (*EN* 1097b24–1098a19).[17] The so-called function argument leads Aristotle to his definition of human happiness: "The conclusion is that the good for man is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, or if there are more kinds of virtue than one, in accordance with the best and most perfect kind" (*EN* 1098a 16-18). Moreover, happiness is the quality of the goodness of one's life as a whole. As Aristotle says, "One swallow does not make a summer; neither does one day. Similarly neither can one day, or a brief space of time, make a man blessed (*makarios*) and happy (*eudaimonia*)" (*EN* 1098a 20,1). One can be happy only by engaging in virtuous activity over "a complete life" (*EN* 1098a19).[18]

Aristotle spends the rest of the *Nicomachean Ethics* fleshing out his understanding of happiness: what does it mean for a soul to live the life of complete excellence? This is precisely where controversy arises between the different ancient schools with each one presenting a competing account of *eudaimonia*. According to Irwin, the Stoics agree with the formal conditions of happiness as presented in *EN* I vii, but they disagree as to whether external goods are necessary to achieve these conditions.[19] The Stoics thought that virtue was the sole intrinsic good and therefore the only constituent of happiness. As Cicero's Stoic spokesman Cato says,

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be legitimately conflated, as Annas suggests. However, I think that it useful to distinguish them for the purposes of understanding Sextan ethics, as shall become clear in the discussion that follows.

[17] See Nagel (1995), 116,7. I agree with Nagel that there are some problems with Aristotle's *ergon* argument. In addition to the fact that our rationality does not seem to be unique (which Nagel points out), it seems fallacious to argue from one particular feature (especially one whose content is as vague as 'the practical life of the rational part') to a proper function. However, one can make sense of the *ergon* argument by appealing to Aristotle's metaphysics and his teleological / normative view of nature. cf. *Phys*. 192b9–194b15, *PA* 639a1-642b1, 644b21-646a5.

[18] Irwin argues that "a complete life" does not mean that happiness can be evaluated only over an entire life, but it can also be evaluated over complete periods in the course of an adult human life: "Happiness is complete, and therefore requires a complete range of activities realizing human capacities. A complete time is a time long enough for such a complete range; and since the projects of a virtuous friend or of a magnificent and magnanimous person take some time to realize, a complete time will not be a short time" (Irwin 1999, 12,3). I think that Aristotle does show interest in evaluating a life as a whole (e.g. Priam). He does not say that Priam was happy until the Greeks arrived. But it does not conflict with Aristotle to make premature evaluation about someone's life, that is to say that things have gone well or poorly for her up to now.

[19] Irwin lists Aristotle's formal conditions of happiness:

> Herein lies that good, namely moral action and morality itself, at which everything else ought to be directed. Though it is a later development, it is none the less the only thing to be sought in virtue of its own power and worth, whereas none of the primary objects of nature is to be sought on its own account. (*DF* III 21)[20]

Thus, the happy life simply is the virtuous life for the Stoics; one's happiness cannot be affected by external goods in the way that it can in the Aristotelian system.[21]

Even Epicurus, whose hedonistic ethic differs significantly from the Stoics and the Peripatetics in many ways, still sees philosophy as revealing the truth that leads to a happy and tranquil life. Writing to Menoeceus, Epicurus recommends practicing "the things which produce happiness" (*DL* X 122).[22] As a hedonist, Epicurus advocates a conception of happiness that is based in pleasure; but his view of pleasure is unique as he considers lack of pain (*aponia*) to be a higher form pleasure than active titillation.[23] More precisely, Epicurus conceives of the end as the combination of *aponia* and *ataraxia*:

> The unwavering contemplation of these [necessary and natural desires] enables one to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance, since this is the goal of a blessed life. For we do everything for the sake of being neither in pain nor in terror. (*Letter to Menoeceus*, *DL* X 128)

Happiness for Epicurus involves avoiding bodily pain, but even more so, it involves eliminating psychic disturbances. Foremost among these is the fear of death. Philosophy helps us achieve mental tranquility by showing us that death is annihilation and therefore nothing to be feared (*DL*

"1. The highest good is the ultimate end, 'for the sake of which the other things are done' (1097 a15-14).
2. Since it is the ultimate end (*telos*) it must be complete (*teleion*) (1097 a24-b4).
3. Since it is complete, it must be self-sufficient (1097 b6-16).
4. Since it is self-sufficient, it must be incapable of increase by the addition of any other good (1097 b16-20)" (Irwin 1986, 206).

[20] Eventually, Cato's argument leads him to conclude that "if a happy life is marked out by its morality, only what is moral should be regarded as good" *DF* III 28. cf. *TD* V 40 and *DL* VII 89.

[21] It is commonly claimed that Aristotle includes the having of external goods as constitutive of happiness. However, Eric Brown has argued that Aristotle defines human good strictly as virtuous activity in EN I vii., and that he does not depart from that definition (all appearances to the contrary) in *EN* I 8-12. (This makes the Stoics' view much closer to Aristotle's than one might think). On Brown's view, one can claim that external goods are constitutive of happiness for Aristotle only insofar as they are necessary conditions for virtuous activity (Brown 2005).

[22] This translation is from Inwood and Gerson (1997).

[23] Compare this to the hedonistic principles of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*. Callicles advocates allowing your appetites and desires to grow as large as possible in order to facilitate a greater amount of satisfaction. This is illustrated by the image of the leaky jar; the best life involves maximizing one's flow (488b-494b).

X 124, cf. *KD* 11 and 12). By understanding this and other truths about the natural world, Epicurus thinks we will become happy and blessed.

The Cyrenaics disagree with the Epicureans that freedom from pain is itself pleasurable. As Diogenes reports, the Cyrenaics

> hold the removal of the feeling of pain is not pleasure as Epicurus said it was, and that absence of pleasure is not pain. For both are kinetic, while neither absence of pain nor absence of pleasure is a motion, since absence of pain is like the condition (*katastasis*) of somebody who is asleep. (*DL* II 89)

The Cyrenaics reject the Epicurean view of happiness because not being in pain is compatible with being asleep or being in a coma. Clearly, we would not call someone in a perpetual coma a happy human being. Therefore, *aponia* and *ataraxia* cannot be the primary constituents of happiness.[24] What are therefore choiceworthy are particular pleasures. As I have already mentioned, the Cyrenaics present an alternate form of hedonism: happiness is not the end itself, but only the "state consisting of a number of particular pleasures…," a sort of sum of particular pleasures each of which is our end (*DL* II 87).[25]

Thus, with the exception of the Cyrenaics, ancient ethical theories generally provide an account of happiness as our ultimate human aim. Each philosophical school specifies what it considers to be constitutive of the good human life, and it is this aim that directs the normative force resulting from the teleological nature of these theories. An account of the content of *eudaimonia* as the ultimate end is the second criterion for a eudaimonistic ethical theory.

[24] Aristotle offers a similar objection to the idea that virtue can be the sole constituent of the happy life. Insofar as being virtuous is compatible with being asleep, virtue cannot be all that there is to happiness. Therefore, happiness must involve some activity (EN 1095b30–1096a3).

[25] As O'Keefe notes, "Happiness [for the Cyrenaics] has no value above and beyond the value of the bits and pieces of pleasure that make it up. Also, there is no 'structure' to happiness" (O'Keefe 2002, 404). See also, Annas (1993), 231.

III. The Natural Criterion

The view that happiness is our end is the result of a particular conception of human nature. Ancient theories have diverse ideas about how nature relates to happiness and the good life. What is common among them is the appeal to nature, especially human nature, to reveal our proper end. Ancient ethics are naturalistic in the sense that our end is the fulfillment of our nature.[26]

Aristotle views nature as inherently normative. He equates nature (*phusis*) with developmental perfection or completion (*telos*).

> Again, that for the sake of which, or the end, belongs to the same department of knowledge as the means. But the nature is the end or that for the sake of which. For if a thing undergoes a continuous change toward some end, that last stage is actually that for the sake of which. (*Phys*. 194a 28-31)[27]

Nature is the end in the sense that an animal's nature is that toward which it develops, its goal or perfection. An animal has a natural developmental goal to become a mature member of its species and then to act in way that well expresses its essence. Thus, Aristotle views substance – individual beings and their species – as a fundamental category of which things are said.[28] The animal is composed of smaller analyzable parts, but the individual parts do not tell the scientist about the animal; discovering what is peculiar about the animal requires a view of the whole. Aristotle says that the "nature of the animal is a first principle (*archê*)" (*PA* 642a 18) and that "the relations between these two orders of parts [i.e. homogeneous and heterogeneous] are determined by a final cause" (*PA* 646b 27,8). The nature of the animal tends toward some end; thus it is teleological and hence normative.

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[26] "The ancient appeal to nature is an appeal to what *human* nature is. We should make virtue the most important thing in our lives, according to the Stoics, because that is what accords with human nature. We should cultivate the virtues only because they enable us to achieve true pleasure, according to the Epicureans, because *that* is in accordance with human nature" (Annas 1993, 136).
[27] All citations of Aristotle apart from *EN* are taken from Barnes (1984).
[28] "All the other things are either said of the primary substances as subjects or in them as subjects" (*Cat.* 2a 35).

As I have already said, Aristotle's teleological view of nature motivates him to ask about the human function (*ergon*) in the context of developing an account of human flourishing. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, he finds the *ergon* in "a practical life of the rational part" of human beings (*EN* 1098a3). Using this as his basis, he argues for happiness as an activity of the soul expressing complete virtue. Human happiness is an expression of our proper function, what it is to be a good human being. Thus, Aristotle's ethics are naturalistic since his normative conception of nature leads him to an account of human flourishing.

The Stoics also thought "that living in accordance with nature" was constitutive of the end.[29] Diogenes reports that Zeno of Citium "in his book *On the nature of man* was the first to say that living in agreement with nature is the end, which is living in accordance with virtue" (*DL* VII 87, *LS* 63C).[30] Thus, living in agreement with nature is identified with living virtuously.[31] As Striker explains, "To establish the natural end of action for man will consist in finding out what nature intended man to aim at, given the way she made him….Whatever he may think he wants, the only thing that will in fact satisfy him must be what nature has set as a goal for him."[32]

Epicurean ethical philosophy differs from both Stoic and Aristotelian conceptions insofar as nature is neither teleological nor normative. For Epicurus, nature is simply matter and void, particles colliding with each other.[33] In one sense, nature is not directed on the basis of a rational principle.[34] In another sense, even for Epicurus, nature tells us what it is to live a happy human

[29] Stobaeus 2.77,16-27 (*SVF* 3.16), *LS* 63A.
[30] cf. Stobaeus 2.75, 11-76, 8.
[31] As Cato says, "It is of the essence of virtue that one makes choices among the things that are in accordance with nature" (*DF* III 12).
[32] Striker 1996b, 286
[33] *DL* X 39-44.
[34] "Moreover, when it comes to meteorological phenomena, one must believe that movements, turnings, eclipses, risings, settings, and related phenomena occur without any [god] helping out and ordaining or being about to ordain [things] and at the same time having complete blessedness and indestructibility." (*DL* X 76)

life insofar as we can investigate what, as a matter of fact, does make us happy.[35] By studying what is, we eliminate our fear of death and other potential terrors.[36] Moreover, nature tells us what is good for humans just as a matter of fact. We can see that toward which we are naturally predisposed by observing infants who pursue pleasure and shun pain.[37] Thus, the Epicurean account of happiness is also derived from a view of nature. We must study nature to determine what is good for us so that we can achieve it.[38]

