

Conclusion

Abstract

Chapter 11 concludes the essay by emphasizing the importance of reconsidering today Pyrrho and Aenesidemus' ideas. For centuries, humans have enjoyed the comforting delusions of being the measuring masters of space and time. And yet, the time has perhaps come for these delusions to be questioned and doubted once more. Out of the four elements of ancient Greek thought, air finally acquires all its metaphorical relevance for its potential to disrupt received wisdom on reality, time, and thought. Over the devastated landscapes and dying oceans, winds are out of control, minds are reckless, and times are short. This is no mere apocalypse; this is air finally making itself known to the little creatures skuttling over Earth's surface. Against the instrumental logics established at the time of Aristotle, logos finally acquires with Pyrrho's tetralemma and Aenesidemus' time is air, its true meteorological dimension. All change at will without reason over the desolate ruins of a few all-too-logical past fantasies. Pyrrho and Aenesidemus' ideas might just allow us to rekindle with our turbulent aporetic logos, one for which all is both contradictory and non-contradictory, measured and chaotic, just as it has always been.

During a short period, Elis, the north-western city-state west of Arcadia where Pyrrho lived, was ruled by a tyrant called Aristotimus (c321-273BC). He had been installed, fifty-two years after the death of Alexander, by the Macedonian King Antigonos II Gonatas in 272BC and ruled only a few months during which he committed many crimes and drove 800 citizens into exile. During these fateful months, Aristotimus forced Pyrrho, now an aged man, to teach his non-philosophy by arresting his companion, Eurylochus, and threatening to kill him. To avoid such a fate, Pyrrho agreed. Here is Carré's fictional account of Pyrrho's reluctant first and only lesson in *Yavana*:

"Even though Pyrrho was now unperturbed by most things, he nonetheless also felt it necessary to avoid falling into a complete lack of discernment, which would simply be senselessness itself... Determined to free the innocent Eurylochus who did not deserve to stay a moment longer in a cell in the middle of winter, he agreed to speak with Aristotimus. When he reached the palace, Aristotimus was flanked by his father and two athletes, half bodyguards, half adornments.

Aristotimus: Pyrrho! What do you say we use this dull moment for one of your perplexing lessons on the aporetic?

Pyrrho: Man is a dull animal on this splendid day... Please take your seats, my lords. I shall relieve your boredom.

With a few grumbling noises, they all sat down. Standing in front of the tyrant, Pyrrho fixed his gaze upon him.

Pyrrho: The aporetic consists in shouting without a sound, laughing for no reason, and crying without shedding tears.

Aristotimus shifted his weary gaze away from the non-philosopher firebrand and with a small nudge to his father, burst out laughing. They all followed suit.

Pyrrho: The aporetic is achieved by betraying any one position, is acquired by unseating any form of power, and is examined away from tyranny.

Everyone burst out laughing again. Unperturbed, Pyrrho continued:

Pyrrho: The aporetic treats stupidity, intelligence, and deceitfulness with the same indifference.

Aristotimus was no longer laughing. Sensing a turn for the worst, everyone immediately left the assembly room. The bogus tyrant in need of a good beating was staring at Pyrrho in disbelief. After a long while, he said:

Aristotimus: Fine, your friend Eurylochus will be freed later.”¹

The moral of the story is clear enough: if one is forced to spell out what an aporetic logos consists of—i.e., a logic that is not exclusively human and for which customs converge with nature (*phusis*)—then everything becomes both senseful and senseless: someone is shouting and yet it is soundless, someone is laughing and yet nothing is funny, someone is crying and yet there are no tears. Such perplexing situations show that what appears senseless, gibberish, or nonsensical is not a form of anarchy for which anything and everything can happen. Absurdism or irrationality is again not what is at stake here. Such perplexing occurrences are also not indicators that logos is utterly useless and that only death itself, that is, the opposite of a supposedly reasoned life is worth considering. Precipices continue to be avoided and Eurylochus still needs to be saved. Pyrrho’s lesson simply shows that nothing is secure even if there is some form of security in temporary human logic. To phrase this differently, one could perhaps say: Pyrrho’s aporetic “sense” goes with both the logic of customs and that of *phusis*, wherever it takes him. I use the word “sense” following Nancy’s interpretation of this word, namely, as a logical attribution (“this has meaning”) and a logical expression in the throes of the unpredictable (“this expresses itself”).² In other words, although logos still makes sense, its aporetic nature (meaning, direction) is never guaranteed.

