

rett has nothing to say.

The book is a curate's egg, good in parts. Here is the part at the end. It is Barrett's tentatively favoured solution, the one also developed by Euan Squires (*Conscious Mind in the Physical World*, New York: Adam Hilger, 1990; this book too goes unmentioned). It is a one-world dualistic theory, with the usual double-standard of all the mentalistic approaches: whilst the physics is precisely described in mathematical terms, although it concerns nothing that we ever actually observe, the mental—in the Squires-Barrett case a single *collective* mentality—is imprecisely described in non-mathematical terms, despite the fact that it contains everything under empirical control. It is Kant inside out.

If we were to have a precise dynamics for this collective mentality, using terms (as we must) that are ordinarily thought of as physical, only on a point of terminology would the theory differ from a state-reduction or hidden-variable theory. The problem of how to actually carry this out, and of how to resolve the potential conflict with relativity, will emerge anew. But it may be that only in this purely nominal sense can one solve the problem of measurement without modifying the equations, and without modal realism. The choice, between accepting Everett's proposal and giving up relativity, will be all the more clear-cut if it is.

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***Pyrrho—his Antecedents and his Legacy***, by Richard Bett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. xi + 264. H/b £35.00.

Pyrrho of Elis is traditionally presented, in ancient texts and in modern commentaries, as a votary of the philosophy to which he gave his name: as a sceptic, utter and outright. Richard Bett would subvert the tradition: his Pyrrho is not an epistemologist but a metaphysician, the foundation of whose thought is a metaphysical thesis: Everything is indeterminate. From this thesis Pyrrho inferred that we should not believe anything; and he announced that the result of such unbelief is tranquillity of mind.

The introduction to Bett's book sets the scene and discusses the meagre evidence for Pyrrho's philosophical position. Chapter 1 offers a meticulous analysis of the chief item of evidence, and discovers in it Pyrrho's metaphysical thesis. Chapter 2 deals with anecdotes about Pyrrho's life and dissects some pertinent fragments of the work of his disciple, Timon. Chapter 3 looks for the influences on Pyrrho—and finds them primarily in Plato. Chapter 4 explains how Pyrrho's thought was transmuted into Pyrrhonism as it passed through the hands first of Aenesidemus and then of Sextus Empiricus.

Much of Bett's argument has already been published in article form; but the

book usefully puts the material together and considers, with modesty and intelligence, certain objections which have been or might be raised against the metaphysical interpretation. Many of the accompanying contentions are true: the book makes a substantial contribution to the understanding of a knotty group of texts. In addition, it is pleasingly written and prettily presented; but it is a pity—given that the argument turns largely on philological matters—that the crucial texts are not reproduced in their original language.

Here I limit myself to Bett's main and original claim. He talks of 'Pyrrho the Non-Sceptic'. But although his Pyrrho differs importantly from the later Greek Pyrrhonists, he remains someone who believes nothing (e.g. p. 39); and he might best be described as a sceptic with a metaphysical bottom. Then was the bottom metaphysical?

The case turns on a single short text. In his *Preparation for the Gospel*, Eusebius quotes a passage from the *History of Philosophy* written by a Peripatetic philosopher called Aristocles, who probably flourished in the second or first century A.D. (but see pp. 14–15). Aristocles says that 'Pyrrho of Elis was a powerful advocate' of the position that 'it is our nature to know nothing'. Although 'he himself has left nothing in writing', Timon recorded his master's notions. Aristocles can thus offer, in some ten lines paraphrased from Timon, an account of Pyrrho's philosophy; and he follows it with half a dozen pages of criticism.

This is the crucial passage, which I give in Bett's translation:

He [Timon] says that he [Pyrrho] reveals that [1] things are equally indifferent and unstable and indeterminate; [2] for this reason neither our sensations nor our opinions tell the truth or lie. [3] For this reason, then, we should not trust them, but should be without opinions and without inclinations and without wavering, [4] saying about each thing that it no more is than is not or both is and is not or neither is nor is not. (Eusebius, *PE* XIV xviii 3–4)

The three adjectives in clause [1], according to Bett, might be taken either in an epistemological or in a metaphysical sense. Their interpretation can be fixed only by the sense of the argument which follows in [2]–[4] (p. 22). And the argument, Bett urges, strongly encourages a metaphysical interpretation.

(A) The passage from Aristocles is the only text which suggests a metaphysical Pyrrho. Bett is right to insist that it is our most important text. But, on the one hand, he overestimates Aristocles, sometimes writing as though we knew what words Timon—or indeed Pyrrho—had used (pp. 28, 31). Aristocles is not citing Timon—and how near he keeps to any Timonian text we cannot judge (see p. 16). And on the other hand, Bett underestimates the rest of the evidence. Antigonus and Ariston and Aenesidemus all—so far as we know—presented Pyrrho as a plain sceptic, not as a metaphysical sceptic; and they had information—in particular, other work by Timon—which we do not. Perhaps they distorted or suppressed or simply missed Pyrrho's metaphysics? Perhaps they alluded to it and their allusions are lost? There is another, and initially more plausible, hypothesis.