Someone might object that this criterion excludes Plato from being a eudaimonist because Plato does not have a theory of nature.[39] But in the *Gorgias*, Plato has Socrates claim that the true political craft will involve knowledge of the nature of "whatever things it applies by which it applies them" and that the craftsman will be able to state the cause of each thing (465a3,4). Socrates explains that the crafts of justice and legislation are meant to have such knowledge about the good of the soul (464b-466a). Thus, Plato views ethics as depending on knowledge of our human nature since such knowledge is required to know how to achieve our end. In light of this requirement for ethical philosophy, Plato's *Republic* offers an example of a

[35] "Moreover, one must believe that it is the job of physics to work out precisely the cause of the most important things, and that blessedness lies in this part of meteorological knowledge and in knowing what the natures are which are observed in these meteorological phenomena, and all matters related to precision on this topic." (*DL* X 78, cf. *KD* 12, 13).
[36] As Torquatus says, "It is through physics that the meaning of terms, the nature of speech, and the rules of inference and contradiction can be understood. By knowing the nature of all things we are freed from superstition and liberated from the fear of death" (*DF* I 63).
[37] *DF* I 30.
[38] The list of Hellenistic philosophers who appeal to nature could go on and on. Another good example is Cicero's Antiochean spokesman Piso who explains the Carneadean *divisio* in light of the aim of practical reason which coincides with our nature: "It is almost universally agreed that what practical reason is concerned with and wants to attain must be something that is well suited and adapted to our nature, something that is attractive in itself and capable of arousing our desire" (*DF* V 17). After presenting the *divisio*, Piso goes on to discuss (at length) human nature and how virtue and the "primary things in accordance with nature" relate to our end (*DF* V 24-60)
[39] Thanks to Emily Austin and Eric Brown for offering this objection (independently of each other).

theory that lays out the structure of the soul and relates it to the good life. Thus, Plato does meet this criterion.[40]

The third criterion is that a eudaimonistic ethical theory considers human nature as the place to look to determine our end, how human life is or may be fulfilled. As Annas argues, although ancient philosophers disagree about "what it is that human nature requires for its fulfillment, they agree that it is human nature that we should look to if we are to determine the proper place of virtue in our lives."[41] When looking at the Pyrrhonian way of life, I will consider the question both from a normative conception of nature and from the more descriptive approach that is characteristic of the Epicurean view.

IV. The Theoretical Criterion

It should be clear by now that eudaimonistic ethics is a theory about human nature and human life. To be eudaimonistic, an ethical account must make claims about what it is to be human and this includes what the ultimate goal or aim of a good human life is. Annas talks about this in terms of "making sense of my life as a whole."[42] Because it is an appeal to some underlying nature, it is dogmatic: suggesting that human nature has a particular character entails making a claim about the way things are, not merely how they appear. Moreover, constructing a

[40] One might further object that even though this criterion admits Plato, it excludes Socrates as a eudaimonist. This objection assumes that one can distinguish between Socrates's and Plato's views as presented in Plato's dialogues and espoused by Plato's character Socrates. I find this interpretative approach highly suspect. All the same, the *Gorgias* is considered a (late) Socratic dialogue and as I indicate above, the Socrates of the *Gorgias* could be said to have a eudaimonistic view (even though he does not spell out a full-fledged theory of the soul in that particular dialogue himself, he is at least aware that such a theory is needed as the basis for the political craft). Other Socratic dialogues (e.g. the *Apology*) do not meet this criterion and therefore could not be characterized as eudaimonistic, but I do not think that is a problem for my interpretation because Socrates's failure to meet this criterion is primarily an issue of silence and not an issue of his presenting a contrary view. In other words, if the Socrates of the *Apology* is not a eudaimonist, he is also not a non-eudaimonist either.

[41] Annas 1993, 136. She points out that the ways that ancient philosophers appeal to nature varies: Sometimes it is an inescapable aspect of ourselves, sometimes it is understood in terms of our potentialities, sometimes it includes a strong sense of normativity.

[42] Annas 1993, ch. 1.

theory implies being systematic, meaning that one must organize related concepts and knowledge in a comprehensive manner. This often involves tying one's theory to facts or theories in other domains. The motivation for such a procedure is to explain and predict events of a particular kind. A eudaimonistic theory will provide an explanation about which features of human life are consistent with our human nature and which are foreign. For example, Epicurean doctrine indicates which desires are "natural and necessary," which are "natural but not necessary," and which are vain and empty.[43] Moreover, a eudaimonistic theory will be predictive insofar as it tells us how to achieve happiness. Such a theory will be a good one if it is complete; that is, if it can properly explain all of the features of human life in terms of their being consonant with or alien to our nature and how they relate to our end.[44]

One might object that this criterion unfairly stacks the deck against the Pyrrhonist's having a eudaimonistic ethic since Sextus eschews any appeal to what is unclear. Because this criterion seems to disqualify immediately Sextus, one might argue that I am begging the question as to Sextus's being a eudaimonist. However, I think that it is important to include this criterion for two reasons. The first is that it is not clear that Sextus cannot meet this criterion. There are at least two ways which I shall consider that Sextus could be said to hold a theory: First, one might take a Fredean approach whereby the skeptic is allowed beliefs about what is good for humans even while these beliefs are not organized scientifically in way that is unapparent. Second, one might argue that the skeptic has an implicit working theory about the human good even if her skeptical *dunamis* inhibits her from formally developing it.

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[43] *KD* 29. cf. *DF* I 45.

[44] In addition, theories often have universalizing tendencies. For example, a theory about human nature will apply to all humans insofar as all humans share the same nature. However, it is possible to construct an ethical theory that is limited in scope, such that it does not apply to all humans, yet is still systematic. Thus, this universalizing tendency is not a character of all theories. For example, one might argue that since Plato and Aristotle only meant to address themselves to the elite, their ethics is not meant to be universal (in spite of e.g. Aristotle's arguments that ground our good in human nature).

In addition, I think it important to include this criterion because it merits discussion. If Sextus is the only eudaimonist who fails to meet this criterion, we must discuss how this difference from other eudaimonists does not disqualify him from being part of the group. In other words, since this thesis is meant to be a substantive discussion of how Sextus is different from other so-called typical ancient ethical theories, this criterion should be included.

These four criteria broadly describe the character of typical ancient ethical theories. They are teleological theories directed toward ultimate happiness based on an understanding of human nature. In order to determine whether an ethical theory is eudaimonistic, it should meet these criteria. It should be teleological; it should claim that human life has an ultimate goal or object of desire. This end must be happiness, where happiness is given content as an account of human flourishing considered over one's entire life. The understanding of the good human life must be derived from knowledge of nature, where nature is viewed either in a normative sense as the end toward which we as humans ought to be directed, or in a more descriptive sense as the basis upon which we actually achieve happiness. Finally, as a theory, it should account for the way things are and relate them to the way they appear to be. It should have explanatory and predictive power in helping us to understand and achieve happiness. With this rough definition in hand, I hope to evaluate whether Sextus's philosophy meets the criteria for a eudaimonistic ethical theory.[45]

[45] If the reader remains skeptical about the importance of these criteria for establishing the character of an ethical theory, then the rest of the thesis can be read as an *ad hominem* argument. That is, insofar as some scholars do accept these as characteristics of ancient ethical theories, Sextus does not fit into *their* account of the structure of such thought. In that case, my conclusion would in no way imply anything about other ancient schools and their views on ethics.

Chapter 3 – The Skeptical Life

Is Sextus a eudaimonist? Now that we have an account of what it means for an ancient ethical theory to be eudaimonistic, we can ask whether Sextus meets those conditions. In this chapter, I will present the passages that are used to argue for the thesis that Sextus is a eudaimonist. This will lead to a discussion of the skeptical way of life in which I point out difficulties that arise from that thesis. If this chapter is successful, then it will raise questions about the thesis that Sextus is a eudaimonist. This will lay the foundation for my argument in the last two chapters that he is not.

I. The Argument for Sextus as a Eudaimonist

If Sextus is a eudaimonist, he must have an ethical theory that is teleological insofar as it directs us toward the ultimate good – happiness – which must be defined in terms of what it is to be human. Sextus tells us exactly what the end of skepticism is. In the section entitled "What is the aim (*telos*) of Scepticism?", he says that, "Up to now we say the aim of the Sceptic is tranquility (*ataraxia*) in matters of opinion and moderation of feeling (*metriopathêia*) in matters forced upon us."[46] Sextus says that the skeptic has a *telos*, and he clearly knows what it means to say this because he defines *telos* in a common way: "Now an aim is that for the sake of which everything is done or considered, while it is not itself done or considered for the sake of anything else. Or: an aim is the final object of desire" (*PH* I 25). According to Sextus, the aim or the end of the skeptic depends upon which matter is under discussion. The skeptic avoids belief – at least concerning what is dogmatic and non-evident – for the sake of *ataraxia*, and so with regard to

[46] "*phamen de achri nun telos einai tou skeptikou tēn en tois kata doxan ataraxian kai en tois katēnagkasmenois metriopathêian*" (*PH* I 25).

matters of opinion, she aims for tranquility.[47] But she also tries for moderation with regard to things that are not (entirely) under her control.

There are two arguments that suggest Sextus has *eudaimonia* in mind when he offers *ataraxia* and *metriopathêia* as the ends of the skeptical life. The first is an appeal to the Hellenistic sources: Sextus's use of teleology and especially *ataraxia* (which commonly appears in Hellenistic accounts of the happy life) means that Sextus has happiness in mind when he talks about the end as tranquility.[48] Since *ataraxia* is constitutive of *eudaimonia* in other ancient ethical theories, then it must be in Sextus too. The second argument appeals to Sextus's larger work, *Adversus Mathematicos*, where he argues more extensively that one who holds beliefs will be distressed while the skeptic who suspends belief will be tranquil and therefore happy as far as she can.[49] Sextus does not deny that the skeptic will be faced with troubles, but by suspending belief she will escape avoidable distress; and in this way, she becomes as happy as possible. Thus, although Sextus does not explicitly say in *PH* I 25-30 that he is giving an account of human flourishing, his formulation of the end of skepticism fits such an interpretation, and other passages corroborate it.

As far as these arguments go, Sextus has a view of the *telos* that is tied to happiness and has a particular content – tranquility and moderation of feeling – but where does he derive that end? At this point, the argument becomes problematic. Sextus takes significant pains to

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[47] Sextus earlier defines *ataraxia* as "freedom from disturbance (*aochlēsia*) or calmness (*galēnotēs)* of soul" (*PH* I 10).

[48] Tranquility appears in both Epicurean and Stoic conceptions of the end. Epicurus claims, "For the steady observation of these things makes it possible to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the soul's freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*), since this is the end (*telos*) belonging to the blessed life" (*Letter to Menoeceus* 127, *LS* 21B). And Seneca claims that the happy life is "peacefulness and constant tranquility (*tranquillitas*)" (*Letters* 92.3, *LS* 63F).

[49] "So that in respect of things held, as a matter of belief, to be good and bad, and in respect of the desires and avoidances thereof, [the skeptic] is perfectly happy (*eudaimon*), while in respect of the sensible and irrational affections he preserves a due mean" (*M* XI 147,8. cf. *M* XI 141). I use the Bury (1936) translation of *Adversus Mathematicos*.

emphasize that the skeptic does not make claims about the reality of the things he talks about: "For if you hold beliefs, then you posit as real the things you are said to hold beliefs about; but Sceptics posit these phrases not as necessarily being real" (*PH* I 14).[50] Clearly, Sextus cannot have a *theory* about happiness in the sense that he posits an underlying nature that we all share; thus, he cannot have a theory of *human nature* that grounds a eudaimonstic ethic. But we can interpret Sextus, drawing from his statements their implications, and use that to offer an explanation for the basis of happiness that is implied by his claims about our end. In so doing, I hope to offer a sketch of skeptical psychology that might provide an explanation of the way that the skeptical end fulfills our ultimate good.