But this is not all. If one acknowledges that one is aporetic, i.e., not a sceptic in its latter appellation, but someone embracing the perplexing aporia with its endless changes, one can only become not only disloyal to any established order, but altogether treacherous towards

¹ Carré, *Yavana*, 1991, 286-7, my translation.

² See Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, 1997, 4-6.

it. Those who are aporetic or at one with meteorology, i.e., logos, need no method (*odos*). They no longer need a strategy to inculcate differentia, stability, or decidedness. A method requires stable bases from which to confirm the procedure or the technique. Since no methodology is at work here, then lessons go out of the window, dispersing in the air where all is movement. In such an unusual treacherous context, nothing remains differentiated, fixed, or resolved; everything becomes one vast subversive hurricane or one deceitful breeze or maybe both, at once. This does not mean that those embracing an aporetic logos or a meteorology are guilty of betraying human logic with its all-too-imposing certainties and temporarily established laws. The treachery is the natural outcome of a perplexing logos that at last allies together both customs and nature. To be aporetic, in an early Pyrrhonian sense, is to be necessarily treacherous towards any form of custom that *aspires* to consolidate itself into either doxa or *episteme*.³ Such treachery is, as intimated earlier, an invitation to remain with the narration or the question, that is, to persevere in perplexity. No aporetic or meteorological position could sustain itself without questioning or changing perspective, not because it is fickle or capricious, but because no human logic is strong enough to consolidate itself as a determined or fixed position. Once again, fickleness and capriciousness are not what is aimed at here because no prior discernible rule or benchmark exists from which one could judge something to be either “fickle” or “capricious.” With nothing but air, those in the aporia who ally customs and nature (*phusis*) can only remain true to their aerial selves, to their minds tirelessly criss-crossed by non-contradictory or contradictory thoughts that never waver in their indeterminateness or unexpectedness.⁴

Considering such an unforgiven, and no doubt unforgivable lesson, it is therefore not surprising that Pyrrho’s lesson failed. Aristotimus wanted confirmed and certain knowledge, thought-provoking *episteme* and established doxa, as well as centres of significance from which to consolidate and justify his tyrannic power. Instead, he is asked to reflect on the way nature expresses itself in all its perplexity. This failed lesson goes some way to explain why Pyrrho never wrote a single word or established a school of thought.⁵ Contrary to his contemporaries, Pyrrho founded nothing that resembled an Academy (c.300-83AD), a Lyceum (c.345-100BC), a Painted Porch (310-150BC), a Garden (c.300-79AD), or a

³ The latter not in a Foucauldian sense (the “rules of formation” which govern legitimate forms of knowledge within a given epoch, see Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1974, xii), but in an Aristotelian sense, namely, as the knowledge of the necessary with the rationality of causality (*aitia*) as a central organising principle. See Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 1993, 71b10–15, 75.

⁴ As I intimated in Chapter 1, Introduction, the topic of the aeriality of the mind cannot be broached here for lack of space. Suffice to say at this point that if one remains at the level of the discursive or the interrogative (without necessarily falling into silence—*aphasia*), then what occurs in thought can no longer be understood as either correct or incorrect for such alternative no longer makes sense. As Graham says, “[Nature] has composed a type of mind both stable and unstable. She has mixed each form of mentality in us... True, some folks are more temperamentally secure than others... But beneath our individual differences, however, is a fusion of both. Each of us is endowed with a stable/unstable mind.”⁴ Graham, *Disordered Mind*, 2014, 3. This does not preclude efforts to help when instability turns to despair, fear, anxiety, sorrow, depression, etc. This simply attenuates the potential dogmatic positions that compartmentalise one from another and allows for an adaptable un-steadiness that precisely matches the way air and the human mind behave, meteors that never know where to go.