(B) Of the three adjectives in clause [1], the first, ‘indifferent [*adiaphoros*]’, is radically undetermined. The second, ‘unstable [*astathmêtos*]’ is genuinely ambiguous—‘of no fixed abode’ or ‘unmeasurable’. The third, ‘indeterminate [*anepikritos*]’, means ‘undecidable’ or ‘undecided’. Such is the sense which Aristocles, who wrote the sentence, gave to the word (see especially XIV xviii 9, where it is paired with ‘unknowable [*agnôstos*]’); and such is the sense which it bears in philosophical Greek. Since one of the three adjectives demands an epistemological interpretation, it is plausible to construe all three epistemologically. Bett supposes that Timon used the word ‘*anepikritos*’ in an unattested sense which goes against its transparent etymology. (He might perhaps better have suggested that the adjective was not used by Timon but introduced into the text by Aristocles’s paraphrase.)

(C) Everything is indeterminate. An ingenuous reader of Bett’s book might take the metaphysical thesis to amount to something like this: for every object  $x$  and every predicate ‘ $F(\xi)$ ’, ‘ $F(\xi)$ ’ is neither true of  $x$  nor false of  $x$ . (See e.g. p. 118, n.10: ‘no predicate either applies or fails to apply to anything’.) But it seems that Bett means to ascribe something a little less outrageous to Pyrrho, namely: for every object  $x$  and every predicate ‘ $F(\xi)$ ’, ‘ $F(\xi)$ ’ is neither invariably and without qualification true of  $x$  nor invariably and without qualification false of  $x$ . (See e.g. p. 118; p. 134, n.38. That is to say,  $x$  is ‘in its true nature purely indeterminate’: p. 117.) Thus read, the thesis is not evidently nonsensical; but it is evidently false—and we may wonder how it fits into the economy of Pyrrho’s thought (or rather, into the economy of Aristocles’s text).

In Bett’s view, Aristocles claims that, according to Timon, from the thesis that everything is indeterminate, it follows that none of our perceptions or beliefs is either true or false (see especially p. 23). The inference is preposterous. Suppose that ‘purple( $\xi$ )’ is neither true nor false of tomatoes. Then ‘purple( $\xi$ )’ is not true of tomatoes—and my present belief that tomatoes are not purple is true. So, come to that, is my standard perception of tomatoes as non-purple. (This remains whether or not Pyrrho rejected the principle of bivalence: see p. 126, n.26.) Moreover, most ordinary opinions are entirely untouched by the thesis. The tomatoes, I believe, are now green; they will turn orange in a few weeks, and then red. The metaphysical thesis warns me that tomatoes, in their nature, have no determinate colour—but that is no more than a fancy way of saying what every gardener knows.

(D) There is a better way to construe the text. First, clause [2]—‘neither our sensations nor our opinions tell the truth or lie’—should be taken to mean not ‘no perception and no belief is either true or false’ but rather ‘not every perception nor every belief is true, and not every perception nor every belief is false’. (See M. R. Stopper, ‘Schizzi Pirroniani’, *Phronesis* 28, 1983, pp. 292–3. Bett disputes Stopper’s interpretation (pp. 60–2); but he does not understand it as I do.) Secondly, the Greek text in [2] must be emended: instead of ‘for this reason [*dia touto*]’ read ‘because [*dia to*]’. (See E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, III i (Leipzig, 1909), p. 501. Bett gives a detailed philological defence

of the received text (pp. 25–26), and everything he says there is true. Nonetheless, Zeller’s emendation is palmary.) And thus, on the traditional interpretation of clause [1], the argument runs as follows: ‘Since neither our perceptions nor our beliefs are always true, we can’t determine how things are.’ The inference is hardly unexceptionable; but its face is a familiar one in the sceptical clubs: in order to determine how things are, we need—in the later jargon—a criterion; but neither perception nor opinion, being unreliable things, can supply one. This is probably the argument which Aristocles thought he had transcribed, and it is possibly the argument which Timon ascribed to his master.

These brisk remarks have not, and should not have, persuaded Bett that he is wrong: his interpretation is subtle, and it requires a far subtler consideration that I have had space to give it. In truth, I am no more certain that Bett is wrong than he is that he is right. But if anything determinate is to be said on the matter, I still side with Sextus, who says that he and his fellow sceptics call themselves Pyrrhonists ‘because it appears to us that Pyrrho applied himself to scepticism more substantively and more conspicuously than any of his predecessors’.

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*Aristotle’s Ethics*, by David Bostock. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. ix + 255. P/b £15.99.

Some writers about the *Nicomachean Ethics* attribute a unified and systematic view of morality—a moral theory—to Aristotle. Others focus on details and work through its particular topics one by one. David Bostock’s book belongs to the latter tradition. It is not a full commentary but it does consider every major topic (partial exceptions are Book I chapters 8–12 and the description of particular virtues of character in Book III chapters 6 to 12 and Book IV). Those who find a comprehensive view in Aristotle also tend to think that the view is right or at least very persuasive. Sometimes the claims made for Aristotle are extreme, and his insights are contrasted with the mistakes of contemporary moral philosophy.

Bostock is refreshingly free of this stance. He subjects Aristotle to severe criticism, criticism that he believes cannot in the end be answered. The most important objections are aimed at Aristotle’s central ideas and the relationship between them. Bostock finds deep gaps in Aristotle’s account of ethics.

I agree that gaps exist and that Bostock is right to focus our attention on them. However, this does not decide where the gaps come and how deep they are. I will explain the problems that Bostock finds, but I will also indicate