II. The Foundations of Skeptical Psychology

Sextus gives us a view into skeptical psychology when he explains why the skeptic wants to avoid belief. Part of the motivation for suspension of judgment is derived from a realization about the character of having opinions; "for those who hold the opinion that things are good or bad by nature (*phusis)* are perpetually troubled (*tarassetai dia pantos*)" (*PH* I 27). Someone who has opinions about what is *by nature* good or evil is troubled when he finds himself lacking the good or failing to avoid the evil. Even if he manages to gain what is good, he worries about being able to keep it. Or if he manages to avoid the evil, he will never stop striving to stay away from it. Such beliefs are troubling; believing that something is good or bad by nature makes worry unavoidable. But the skeptics "who make no determination about what is good and bad by

[50] "Thus, if people who hold beliefs posit as real the things they hold beliefs about, while Sceptics utter their own phrases in such a way that they are implicitly cancelled by themselves, then they cannot be said to hold beliefs in uttering them. But the main point is this: in uttering these phrases they say what is apparent to themselves and report their own feelings without holding opinions, affirming nothing about external objects" (*PH* I 15 cf. I 206-208). Moreover, Sextus argues in various places that things are neither good nor bad by nature (*phusis*) (*PH* I 145-163, III 179-196, *M* XI 42-109).

nature neither avoid nor pursue anything with intensity; and hence they are tranquil (*dioper ataraktei*)" (PH I 28). This explains the connection between *epochê* and *ataraxia*: Having evaluative beliefs inevitably causes worry and psychological distress; therefore, in order to alleviate distress, one should suspend such beliefs. Psychological distress is caused by dogmatizing (because of the nature of belief and how that relates to our concerns) and the *only* way to alleviate that distress is by purging oneself of such beliefs. Thus, Sextus's explanation for the causal connection between *epochê* and *ataraxia* stands as an implicit theory about how one can achieve *ataraxia*; it amounts to having a psychological theory about how humans work.[51]

But Sextus does not claim that our entire psychological world can be reduced to evaluative beliefs. Skeptical psychology is utterly opposed to the Stoic view that ties even the "passions" to a cognitive function.[52] On the contrary, Sextus thinks that we have many things forced upon us. He distinguishes between two kinds of belief (*dogma*); the skeptic avoids belief in the sense of assenting "to some unclear objection of investigation in the sciences" (*PH* I 13), which he makes clear is something under our control. Sextus opposes this sense of belief to "acquiescing in something; for Sceptics assent to the feelings (*pathos*) forced upon them by appearances (*phantasia*) – for example, they would not say, when heated or chilled, 'I think I am not heated (or: chilled)'" (*PH* I 13, cf. *PH* I 193, 230, II 10). Later, he says that "we do not overturn anything which leads us, without our willing it, to assert in accordance with a passive appearance – and these things are precisely what is apparent" (*PH* I 19, cf. *PH* I 22).[53] Thus, Sextus suggests that the phenomenal appears to us in such a way that we are forced to assent to such feelings. Insofar as he includes sense impressions in the appearances, his point is clear.

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[51] Thanks to Eric Brown for suggesting this argumentative approach.
[52] See Plutarch, *On moral virtue* 446F or Galen, *On Hippocrates' and Plato's doctrines* 5.6.37. cf. *LS* 65.
[53] "*ta gar kata phantasian pathêtikên aboulêtōs hêmas agonta eis sugkatathesin ouk anatrepomen, hōs kai emprosthen elegomen; tauta de esti ta phainomena"* (*PH* I 19).

After all, I do not have a choice regarding the fact that it looks like the ground outside my window is covered with a thin film of yellow pine pollen dust; I see it. But Sextus means for the appearances to include more than this. For example, the skeptic is allowed to think:

> For a Sceptic is not, I think, barred from having thoughts (*noêsis)*, if they arise from things which give him a passive impression (*pathêmatikos hupopiptontos)* and appear evidently to him (*enargeian phainomenos*) and do not at all imply the reality of what is being thought of – for we can think, as they say, not only of real things but also of unreal things. Hence someone who suspends judgment maintains his sceptical condition while investigating and thinking; for it has been made clear that he assents to any impression given by way of a passive appearance insofar as it appears to him. (*PH* II 10)

Sextus allows the skeptic not only sense impressions but also thoughts that arise from passive impressions. Moreover, we shall see that these appearances cover a wide range of phenomena – including bodily feelings, emotions, thoughts, skills and moral or ethical principles. Thus, while Sextus clearly wants to emphasize the psychological determinism of the skeptic who will assent only to that which is forced upon her, it is not clear that his account excludes a psychological compatibilism. In other words, we can talk about the skeptic being free to reason through issues and problems without contradicting Sextus's claim that the skeptic thinks only about things which are passively impressed upon her. This will become clearer, I think, as I discuss Sextus's theory of action. But the point to be made in this context is that, besides belief, Sextus considers another class of cognitive experience which is passive insofar as it is forced upon us, but is not passive insofar as it includes our ability to think, reason and investigate.[54]

It is these passive experiences that Sextus has in mind when he discusses *metriopathêia.* Sextus knows that belief is not the only unsavory thing that concerns us. He recognizes that even

[54] This raises an interesting question about how Sextus views belief relative to freedom of will. If all skeptically acceptable *dogma* is "forced upon us," then *ataraxia* would in some respect be a kind of *metriopathêia* – that is, moderation of feelings with regard to belief. And this is so because Sextus conceives of argumentation as being more about psychological persuasion than pure rational cognition. But this raises further problems insofar as it becomes unclear the sense in which belief is up to us. Of course, as a skeptic, Sextus does not have a theory of free will, so he would not hold beliefs about whether we are really responsible for our actions (beyond going along with the customs and laws of his society).

if we eliminate the troubles associated with dogmatism, we still have plenty of difficulty with which to deal. He adds that our end is not tranquility *full stop*, but tranquility regarding belief. The skeptic is tranquil insofar as particular dogmatic commitments do not stir her up, but that does not mean the skeptic will not have problems: "We do not, however, take Sceptics to be undisturbed in every way – we say that they are disturbed by things which are forced upon them; for we agree that at times they shiver and are thirsty and have other feelings of this kind" (*PH* I 29). The skeptic recognizes that nothing can be done to *eliminate* the feelings that are forced upon her. But *something* can be done about such appearances; it is with regard to these things that the she seeks "moderation of feeling." The skeptic achieves such *metriopathêia* through *epochê*.[55] Sextus claims that people who believe things are good or bad are worse off than the skeptic because they are troubled both by the situation itself as well as by the belief about its nature.[56] The skeptic moderates feelings by avoiding the beliefs about those feelings that would trouble her. As such, she is faced only with the unpleasantness of the cold hard appearances.

Thus, in the case of both *ataraxia* and *metriopathêia*, *epochê* is the key to achieving the end precisely because both psychological distress and extremes in feeling are caused by belief. Belief is the real enemy for the skeptic, but it can be eliminated. Sextus realizes that we can control some things, and other things we cannot. We achieve tranquility and moderation of feeling by suspending belief, but there are plenty of things that we cannot change; and the skeptic simply deals with those as they are impressed upon her.

[55] Thanks to Tim O'Keefe for pointing this out to me.
[56] "But in these cases [of cold or thirst] ordinary people are afflicted by two sets of circumstances: by the feelings themselves, and no less by believing that these circumstances are bad by nature. Sceptics, who shed the additional opinion that each of these things is bad in its nature, come off more moderately even in these cases" (*PH* I 30).

III. Skeptical Action Theory

In the foregoing discussion, skeptical psychology has still not provided us with a view of human nature that tells us why we should pursue *ataraxia* and *metriopathêia*. Sextus gives an account of how we can gain the skeptical end, but he does not explain how *ataraxia* and *metriopathêia* can and should be viewed as the only constituent parts of happiness. One might try to ground Sextus's view of human nature in his account of action; the picture of the skeptical psyche could be expanded to include the skeptic's criterion of action in the hope of showing why *ataraxia* is the appropriate human end.

In the section on "The standard (*kritêrion*) of Scepticism" (*PH* I 21-4), Sextus claims that the skeptic does not have a standard of truth, but does admit a criterion of action. This criterion involves "attending to what is apparent (*phainomenos*)" and living "in accordance with everyday observances (*biōtikê têrêsis*), without holding opinions (*adoxastos*)" (*PH* I 22, 3). The skeptic acts in accordance with the appearances which "depend upon passive and unwilled feelings and are not objects of investigation" (*PH* I 22), and these appearances are the criterion of action for the skeptic. Appearances provide the basis for the (four-fold) everyday observances: "guidance by nature (*phusis*), necessitation by feelings (*pathos*), handing down of laws and customs (*nomos kai ethos*), and teaching of kinds of expertise (*technê*)" (*PH* I 23). Sextus goes on to describe each of these observances. By nature's guidance, he says that we are "naturally capable of perceiving and thinking" (*PH* I 24); in this context then, nature is tied to our natural capacities. By the necessitation of feelings, we are driven to eat and drink; for Sextus, *pathos* involves our physical drives. In describing laws and customs, Sextus gives an example; the skeptic accepts that piety is good and impiety is bad.[57] And finally, the skeptic is allowed to learn a trade and act with the expertise appropriate to it (Sextus was, after all, a physician). Thus, in the criterion

[57] cf. *PH* III 2, *M* IX 49

of action, the "natural" is simply one type of appearance; specifically, that which relates to perceiving and thinking. And *phusis* excludes things that we would normally consider natural, like hunger or emotions. Sextus groups these raw physical drives under the *pathê* which are apparently different than *phusis* as far as the criterion of action is considered.[58]

At the same time, one might suggest that all aspects of the criterion of action represent those things that push the skeptic around and as such constitute his view of the natural. Presumably, *ataraxia* is simply something toward which we are pushed. It is what we, as a matter of fact, pursue insofar as it is forced upon us. On this view, skeptical psychology provides the basis for the skeptical conception of the end because a key component of the skeptical cognitive life is being forced about by the appearances. If we are forced toward *ataraxia*, *eudaimonia* depends on our achievement of that toward which we are pushed; thus the skeptical *telos* depends upon our psychology. In order to evaluate this claim, we should consider what Sextus has to say about why *ataraxia* is pursued.[59]

IV. The Skeptical Beginning and the End

The motivation for the skeptical end starts at the beginning (*archê*), the first principle. Skeptical philosophy begins when "men of talent" (*hoi megalophueis tōn anthrōpōn*) notice troubling anomalies in things (*PH* I 12, 26). These talented, great natured people began studying because they thought that by determining what was true or false about these anomalies, they would achieve *ataraxia*. They were not skeptics – call them proto-skeptics – since they believe

[58] Elsewhere, Sextus uses *phusis* to mean something more like 'the way things ought to be': He mentions the example of a dog removing a thorn in his foot as restoring what is natural. "And it is clear that things foreign to nature (*phusei allotria*) force us to proceed to remove them: even a dog will remove a thorn which has got stuck in his paw" (*PH* I 238).

[59] On this reading, the skeptical view of nature corresponds to what I described earlier as a descriptive account: The good is simply that which we naturally seek and evil is that we naturally shun. And by achieving the good and avoiding the evil we are happy. This seems to place Sextus closest to the Epicurean view of nature. Annas also argues that the skeptical view of nature is similar to the Epicurean account in important respects (Annas 1993, 212).

some things (e.g. finding the truth will bring peace) but are uncertain about others. The troubling nature of an anomaly can be eliminated by resolving it. The *archê* of skepticism is the "hope of becoming tranquil" by eliminating problems and answering puzzling questions (*PH* I 12). How does the proto-skeptic become a skeptic? As the proto-skeptic searches, she stumbles upon a dispute that she cannot decide – the arguments and appearances on each side are equally weighted – and so she suspends judgment. Sextus claims that when she suspends judgment, "tranquility in matters of opinion followed fortuitously (*tuchikōs*)" (*PH* I 26 cf. I 29). The proto-skeptic gains what she is looking for by dumb luck. She wanted tranquility and thought that it could be achieved by finding the truth. But it turns out that *ataraxia* is achieved by suspending judgment (or so it seems to her). At this point the proto-skeptic has simply reached *epochê* on one thing and not generally. Presumably, she will continue suspending judgment on individual matters until she reaches a point where she acquires the skeptical disposition. The move to the skeptical disposition seems to be tied to the development of the skeptical *dunamis* since, as she becomes better at setting out oppositions, the skeptic will more likely reach equipollence and the resulting *epochê* in each matter of investigation. Perhaps the last belief that the proto-skeptic holds and then casts off is that inquiry leads to equipollence and the resulting *epochê* produces *ataraxia*. After suspension of judgment is reached generally, she is a skeptic, which means that she opposes appearances and arguments on either side of any question that she pursues.

In light of this developmental story, Sextus's account of the end is puzzling. He claims that the proto-skeptic starts seeking tranquility because of anomalies in the appearances (*PH* I 12), but in describing the end of skepticism, he suggests that it is evaluative belief itself that is

the source of disturbance (*PH* I 27).[60] Moreover, Sextus clearly valorizes the proto-skeptics (they are 'great natured'), but this raises more questions about whether the pursuit of tranquility results from an awareness of anomalies or from troubling beliefs. On the one hand, when Sextus talks about the *archê* – the hope of tranquility – he suggests that only a few special people get started down the path of skepticism; on the other hand, when he talks about the end – achieving tranquility itself – he seems to cast the net more broadly, suggesting that all dogmatists are troubled.[61] This tension makes it difficult to evaluate the claim that Sextus's view of the end is tied to his understanding of human nature. It certainly is not the case that everyone pursues *ataraxia* in the way that the proto-skeptic pursues it, although Sextus does seem to think that everyone is (or at least all dogmatists are) troubled in some respect or other.

The distinction between the proto-skeptic and the skeptic seems to complicate the story rather than make things clearer. To say that the proto-skeptic seeks *ataraxia* is different from saying that the skeptic seeks *ataraxia*, since they do not seek tranquility for the same reasons. It is not clear that the skeptic has reasons for seeking *ataraxia* insofar as she has given up the hope of acquiring tranquility "by deciding the anomalies in what appears and is thought of" (*PH* I 29).[62] Yet Sextus suggests that there is a causal connection between *epochê* and *ataraxia* at least with regards evaluative beliefs *(PH* I 27, 28); but it is unclear whether this connection will hold

[60] Brennan tries to explain this by saying that it is the second order belief (i.e. that one must have the truth in order to become tranquil) that is troubling, or at least the source of the trouble (Brennan 1999, 98). But this does not really explain *PH* I 27,8.

[61] Some scholars, following Frede, think that Sextus targets (mainly) dogmatists in philosophical schools. See, for example, Brennan (1999), 1, 4-6. cf. Frede (1998) 18, 19. Others, like Burnyeat and Barnes, suggest that everyone needs the skeptical tonic. See Burnyeat (1998a), 47-53, and Barnes (1999), 78. Both positions seem to fit with the passages that I am discussing here insofar as Sextus advocates the ordinary life while simultaneously claiming that all dogmatists are troubled. Thus, Thorsrud argues that Sextus primarily targets the dogmatic positions of the philosophers, but that he also criticizes the ordinary person when she strays into theoretical disputes (Thorsrud forthcoming, ch. 9).

[62] This is contrary to Brennan's position, who argues that there is no difference between the way that the proto-skeptic and the skeptic seek *ataraxia*. He says, "My suggestion, then, is that we see the Skeptic's advocacy of tranquility as the end as just an instance of the conservation of his pre-Skeptical and proto-Skeptical position" (Brennan 1999, 97).

in the future: On the hand, the experience of Apelles suggests that the achievement of tranquility by means of *epochê* was just a matter of luck; on the other hand, the fact that one follows the other like a shadow suggests a dependable regularity (*PH* I 28). In other words, the sense in which the skeptic continues to hold the end is unclear. Does she hold tranquility as the end simply because that is what she started out doing and she sees no reason to stop? Does she hold the end because she seems to have found something that works insofar as *epochê* appears to lead to *ataraxia*? Does she suggest that this will work for everyone? And is it something that is based upon human cognitive function as such? None of this is clear. What is clear is that Sextus says he has an end and he suggests how it is achieved.

V. Conforming to the Correct Life

It is important to emphasize that skepticism is a way of life.[63] The skeptic's life is characterized by inquiry such that even if she has achieved tranquility, she continues to consider and then suspend judgment on all matters.[64] It is not a life that is characterized by striving for tranquility if such striving implies some ultimate concern for grasping e.g. what is by nature good or evil. But neither is it a life utterly passive, if the term 'passivity' indicates that the skeptic sits around allowing life to pass her by.[65]

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[63] Sextus answers the question "Do Sceptics belong to a school?" by saying, "If you count as a school a persuasion which, to all appearances, coheres with some account, the account showing how it is possible to live correctly…in that case we say that Sceptics do belong to a school" (*PH* I 17). As Barnes points out, "For Sextus presents himself as the champion of what he calls Life, *bios*" (Barnes 1983, 156).

[64] This includes the question of whether suspension of judgment produces *ataraxia*. Burnyeat points out that this issue seems to create a problem for the skeptic. "…if tranquility is to be achieved, at some stage the sceptic's questioning thoughts must come to a state of rest or equilibrium. There need be no finality to this achievement, the sceptic may hold himself ready to be persuaded that there are after all answers to be had….But *ataraxia* is hardly to be attained if he is not in some sense satisfied—so far—that no answers are forthcoming, that contrary claims are indeed equal. And my question is: How can Sextus deny that this is something he believes? I do not think he can" (Burnyeat 1998a, 56).

[65] Annas suggests that the ancient skeptic leads a passive life in the sense that she is detached from her beliefs. "Suspension of judgment as to things being really good or bad is followed by the radical inner detachment from one's beliefs which involves taking up a passive attitude to them, and treating them as items which just happen to be

But it is not enough to consider Sextus a eudaimonist because he recommends a way of life. He must provide the right life for all of us.[66] Sextus's account must be normative; it must be a way of life that we ought to pursue (insofar as we all want happiness). When Sextus discusses whether skepticism counts as a school, he admits that skeptics present an account "showing how it is possible to live correctly (*orthôs*)" (*PH* I 17) which would seem to suggest a normative viewpoint. However, he immediately qualifies this term, adding "where 'correctly' is taken not only with reference to virtue, but more loosely and extends to the ability to suspend judgment."[67] Sextus wants to make clear that he is not recommending a way of life that is tied primarily to virtue or human excellence; it is not a Stoic or Peripatetic theory. Here, he uses the term "simply" or "loosely" (*aphelês*) to indicate that he does not mean to imply any particular theory.[68] Living rightly for Sextus may include virtue, but also includes *epochê.* Sextus specifies further what he means by the correct life: "For we coherently follow, to all appearances, an account which shows us a life in conformity with traditional customs and the law and persuasions and our own feelings."[69] In other words, for Sextus, the correct life is the ordinary life, where ordinary life is understood as being tied to the appearances. But this cannot be a normative injunction insofar as the skeptical modes – especially the 10th mode – undermine any

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there given certain conditions" (Annas 1986, 24). Burnyeat has a similar complaint, as I described earlier (Burnyeat 1998a, 53ff). Of course, Sextus would deny that the skeptic has any beliefs from which to be detached. Moreover, I suspect that Annas's charge comes out of a particular understanding of how the skeptic is forced about by the appearances. While Sextus does admit as much (cf. *PH* I 13, 19), it is not at all clear that this is incompatible with leading an active life.

[66] Of course, many ancient theories recommend a way of life to aim at happiness based in human nature that most people will never achieve because of their particular situation in life. It is consistent to recommend a way of life for all people (based on our common nature), without necessarily being committed to the idea that all people can be happy.

[67] "*Tou orthôs mê monon kat' aretê lambanomenou all' aphelesteron kai epi to epechein dunamis diateinontos*" (PH I 17).

[68] Compare Sextus' use of *aphelês* in this passage to his use of *adiaphoros* ("loose") and *katachrestikos* ("inexact") in other passages (*PH* I 191, 195, 207, III 119). These latter terms are used consistently in places where Sextus wants to emphasize that his claims do not commit him to any particular theory. In this, I disagree with Burnyeat (1998b), 104-6.

[69] "*akoloutheoumen gar tini logô kata to phainomenon hupodeiknunti hêmin to zên pros ta patria ethê kai tous nomous kai tas agôgas kai ta oikeia pathê*" (*PH* I 17).

claim that a particular law or custom gets at "the nature of external existing objects" (*PH* I 163, 145-162). When Sextus talks about living correctly, he really means "fitting in" and not the more normative "living rightly."

To sum up, the skeptical way of life is one of inquiry, but it is not the same as the inquiry of the proto-skeptic. The inquiry of the skeptic is used to create equipollence because it is through the suspension of judgment in the face of equally weighted positions that the skeptic achieves tranquility.[70] At the same time, the skeptic seeks to mitigate extremes with regard to the *pathê* – also through *epochê* - and hopes to find moderation. This, then, is the life of the skeptic; is the skeptical way of life eudaimonistic? In light of this summary, it is not as clear as it might have been. Sextus certainly appeals to a particular end and one aspect of that end, *ataraxia*, is common in Hellenistic accounts of *eudaimonia*. But it is not clear that Sextus's account of the end is teleological in any normative sense. Moreover, it is even less obvious that Sextus's view of *ataraxia* is grounded – even implicitly – in a view of the human. For the remainder of this thesis, I intend to argue that Sextus does not meet the criteria outlined in the previous chapter and examined here. That is, Sextus was no eudaimonist.

[70] It seems strange to consider this inquiry at all, if we understand inquiry paradigmatically as searching for the truth of a matter. If the skeptic is looking to set arguments and appearances against each other in order to suspend judgment, then she is not really looking into the matter so much as looking for ways to create said balance. Perhaps the right way to think about it is in terms of dogmatic inquiry. If a dogmatist is honestly searching for the answer to a particular question (and not just looking for support to bolster the party line – cf. *Acad*. 2.7-9 and *PH* II 11), he will research and consider the positions on both sides. And what will he do if finds that the two sides are in fact equally weighted? His rational principles suggest that he should suspend judgment on the matter until he can find a way to decide between them. Likewise, the skeptic finds the two sides equally weighted and suspends judgment. The strange thing is that if she is seeking *ataraxia* by means of *epochê* through equipollence, then it seems like she should be seeking equipollence rather than seeking the truth as Sextus claims (*PH* I 2,3). But this presupposes that the skeptic has a belief about how inquiry will end. If she does not believe that the inquiry will end in equipollence (it just so happens that it does because she is so skilled), then she does not believe that pursuing the inquiry will lead to *epochê*. But this is consistent with the skeptic also not believing that inquiry will lead to truth. There has been much scholarly discussion on this point. Casey Perin argues that the skeptic aims for the discovery of truth as an end in itself, although the ultimate end for the skeptic is still *ataraxia* (Perin 2006 and forthcoming). I think that the crux of his argument does not take the distinction that Sextus makes between the skeptic and the proto-skeptic seriously enough. Brennan also argues that there is no difference between the skeptic and the proto-skeptic with regards the pursuit of truth for the sake of tranquility, but he claims that the pursuit of truth is merely an accidental characteristic of the skeptic, and the "antithetical capacity" is her more essential trait (Brennan 1999, 81, 101n32).

Chapter 4 – Why the Skeptical Life is not Eudaimonistic

In the previous chapter, I argued for Sextus as a eudaimonist; and I demonstrated that this account has problems making sense of what Sextus says about the skeptical end in relation to skeptical practices and skeptical living. In this chapter, I will consider the Pyrrhonian position in light of each criterion outlined in chapter 2 regarding what makes a particular ethical theory eudaimonistic. For each criterion, I will briefly restate the argument for why Sextus fits into the traditional model of ancient ethics. Then I will argue that the interpretation does not work. I will begin with the consideration of teleology.

I. The Skeptic is Endless

The argument for why skepticism is teleological is obvious: Sextus claims that there is an aim or an end to skepticism. Sextus defines the *telos* as "that for the sake of which everything is done or considered, while it is not itself done or considered for the sake of anything else. Or: an aim (*telos*) is the final object of desire" (*PH* I 25). This latter definition is especially characteristic of Hellenistic eudaimonistic ethical theories. So Sextus understands *telos* in a common way, and he follows this definition with a description of the end: "The aim of the Sceptic is tranquility (*ataraxia*) in matters of opinion and moderation of feeling (*metriopathêia*) in matters forced upon us" (*PH* I 25). Annas claims this is a clear statement of the teleological nature of skeptical ethics. "Sextus in fact presents the skeptics with a full-scale account of our final aim and of skepticism as an optimal way to reach it, quite on a par with those of other

schools."[71] So it seems quite obvious that the skeptic has an end, and that end is tranquility with regard to belief and moderation of the passions.

At the same time, the end as Sextus describes it does not fit well with his own definition. For one thing, he has described two ends and not just one, so the end he describes is not the ultimate (singular) object of desire.[72] The end of tranquility (*ataraxia*) is restricted to matters of opinion; moderation of feeling (*metriopathêia*) goes with matters that the skeptic cannot avoid. Thus, Sextus does not have the ultimate end in mind when he describes these two ends. Tranquility cannot be that which provides the ultimate structure to the skeptic's life because it does not account for the matters that are forced upon her.

But is such an account still teleological in a sense, even if tranquility is not perceived as an ultimate end? If the skeptic attempts to achieve *ataraxia* as a particular end, the skeptical life could still be described as teleological. In order to determine this, we should consider the scope of the end. A eudaimonist holds that the end applies in some sense to everyone – either everyone as a matter of fact goes for happiness or, if she does not, she ought to go for it (even if circumstances prohibit her from achieving it). However, it is not even clear that the skeptical way of life is teleological in this way. If the skeptic holds as a *belief* that *ataraxia* is the end for everyone, it would be a problem for the skeptical position.[73] Moreover, it is difficult to argue

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[71] Annas 1993, 209. She later adds, "Pyrrhonism is here clearly put forward in the way any ethical theory is: it is taken that we will agree that we have a final end, and the sceptic tells us how we shall achieve it if we follow his recommendations rather than those of his rivals" (Annas 1993, 210).

[72] It is a common ancient criticism to accuse an ethical theory of advocating more than one end. Plutarch criticizes the Stoics for setting up two ends instead of one: "It is contrary to the common conception that life should have two ends or targets set before it and that all our actions should not be referred to just one thing. But it is still further contrary to the common conception that the end should be one thing and the point of reference for every action something else. Yet they [the Stoics] must stick to one of these alternatives" (*On common conceptions* 1070F—1071E, *LS* 64C). Cicero presents a similar criticism of the Stoics (*DF* IV 39). He also criticizes the Epicureans for advocating two ends instead of one (*DF* II 9-20)

[73] Sedley argues that Sextus avoids this problem by suggesting a non-controversial end that requires no dogmatic argument: "…there is a world of difference between aiming from the outset for *epochê*, which only a skeptic would contemplate doing, and aiming for so nonsectarian a goal as freedom from disquiet. …[*ataraxia*] scarcely needs defense, since the Skeptic supposes freedom from disquiet to be already a common, nonpartisan philosophical goal"

that it simply *seems* to the skeptic that *ataraxia* is the end for everyone.[74] On what basis is such a global claim made? The skeptic cannot perceive *everyone's* end, so such a claim could only be made inductively. But Sextus rejects induction understood as making a universal claim on the basis of perceived particulars (*PH* II 204). Therefore, such a claim falls under the heading of the "non-evident" about which the skeptic refuses to dogmatize.

Striker suggests that, at least in *PH*, Sextus is interested in presenting one possible way of reaching tranquility. She says,

> The Greek phrase (*to telos tēs skeptikēs agōgēs*), like its English translation, is conveniently ambiguous—it may mean either 'the Skeptic's view about the goal of life' or 'the aim of the Skeptics.' What we are led to expect is the former, since Sextus proceeds to quote a Stoic definition of the term *telos* (goal of life), what we get is the latter.[75]

What this means is that Sextus is not arguing for "the goal of life" that everyone pursues or ought to pursue. Rather, he is presenting what the skeptics go for as a matter of fact. If this reading is plausible, it would also suggest that *ataraxia* is not the ultimate end for everyone; it is merely the limited end for the skeptics. It is what the skeptics pursue.

Moreover, Hankinson argues that we should read Sextus's discussion about the *telos* in light of his discussion about the skeptic's beginning (*archê*) (*PH* I 12). Sextus claims that the skeptic, or more precisely the proto-skeptic, begins by hoping for tranquility; and he claims that *ataraxia* is where the skeptic ends up. In this sense, *telos* simply means "the end of a process or …a series of events" and not an ultimate goal.[76] If we interpret Sextus this way, then it avoids the problem of attributing a belief (and thereby inconsistency) to the skeptic, since she will not

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(Sedley 1983, 21,2). But Hankinson argues that *ataraxia* is not such a non-controversial end as Sedley suggests and therefore it cannot be something that the skeptic simply accepts (Hankinson 1997, 26).

[74] Admittedly, this problem blurs the line between the teleological criterion and the one involved with human nature. I will address this point in the latter section.

[75] Striker 1990, 105. Hankinson also argues that the title is ambiguous (Hankinson 1997, 30).

[76] "My suggestion is that, when Sextus claims that *ataraxia* is the *telos* of skeptical inquiry, he simply means that this is what, as it happens, it results in. Of course, that result is perfectly OK – the sceptic has no complaints. But as a sceptic he is not actively seeking that result. This, I contend, is the appropriate way of reading Sextus's remarks *in propria persona* regarding the skeptical telos, in particular the last sentence of text **10** [PH I 30] above: these are the conditions that the sceptic ends up in." (Hankinson 1997, 27).

be advocating an end, not even a particular end merely for herself; and hence she will have no commitment to the causal connection that leads to that end. On this reading, the skeptic is truly endless: The *telos* of the skeptic is not an aim, not even one limited to the particular skeptic; it is simply the result of the skeptical life.

As I argued in chapter 2, the *telos* of a eudaimonistic theory is directive in a normative sense; it provides the ultimate structure to one's life. Recall that the Cyrenaics provided an example that did not meet this criterion although their theory is teleological in the limited sense that they pursue particular pleasures. If we follow Striker's interpretation, Sextus resembles the Cyrenaics since tranquility is the end pursued, but it is not as an ultimate end; it is merely the particular end of the skeptics. But if we accept Hankinson's reading, the skeptical life is not even teleological in the more limited sense. Thus, since the skeptical end is not teleological by directing everyone toward an ultimate end, it is also not normative as required by this criterion. The skeptic has an end, but it is not a normative end; it is not meant to be directive. Thus, we should conclude that the skeptical ethic is not teleological, directed toward an ultimate end. Moreover, on at least one plausible reading, it is not even teleological in the restricted sense of having any aim at all.

II. The End is not Happiness

Even if I grant that the skeptical position is teleological in some sense, I will show in this section that it is not an end directed toward happiness. Happiness (*eudaimonia*) is not mentioned in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* in the context of how the skeptic lives her life.[77] However, as I explained in chapter 3, two arguments can be made that suggest Sextus has happiness in mind when he offers *ataraxia* and *metriopathêia* as the end(s). The first is the appeal to other

[77] Happiness does come up in later sections of the work. cf. *PH* III 172.

Hellenistic sources, suggesting that Sextus's use of *ataraxia* indicates identification with *eudaimonia*. But it is not obvious that Sextus means the same thing by *ataraxia* as, for example, the Epicureans and Stoics do.[78] After all, in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, he never ties the concept of tranquility to happiness or fulfillment.[79] And one might argue further that he cannot tie tranquility to happiness because that would constitute believing something is good or bad by nature.[80]

The second argument appeals to Sextus's larger work, *Adversus Mathematicos*, where Sextus argues more extensively that the one who suspends belief will be tranquil and therefore happy as far as she can.[81] There are at least two reasons to reject this argument. The first is that it claims that Sextus's account in *Adversus Mathematicos* occurs in his own voice. But this is not at all clear. The section in which Sextus discusses the happy life is explicitly titled "Against the Ethicists" which suggests that any argument contained therein should be taken as a refutation of the rash dogmatists and not as a positive claim by Sextus about the skeptical life. Moreover, the tenor of the discussion is at odds with the parallel passages in his *Outlines (PH* III 235-38). In the former work, Sextus seems to take a negative dogmatic position, as opposed to the genuinely skeptical position of the latter. That is, in *Adversus Mathematicos*, Sextus appears to make the dogmatic claim that the good does not exist (*M* XI 78, 89) whereas in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, he argues that our inability to judge whether the good exists should cause us to

[78] Striker argues that the tranquility that Sextus describes is different from that of the Epicurean or Stoic in that Pyrrhonian *ataraxia* cannot include a sense of contentment or satisfaction that must be present in the *ataraxia* of the earlier Hellenistic schools (Striker 1990, 106).
[79] He admittedly does tie skeptical *ataraxia* to *eudaimonia* in *Adversus Mathematicos*, as I discuss below.
[80] Brennan avoids this problem by arguing that Sextus differentiates between the end and something being good. He claims that Sextus does not think that the end must be something good by nature. This allows him to argue that Sextus can have an end without being committed to things being good or bad and thus avoiding any skeptically unacceptable beliefs. As far as I can tell, his main support for this claim is that Sextus never explicitly connects these two concepts – the end and being good – on the assumption that he ought to connect them in his discussion of the good life (Brennan 1999, 83). I tend to find such arguments from silence suspect.
[81] *M* XI 147,8. cf. *M* XI 141.

suspend judgment on the question in proper skeptical fashion (*PH* III 182). In light of these different conclusions, Hankinson explains that we should not take Sextus's occasional dogmatic claims as indicative of underlying belief when said pronouncements occur within the context of Sextus's argumentation. Rather, such conclusions always function as part of the skeptical strategy to produce suspension of belief.[82] In other words, the skeptic can and will argue for a dogmatic position only to turn around and argue for the opposing side. The skeptical *dunamis* is precisely that ability to argue on both sides (without being committed to either one) in order to create the equipollence that generates suspension of judgment.[83]

The second reason to reject this account of skeptical happiness involves the meaning of *ataraxia*. Striker argues that Sextus uses the term *ataraxia* to mean a mental state and not a view of life associated with 'happiness' in the Aristotelian sense that I described above. She says, "The state of tranquility achieved by the skeptic will lack one important element that was included in both the Epicurean and the Stoic conceptions, namely contentment or satisfaction, the thought that one has or can easily get all the goods one might need."[84] If this is the case, then tranquility is simply the feeling of peace of mind and it (by itself) cannot be happiness in the

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[82] "The first important point is that it is easy to mistake the general strategy of a skeptical argument. The Skeptics aim at inducing *epochê*, or suspension of judgment; and they do that by adducing considerations on both sides of any issue….The procedure is dialectical: and each arm of the dialectic will have the appearance of an argument for a dogmatic conclusion. Thus the arguments which apparently have as their conclusion 'nothing is good by nature' and the like are only half the story: they are implicitly meant to be set against the general and prevailing view of mankind that some things are good by nature; and the end result is the position of the epistemological sceptic: we can't tell one way or the other" (Hankinson 1994, 66). Alternatively, Striker suggests that the apparent inconsistency between *M* and *PH* should be read as a temporal development, but this seems an unsatisfying solution to me (Striker 1990, 104). Bett argues for a similar diachronic reading (Bett 2000, 5,6, 207-13).

[83] Someone might object that although it is the case that the arguments are *ad hominem*, Sextus does explicitly appeal to the skeptical life, and so it would seem that he is at least using his account of the skeptical life as part of his refutation of other ethical philosophers. However, just because Sextus uses the skeptic in an argument, that does not imply that he is somehow more committed to the conclusion of that argument being true than when he argues from the other side. In other words, nothing follows from his use of skeptical cases in his arguments.

[84] Striker goes on to explain that the skeptic's "peace of mind is mere detachment—a calm state indeed, but one that might in the end turn out to be also profoundly boring….But their attempt to get in by the back door, as it were—offering a recipe for the happy life without a theory of the human good—is instructive for the modern reader by comparison with the rival theories" (Striker 1990, 106). One might object that it is not at all clear that Epicurus does not consider *ataraxia* as a mental state. Unfortunately, I do not have the space to argue this position on my own.

sense of the flourishing of one's life as a whole.[85] Thus, although Sextus may claim that the skeptic is tranquil and therefore happy, what he means is that the skeptic *feels* good and not that skeptic's life is good in some fundamental respect.[86] Therefore, the Pyrrhonian skeptic's end is not happiness in the sense of *eudaimonia* used by typical ancient ethical theories.

III. The End is not Natural

Again, even if we grant that the skeptic's end is happiness, the position would still not be eudaimonistic because it does not appeal to a particular view of human nature. As I described above, the third criterion is that a eudaimonistic ethic will appeal to human nature – what it is to be human – as the basis for claims about our proper end. But Sextus does not have a particular view of (human) nature that guides his ethical statements; over and over, he argues against the existence of nature. For example, in explaining the 3rd mode—"deriving from the differences among the senses" (*PH* I 91)—he says, "But nature, someone will say, has made the sense commensurate with their objects. What nature? – given that there is so much undecideable dispute among the Dogmatists about the reality of what is according to nature" (*PH* I 98).[87] Philosophers spend their time arguing about the nature of the world, humanity, or good and evil. Sextus suggests that if these things had a nature, surely we would be able to agree on what it is.

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[85] Striker adds that, at best, the skeptical argument will cause the dogmatist to realize that his way of reaching tranquility is one possible way among many; and since tranquility is conceived in this context as simply peace of mind, it would be consistent with achieving tranquility by means of drugs. But this shows that the tranquility in question cannot be *eudaimonia* since drugs cannot make one's life good. And this is why, Striker explains, the Stoics and Epicureans never proposed such a conception of happiness when explaining the human good. (Striker 1990, 106-8).

[86] Admittedly, this is a controversial position since it is reasonable to interpret the Epicurean end as a state of mind and body insofar as the Epicurean goal is *ataraxia* and *aponia*. cf. *DL* 10 128,9. *DF* I 37,8.

[87] As with the other modes, the apparent undecidability between the different sides leads Sextus to recommend suspending judgment on the matter. For other examples where Sextus seems to argue against the existence of nature (or at least suspend judgment regarding nature), see *PH* I 163, 215, 218, 219. *PH* II 87, *PH* III 179, *M* XI 71, 140. As Annas notes, "The Pyrrhonists in fact frequently see their intellectual task as one of rejecting enquiry into the nature of things in favour of resting with the appearances" (Annas 1993, 207).

The total lack of agreement as to the nature of reality is raised as a reason to doubt whether such a nature even exists.

As described in the previous chapter, one might still argue that Sextus has an implicit conception of nature insofar as he appeals to the causal connection between belief and disturbance on the one hand, and *epochê* and *ataraxia* on the other (*PH* I 27,8). In his discussion of the *telos* of the skeptic, Sextus suggests that evaluative beliefs cause disturbance, which implies that *epochê* causes *ataraxia* at least with regards to such beliefs; this, in part, describes the skeptical psychology.[88] However, we must be careful here; it is not the case that Sextus *believes* there is a causal connection. As I have already argued, he can only claim that there *seems* to be a causal connection; and this claim can only be made on the basis of his own experience and perhaps his encounters with other people. So it is not clear that *PH* I 27,8 represents a claim about human psychology even though it is made in universal terms. Sextus ought not be committed to the causal connection obtaining in humans he does not know; he may not even be implicitly committed to his own psychological regularities beyond their appearance to him at this moment. But even if it *seems* to Sextus that all people are troubled by beliefs, that does not constitute justification for the claim that *ataraxia* is a constitutive part of *eudaimonia*. In order to argue that, Sextus would need to be implicitly committed to the idea that *ataraxia* is good for us; but this is a difficult claim to substantiate from the text.[89] So human psychological regularities do not provide the basis for Sextus's claims about the end.

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[88] The advocate of this objection might be tempted to observe that Sextus' claims in this section lack the usual careful skeptical qualifications which might be offered as evidence that Sextus is committed to these psychological connections. But we should not forget that, in his preface, Sextus applies a blanket qualification over all of the claims in *PH*: "By way of preface let us say that on none of the matters to be discussed do we affirm that things certainly are just as we say they are: rather, we report descriptively on each item according to how it appears to us at the time" (*PH* I 4). Therefore, the lack of qualification in this section does not indicate that Sextus is more committed to these claims than to others that he makes in the *Outlines*.

[89] In correspondence, Eric Brown has suggested that one might argue for this from the end of *PH* where Sextus claims to be a philanthropist, attempting to rid dogmatists of their "conceit and rashness" (*PH* III 280). So the claim

Again, one might make a further appeal to Sextus's view of human nature as presented in the *kritêrion* of skepticism (*PH* I 21-4); among the four-fold everyday observances that constitute the criterion, he includes "guidance by nature" (*PH* I 23) which he describes as that by which "we are naturally capable of perceiving and thinking" (*PH* I 24). So, one might argue that Sextus has a view of human nature that is significant for the skeptical way of life insofar as it guides the skeptic's action. However, this appeal to nature does not determine our end. After all, Sextus claims that nature provides only the appearances of perception and thought. He explicitly distinguishes these from feelings (*pathê*), laws (*nomos*), customs (*ethos*), and crafts (*technê*), which are all presumably outside of nature's guidance. Sextus's appeal to nature only provides one small component for the criterion of action, so it cannot be *the* factor that determines the skeptic's *telos*.

In spite of this objection, one might interpret the entire skeptical criterion of action as natural in some sense; nature is constituted in part by what is forced upon us. Annas claims that Sextus expands the notion of nature to cover all that the skeptic does: "everything the skeptic does is natural."[90] Annas appeals to the description of the criterion of action (*PH* I 21-24) to justify her reading of Sextus on nature.[91] While she admits that Sextus includes nature as only one of the four observances,[92] she dismisses this fact because "the sceptic relies on nature to guide her in the absence of commitment to beliefs, precisely because what is natural is just those

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that dogmatists are in need of skeptical therapy implies that Sextus is implicitly committed to skepticism being the best life. But I think it is consistent to recommend a particular way of life without being committed to its being right or good for everyone. So Sextus can coherently claim to be a philanthropist without being committed to thinking that the skeptical life is the best life for everyone.

[90] Annas 1993, 212

[91] "Sextus also appeals to nature in his account of 'how the sceptic can live'—how suspension of judgment does not lead to practical paralysis" (Annas 1993, 208).

[92] Annas finds this approach strange: "It is puzzling that nature is given as only one of the four aspects of everyday observances (*biōtikē terēsis*); and this seems illogical. Why is nature responsible for our perceiving and thinking, but not for handing down customs and teaching skills? It is also odd for nature to be contrasted with the 'necessitation' of feelings, since nature is standardly what we cannot avoid rather than what we can" (Annas 1993, 208).

aspects of us which are unaffected by our beliefs."[93] Thus, Sextus implicitly appeals to a notion of nature – common among some ancient philosophers (Annas cites Epicurus)[94] – that human nature is that part of us that is inescapable. More specifically for Sextus, it is that aspect of us that acts apart from belief.

The problem with this is that it runs counter to what Sextus explicitly says about nature in relation to his criterion. As I mentioned before, Sextus allows nature as only one of the fourfold observances; thus he has a more restrictive notion of nature than Annas suggests. One might object that I am merely quibbling over terms here. As Annas uses 'nature' in this context, human nature includes everything about being human apart from having beliefs.[95] That is, being human is primarily a negative thesis (for the skeptic) insofar as it does not include belief. But in that case, it is unclear what the concept of nature contributes to the discussion. Does such a notion of nature tell us anything at all? Annas recognizes this as a problem, but she thinks it is a problem for the skeptic: "although the sceptics are equally sanguine as to the feasibility of removing our beliefs, they are in the end left with a view of nature so unrevisionary as to be totally unselective."[96] Of course, they are left with this view only if it is a perspective that they actually hold.

I think that the problem is not the skeptic's view of nature – which I have argued is far more restrictive than Annas allows – but rather the problem is attributing to Sextus a view of nature that is in some sense totalizing (what Annas calls a "wider notion of nature"). Sextus does not have such a broad sense of nature; he does not rely on nature so much as follow it as one of

[93] Annas 1993, 209
[94] Annas 1993, 212
[95] Annas 1993, 209
[96] Annas 1993, 212

several possible types of appearances. Human nature is not the basis upon which the Pyrrhonian claims to know the end that leads the skeptic to ultimate happiness.

IV. The Skeptic Eschews Dogmatic Theory

The final criterion to consider is whether Sextus espouses an ethical theory at all, especially one that might be considered eudaimonistic. As I demonstrated in chapter 3, it is not possible to construct an implicit ethical theory from what Sextus says in his *Outlines* that will satisfy the other criteria for being a eudaimonistic ethic. Moreover, I will argue below that Sextus cannot hold an ethical theory because it would need to include dogmatic beliefs about non-evident matters tying human nature to the eudaimonistic end. Thus, Sextus does not have a theory. In fact, this point is so uncontroversial that it needs little argument. However, it is worth discussing because it ties Sextus's account of his way of life – his so-called ethic – to his epistemological commitments (or lack thereof) which I plan to discuss in the final chapter.

When Sextus describes the skeptical program, he claims that the skeptic holds no beliefs (*PH* I 12); he goes on to clarify this statement by saying that skeptics "do not hold beliefs in the sense in which some say that belief is assent to some unclear object of investigation in the sciences; for Pyrrhonists do not assent to anything unclear" (*PH* I 13). He consistently claims throughout his work that he does not have beliefs about the non-evident, which he ties to the "rashness of the Dogmatists" (*PH* I 20). And insofar as the skeptic eschews dogmatic beliefs – that is, about the way things really are – she cannot be "theorizing." Even Barnes's urbane or Burnyeat's country gentleman skeptic would be disallowed this sort of theoretical assent.[97]

[97] cf. Barnes (1998), and Burnyeat (1998b). Annas agrees that Sextus cannot be understood to hold an ethical theory in this sense. She writes: "Is the sceptic not dogmatically putting forward skepticism as a recommended way of life? …Sextus is not in [PH I 25-9] competing with the dogmatists in rationally recommending skepticism; rather he is in good skeptical fashion recording what appears to him to be the case—the way things cannot but strike him—but

Sextus even begins his *Outlines* with the disclaimer that any statement he makes should not be taken as a dogmatic position; "rather, we report descriptively on each item according to how it appears to us at the time" (*PH* I 4). He means for his apparently dogmatic and seemingly theoretical statements to be interpreted as mere claims about the way things appear to him. In fact, he spends several chapters going over particular skeptical utterances in order to clarify how the skeptic can make philosophically interesting claims without being inconsistent in terms of her skeptical approach. For example, when the skeptic says "everything is inapprehensible," she should be understood as saying, "All of the unclear matters investigated in dogmatic fashion which I have inspected appear to me inapprehensible" (*PH* I 200). In a similar fashion, Sextus claims that other skeptical phrases should be taken as a report of appearances relative to the one that offers it, and not as a statement about how things are. He sums up his discussion about these phrases by saying,

> Besides, you must remember that we do not use these phrases about all objects universally, but about what is unclear and investigated in dogmatic fashion, and that we say what is apparent to us and do not make firm assertions about the nature of externally existing things. (*PH* I 208)

Thus, Sextus does not intend to make any dogmatic claims. And if this is the case, then he cannot be offering us an ethical theory, at least not in this sense: When Sextus makes claims about the skeptic being happy, about the skeptical end, or about the role of nature, he does not commit himself to any truth claim. By his own account, none of his statements about the end of the skeptic can be interpreted as anything more than a report of how the end seems to him.

Not only is Sextus not dogmatic in his position, he is not exactly systematic in his approach to ethics either.[98] His account has little explanatory depth. He does not explain how things are in relation to how they seem to him. He does not attempt to provide an explanation–

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without commitment to believing it. Thus Sextus in talking about the sceptic's end is not going beyond what it is inevitable, and natural, for him to do" (Annas 1993, 210).

[98] Thanks to Tim O'Keefe for pointing this out to me.

even one based in the appearances–about why and how it is that *epochê* results in *ataraxia*, even though he does claim that the one follows from the other (*PH* I 28). We are left wondering how this apparently causal relationship works. In fact, the entire chapter on the *telos* of skepticism (*PH* I 25-30) is strikingly brief and rather *ad hoc*. What exactly is the story about Apelles supposed to tell us?[99] Sextus does not approach the question of the skeptical end in a systematic way that would be properly described as theoretical.[100]

Finally, Sextus's account of the skeptical life seems baldly incomplete. There are many aspects of human life that he does not seem to address. For example, how does the skeptic follow the four-fold observances when they involve conflicts in the appearances? We are told that the skeptic's life is guided by what is apparent, but sometimes the appearances of the four-fold observances conflict with each other. Consider a situation where the laws and customs of the *polis* suggest that slavery is morally acceptable, but upon further thought the skeptic finds weighty reasons for acquiescing to the appearance that slavery is wrong. The skeptic obviously suspends judgment on this question (perhaps to her shame), but she must still act as if she accepts or does not accept the principle "slavery is morally acceptable." Insofar as Sextus's

[99] The story of Apelles receives much discussion in the scholarly literature, but there is little agreement as to what features of the story Sextus means to compare to the experience of the skeptic. Annas and Barnes argue that the point of the story is that the proto-skeptic gives up on achieving happiness directly, i.e. by finding the truth, and discovers as a result that it can be achieved indirectly through skeptical inquiry (Annas and Barnes 1985, 168,9; cf. Annas 1993, 352). Perin claims that the story is not meant to show that the skeptics give up on finding the truth, but that tranquility can be achieved through other means, i.e. by suspending judgment (Perin 2006, 344-6). Striker claims that it is meant to show that achieving tranquility is "a matter of lucky coincidence, not an expected result" even though the analogy that the shadow follows the body also suggests that the result is now expected (Striker 1990, 106). Thorsrud agrees that the story suggests the skeptic achieves her end indirectly and unexpectedly (Thorsrud forthcoming, ch. 9).

[100] In discussing the section "Against the Ethicists," Annas notes that Sextus's performance in refuting other ethical theories is "disappointing." "In the sections of his book on logic and physics we find not only general argumentative strategies but a host of detailed refutations of particular theories (often preceded by extensive accounts of them). But Sextus was clearly something of a philistine about ethics, and he gives us appallingly little by way of exposition and demolition of particular ethical theories; we find large gaps where we expect detailed discussions of Stoic, Epicurean and Aristotelian theories of the final good, virtue and so on" (Annas 1993, 356).

account of the skeptical life does not address the possibility of such conflicts of appearances, it is grossly incomplete (if it were really meant as an ethical theory).[101]

In this chapter, I have considered the interpretation that Sextus's account of the skeptical life is a eudaimonistic ethical theory. I have demonstrated that such a reading falls short of what Sextus says. His perspective is not teleological in the sense that it seeks one ultimate end. It does not tie the end to the concept of happiness, generally conceived as human flourishing or the good life viewed as a whole. Moreover, it is not based upon an understanding of the fundamental nature of humankind. In other words, Sextus lacks a theory that suggests how we ought to live our lives in order to achieve *eudaimonia*, our ultimate aim or desire as human beings.

[101] Note that even though Sextus does not discuss this issue, does not mean that he does not have the resources with which to approach it. See Thorsrud (2003), 248,9 for a discussion of this.

Chapter 5 – The Skeptical Rejection of Norms

The conclusion that Sextus was no eudaimonist raises several related questions. First, if Sextus is not a eudaimonist, how should we describe the skeptical way of life? That is, granted that skeptical ethics is not like other ancient theories, what is its character? And second, how does this lack of eudaimonism relate to Sextus's philosophy more broadly construed? In this final section, I will attempt to answer the second question as a gesture toward how the first question could be approached. In answering the second question, I will explain how the skeptical way of life, as Sextus presents it, depends on his epistemological strategy. In particular, the way that the Pyrrhonian skeptic refuses to succumb to a belief in spite of evidence in its favor suggests that she does not acknowledge the ability of reasoned argumentation to access the truth. As I will attempt to show, this implies that the skeptic implicitly rejects the normativity of reason which in turn means that ethical norms are likewise implicitly rejected. The result is that the skeptical way of life is the implicit rejection of normativity, and this rejection frees her to live an ordinary, moderate and tranquil life.

I. The Rejection of the Norms of Reason

As we already know, Sextus claims that the skeptic does not assent to some unclear object of investigation (*PH* I 13, 18). The skeptic continues investigating; in fact, it is precisely this that characterizes the skeptical as opposed to the dogmatic dispositions (*PH* I 2, 3). Sextus claims that the proto-skeptic investigates in order to determine that to which he should assent; that is, which things are true or false (*PH* I 12). And the skeptic also investigates in order to determine what can be said in favor of the truth of various claims.[102] Since, presumably, the truth

[102] As I have already noted, the claim that truth is the object of skeptical investigation is extremely problematic. First, truth is obviously not the final goal since *PH* I 12 explicitly says that the proto-skeptic is aiming at tranquility.

is an object of skeptical (or at least proto-skeptical) investigation, the obvious epistemological question to ask is, how will one achieve said truth? Or what method can be used to get at the truth?

Sextus tells us that the skeptic opposes thought to thought, appearance to appearance and appearance to thought (*PH* I 9). The skeptic has an ability to oppose argument to argument in such a way that, for any given claim, another claim can be offered that contradicts or in some other way, undermines that claim.[103] Thus, Sextus recognizes thought and appearance as possible bases that ground our search for the truth. And they are reasonably plausible ways of getting at the truth; we (dogmatists) generally think we can find the truth through perception or by reasoning our way to it or some combination of the two. Sextus tells us that the skeptical *dunamis* uses truth conducive methods (for so we think them) in order to undermine potential beliefs. The skeptical *dunamis* is able to raise an objection that gives you some reason to believe a contrary claim whenever you might think you have grasped the fact of the matter.

It is significant that the skeptical ability does not refute beliefs. For any given claim p, the skeptic does not simply argue for ~ p in order to conclude ~ p. Rather, the skeptic argues for ~ p in way that fails to undermine the basis for p. Thus, the reasons for p and ~p stand independently without any way to adjudicate between the reasons. For example, the skeptic will argue that motion exists because look! If I kick a ball, it moves. The skeptic will then argue on

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So truth can only be an intermediate goal. But it is unclear whether the skeptic really aims at truth or merely at *epochê*. Thus, when I suggest skeptical investigation aims at the truth, all I mean to say is that the skeptic, as investigator, looks into things, in order to determine what can be said in favor of their truth. Note that Perin argues that discovery of the truth is a goal of the skeptic; moreover, the skeptic sees the discovery of truth as an end in itself (although not the ultimate end) (Perin 2006 and forthcoming). Brennan also argues that the skeptic is searching for truth (Brennan 1999, 81). Palmer argues that the skeptic cannot be seeking the truth as a result of the way that the arguments she uses work – especially the modes of Agrippa – even though the skeptic would never that the truth cannot be discovered (Palmer 2000).

[103] Someone might wonder what kinds of claims I have in mind here, harkening back to the debate among Frede, Barnes and Burnyeat. I want to avoid getting bogged down in that debate. However, the point I make here does not hinge on taking a particular view regarding what beliefs the skeptic will hold (if any at all).

the basis of *a priori* reasons given a particular understanding of motion that motion cannot exist.[104] Thus, the perceptual evidence of motion is not undermined by the *a priori* reasons, neither are the *a priori* reasons supposed to be subject to refutation by the sight of something moving. After all, how are we to decide that the way things appear to us is the way they are? In other words, there is no way to adjudicate between the perception and the theory as to which better grasps the matter in question.

The same general point can be made with regard to the 'Ten Modes'. Sextus presents the skeptical modes as general argumentative strategies used by the skeptic to achieve *epochê* by equally weighted positions. For example, in the first mode, Sextus appeals to differences between the way things appear to us and the way things appear to some animals. The purpose of this appeal is not to demonstrate that the way things appear to us is false, but to undermine the authority of our perceptions by claiming that we have no reason "to prefer our own appearances to those produced in the irrational animals" (*PH* I 78). In other words, there is no basis by which we can judge between these appearances to determine which accurately represents the world. The same argumentative structure occurs in the second mode, which opposes differing appearances among humans, or in the third mode which opposes differences among the senses in one person, and so on. In short, the skeptical strategy argues indirectly (by supporting one side and then the other) that there are no bases, no rules, no norms by which one can judge between the two opposing sides.

Thus, the skeptical ability is not merely an argumentative ability, but one that builds argumentative positions such that for any given claim, the arguments for and against a given

[104] For example, in *PH* III 67-69, Sextus argues that what is moved must either be moved by itself or by something else. But, if it is moved by something else, that too must be moved by something else and therefore you are sent into an infinite regress. But, if it is moved by itself, it must be pushed or pulled and nothing can push or pull itself since that implies being outside of itself which is absurd. Therefore, nothing can move.

position stand equally weighted on both sides. This is what Sextus means when he describes the equipollence of opposing positions; they are equal "with regard to being convincing or unconvincing" (*PH* I 10).

The skeptic approaches each particular position as one to be opposed and supported simultaneously. If she does not support it, it will not be convincing; and if she does not oppose it, it will be too convincing. Of course, it is always possible that the skeptic may run into a position for which she cannot find an opposition. But having found such a position, she does not thereby conclude that the claim should be believed. Instead, she keeps investigating, convinced – at least at the level of appearances – that an opposition to the position must exist. And if asked, for example, "don't you believe that for all positions, an equally strong position can be opposed?" she will answer that it may appear so now, but that strong arguments have been discovered in times past and that the argument that opposes this one must surely be out there. She will assert the contrary, on the basis of this purely hypothetical, possible argument, and thus suspend judgment (*PH* I 34).[105]

Even when presented with an apparently irrefutable position, the skeptic will refuse to assent to the belief and will continue to search for the truth. At some level, what this demonstrates is that Sextus treats the methods of perception and reason as utterly impotent to achieve anything conclusive. I should be careful here. It is not the case that Sextus claims that reason cannot get at the truth or that we do not perceive the truth.[106] After all, as I described, the

[105] Hankinson calls this the 'Micawber Policy' (Hankinson 1995, 30, 303). Perin argues that the availability of this – what he calls the 'possibility argument' – need not guarantee that all skeptical investigation ends in suspension of judgment. He needs to argue for this point in order to support his larger conclusion that the skeptic is genuinely searching for the truth and that she follows rational norms (Perin 2006, 348). As I have tried to indicate above, I think that the skeptic will be prepared to level the possibility argument against a formulation of the skeptical enterprise itself, but with the result of skeptical suspension. Thus, the very possibility of finding the truth acts as a purgative which results in *epochê*.

[106] Sextus calls this a (negative) dogmatic position; and he states very clearly that this characterizes the Academics and not the Pyrrhonians (*PH* I 3, 220-35).

skeptical ability approaches each assertion on its own. If asked whether reason can grasp the truth, the skeptic will say she does not hold an opinion one way or the other on the matter (or that in one light, it seems like it can and in another, that it cannot). She will hold open the possibility that reason may actually achieve the truth, and she will be able to give reasons to support either position. But the skeptical ability is used to call into question exactly what these methods provide; it raises questions about the reliability of these methods. There is no way to establish the reliability of these methods conclusively.[107]

The skeptic rejects the norms of reason (again, being careful, as this is only an implicit rejection). That is, a sound argument for the claim p in no way requires that the skeptic admit p.[108] Given good reasons to believe p, there is nothing to *compel* the skeptic to conclude p. The way that Sextus discusses reasons, they seem to have merely psychological force; they do not justify the claim that p on any rational basis.[109] This means that the skeptic behaves as if there is little or no reason to think that reason or perception actually gets you to the truth.[110] Good reasons do not obligate cognitive action on our part. Thus, the skeptical approach implicitly undermines the entire epistemological enterprise.[111]

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[107] It cannot be established *a priori* insofar as there is no trusted method to establish reliability beforehand. And there is no way to establish reliability empirically because one must use some other criteria to establish whether the method has actually gained the truth. See, for example, *PH* I 59-61, II 34-6.

[108] In part because the veracity of the premises is always open to question.

[109] One reason for this is that the skeptic is an expert at producing opposing accounts that have equal weight. When Sextus defines equipollence, he says that it means "equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing" (*PH* I 10).

[110] In the face of an irrefutable argument, the skeptic can only offer the possibility of a refutation as a reason to not accept the conclusion.

[111] Annas and Branes note in the introduction of their translation of *PH* that the skepticism of Sextus has been characterized as "local" as opposed to "global" where local skepticism is a skepticism that is contextualized by topic or location – local skepticism asks you to suspend judgment on one matter – while global skepticism asks that you suspend judgment on everything. Sextus is sometimes characterized as a local skeptic because, as he describes skepticism, it is the ability to oppose this argument to that argument. The Pyrrhonian skeptic is always investigating this issue or that issue and therefore she can only suspend judgment on the issue in question. But as Annas and Barnes correctly note, there is a sense in which Sextus is a global skeptic since the skeptical modes (especially the five modes of Agrippa) can be applied to every situation; therefore, armed with the five modes, the skeptic can advocate suspension of judgment on every issue (Introduction to *PH* xxv – xxvii). I basically agree with this point

I should be careful here too. Sextus claims that the apparent is a guide of sorts. He does not question the apparent: it is a criterion for action (*PH* I 22). But this is not meant to be an assent to what is unclear; that is, it is not a criterion of truth (*PH* I 21, II 14-17). Sextus does say that the skeptic does not question the appearances insofar as "they depend on passive and unwilled feelings and are not objects of investigation" (*PH* I 22). Given this, it seems strange that Sextus argues against appearances, as he does against the possibility of motion in the example mentioned above. If the skeptic does not reject the appearances as a guide for action, why argue against them as a guide for truth? Sextus tells us why he presents arguments against the appearances:

> And if we do propound arguments directly against what is apparent, it is not because we want to reject what is apparent that we set them out, but rather to display the rashness of the Dogmatists; for if reasoning (*logos*) is such a deceiver that it all but snatches even what is apparent from under our very eyes, surely we should keep watch on it in unclear matters, to avoid being led into rashness by following it? (*PH* I 20)

In other words, the skeptic deeply mistrusts reason. She uses her rational capacity to make convincing claims that are contrary to what is utterly obvious in order to create a distrust of reason in others. We ought to take care regarding any conclusion that reasoning seems to reveal to us because reason does not have special access to the truth.[112]

One way to interpret Sextus's claim is that reason itself is flawed; it goes wrong from time to time. The charge that "reasoning is such a deceiver" may suggest this interpretation.

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although I would add that Sextus cannot make the global claim consistently and therefore his global skepticism is only implicit to the skeptical way of life.

[112] The appearances also do not have special access to the truth. But at least the apparent allows us to get around in the world. It is for this reason that I think Hume was more of a Pyrrhonian than he knew: "The great subverter of Pyrrhonism or the excessive principles of scepticism, is action, and employment, and the occupations of common life. These principles may flourish and triumph in the schools; where it is, indeed, difficult, if not impossible, to refute them. But as soon as they leave the shade, and by the presence of the real objects, which actuate our passions and sentiments, are put in opposition to the more powerful principles of our nature, they vanish like smoke, and leave the most determined sceptic in the same condition as other mortals" (Hume [1777] 1993, 109,10).

Logos is portrayed as a liar.[113] Alternately, perhaps Sextus is thinking about reason instrumentally; it is a tool whose end depends on its beginning. Reason works, but the truth of its conclusions is contingent upon the veracity of its source material. His portrayal of the skeptical arguments as medicine to cure dogmatic rashness might be a reason to believe the instrumental approach. The therapeutic effectiveness of reason depends on our own psychological constitution; Sextus speaks about arguments as if they push us in one direction or another toward beliefs (*PH* III 280). Thus, the skeptical ability allows the skeptic to create the equally weighted oppositions in order to balance the push and pull of reason. By stanching reason from leading us toward a belief, the skeptic blocks reason's directive impulse. And it is the dogmatist's assumption that this directive impulse indicates the achievement of truth that characterizes his rashness. On this interpretation, Sextus uses reason as an effective remedy, not only to search for the truth himself, but also to demonstrate to the dogmatist that his dogmatic trust in reason is opposed by reason itself. Regardless of the interpretation you choose, the skeptic's epistemological approach is characterized by an implicit rejection of the norms of reason. A reasoned conclusion does not give us good reason to believe anything at all.

II. The Relation between Rational and Ethical Norms

The conclusion that rational argumentation does not give us good reason to believe anything at all suggests an answer to the second question posed above. How does the skeptical way of life relate to Sextus's philosophy? The skeptical rejection of the norms of reason is related to the skeptical way of life as a non-eudaimonistic approach in at least two ways. First,

[113] As such, the notion of a "good" argument vs. a "bad" argument is probably a little misleading when discussing the skeptical disposition. What matters is the strength and effectiveness of the argument (*PH* III 280,1). If the argument does its job of rebutting "the dogmatic affliction of conceit," there is no external criterion by which to judge the intrinsic value of the argument (apart of the values available to the dogmatic position).

the skeptical life is tied to the broader skeptical philosophy in that its epistemological approach leads to ethical considerations. Since the skeptic behaves as if reason provides no principled access to the truth, then the skeptic has no reason to believe any particular account of nature. After all, nature does not simply appear. If the skeptic has no access to nature, then she has no way to determine what is good by nature. Insofar as the eudaimonistic ethical framework appeals to what is good by nature in order to determine the end of human life, the skeptic has no access to the end either. If no end, then no happiness. In other words, the fact that reason is unable to grasp the truth reliably means that – for the skeptic – no arguments can be made that will show conclusively what constitutes human happiness. Because the skeptic has no reason to claim that our happiness is constituted by this or that, she cannot recommend any particular end.[114]

The second way that the skeptical ethics and epistemology are related is that both involve a rejection of norms. I have just explained above how the skeptic rejects of the norms of reason. But we have also seen that the skeptical way of life rejects the normativity of the end. That is, while Sextus describes the skeptical end as *ataraxia*, there is good reason to think that he does not mean this as something that we ought to pursue. Sextus's rejection of the norms of reason is paralleled in his ethical considerations by a rejection of the normativity of the end.

Thus, I propose that Sextus's philosophy – at least, his epistemology and his ethics – is characterized by a thoroughgoing rejection of the normative. He does not accept any standard which is directive toward a particular goal or end – whether it is truth or happiness. There is no standard which can push us toward an end without some reason (reason used in the loose sense).

[114] This interpretation places Sextus fairly close to what O'Keefe calls the "radical" interpretation of the Cyrenaics. O'Keefe argues that – on the radical interpretation – the Cyrenaics deny that we have knowledge of human nature which gives us the human *telos* (as Aristotle argues). As a result, they also deny that we have an end beyond the particular pleasures that we now desire; thus, their subjectivist epistemological position leads to their ethical position in much the same way that I am suggesting Sextus's does (O'Keefe 2002, 406-411).

And therefore the skeptical end cannot be normative in the sense that one should pursue the end. Moreover, there is no way to establish the end because the epistemological *dunamis* operates by undermining any basis on which we could make claims about the end. As such, the skeptical end cannot be eudaimonistic because the skeptical way of life operates by undermining any normative basis by which Sextus could claim what the good life is. That does not mean that he cannot have an end. The end therefore must simply be where he ends up and nothing more.

III. The Skeptical Way of Life

The skeptical way of life is one that is characterized by an implicit thorough-going rejection of the normative in these two domains – the ethical and epistemological. This gestures toward an answer to the first question of this chapter; that is, what is a positive characterization of the skeptical way of life. But more can be said about the life that Sextus describes. He makes it clear that the skeptical ethic is meant to be conducive to a conventional way of life. As he says, "For we coherently follow, to all appearances, an account which shows us a life in conformity with traditional customs and the law and persuasions and our own feelings" (*PH* I 17). In other words, the skeptical way of life is one that follows the criterion of action. The skeptical rejection of the normative is an attempt to undermine the basis for any criterion of truth while at the same time opening up the "the criterion of skepticism," that is, "attending to what is apparent" (*PH* I 23). In this sense, Sextus's description of the skeptical criterion is not simply a response to *apraxia* arguments (although it is obviously that as well). Rather, the skeptical criterion – living according to the appearances – is central to what the skeptical life is.

The appearances are authoritative for the skeptic and it is in this "loose" sense that the skeptic maintains some norms. The appearances provide the basis for the skeptical life and as a

result, the appearances take the place of a normatively grounded ethic. Thus, Sextus admits that piety is good and impiety bad (PH I 24); the skeptic even affirms values. But these values are affirmed in the context of societies custom's and laws, not as an intrinsic or natural value, but simply as the apparent convention. Piety is not good in some philosophical sense such that all humans ought to pursue it. One ought to sacrifice to the gods because it seems good.

In light of the skeptical criterion, it seems that the skeptical way of life is a deeply ambivalent life. On the one hand, it is characterized by philosophical inquiry and the ability to create and oppose arguments. On the other hand, the skeptic retreats into ordinary life, and accepts the values and the life in which she was raised.[115] The skeptic lives day-to-day moderately and with tranquility by means of *epochê* because reason did not provide the answers that were promised.

[115] She accepts those values in the sense that she keeps living according to the guidance of the traditions and norms of her society. But, of course, she may question those norms in the critical sense of investigating their truth and developing arguments for and against them.

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