⁵ Although he founded no proto-Sceptic school, some scholars see him as a wandering “guru.” Long, for example, links him instead to other Greek “gurus” who penned nothing or very little such as Diogenes of Sinope, Crates of Thebes, and Stilpo of Megar, but without automatically assuming a commonality between them. See Long, “Timon of Phlius: Pyrrhonist and Satirist,” 1978.

Gymnasium (c.330-200BC). When it comes to Pyrrho's thought, nothing can indeed be taught and no one, not even a tyrant, can learn something from it. The previous tyrant, Alexandre, whose erratic behaviour was only explained after his armies passed, leaving in their wake both splendours and horrors, provided the real lesson to all tyrants. Never trust where human logic and above all dogma can lead to. It is unlikely that Aristotimus learned anything from Pyrrho since he was killed shortly afterwards by Cylon of Elis, the resistance leader in a fight against tyranny.⁶ The heuristic character of Pyrrho's thought can only take place outside of all established schools, institutions, or temples and therefore outside of any teaching framework that tirelessly consolidates master-pupil differentiae. In its interrogative formulation, the tetralemma prevents curricula and all the institutional paraphernalia that comes with them. Besides his disciples Eurylochus, Timon, Hecataeus, Numenius, Nausiphanes, and much later Aenesidemus, Pyrrho had no followers. He died a hermit in an unmarked cave on Mount Erymanthos where, apparently, Artemis went about its ridged peaks hunting the area well-known for its Erymanthian boars, as Homer recounts in the *Odyssey*.

I started this essay with Aristocles' account of Pyrrho's thought in which it was established, paradoxically, that although it is in our nature to know nothing, it is nonetheless necessary to inquire into the nature of such a knowledge. The paradox can thus now be solved. If nothing can be established with any certainty, if no a priori principle can be put forward because reason always arrives too late and can never match nature's own taking place, then indeed it is in our nature to know nothing at all. If one is truthful to such an inability, then knowledge is nothing more than nature taking place as *logos*, i.e., *phusis* in act alongside our endless propensity to attribute differentiae right, left, and centre as well as then, now, and tomorrow. This is particularly important when ontologies are put forward. No more "is" or "is not," both "is" and "is not," and neither "is" and "is not," and the same goes with "becoming." Nothing can be pinned down because all is in an "unsteady state" of radical change, a state that, unlike Meillassoux's unreasoned, but rational hyper-chaos, is not one strictly speaking (i.e., non-contradictory). It is not a state precisely because it never perdures long enough to be recognized as timeless or hyper-chaotic. All is undifferentiated, unstable, and undecidable *not because of a time that knows no breath whatsoever, but amidst a time that is as regular or irregular as our own breathing*. To be disposed towards things is to be as things behave without fastening onto them anything permanent, not even a moving inner-temporal subjective phenomenon that temporalizes through remembrance, experience, or anticipation. Everything solid has now indeed finally "melted into air" to recall a famous Shakespearean line from the Communist Manifesto,⁷ not in the sense whereby the old bourgeois beliefs have finally come under the blowtorch of the

⁶ Pausanias, *The Description of Greece*, 1977, Book 5, Chapter 1, "History of Elis," §5, 127.

⁷ Marx and Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in *Collected Works*, 1976, 477. In *The Tempest*, Prospero says to Ferdinand: "These our actors, / As I foretold you, were all spirits and / Are melted into air, into thin air" (Act 4, Scene 1). Much could be said not only about this potential Shakespearean quote in Marx, but also of the play's famous exploration of the nature of freedom and enslavement in the figures of Ariel and Caliban. As is well known, Shakespeare famously pitched Ariel the upward-tending elements of air against Caliban the downward-tending elements of earth. Ariel is indeed addressed as such: "Thou, which art but air" (Act V, Scene 1). He is invisible but can take the shape of lightning. His ideas are those of the atmosphere: freedom and ubiquity: to be "free as mountain winds" (Act I, Scene 2). Like the atmosphere, he also reflects human emotions; he can be "moody." I can only leave this immense topic for scholars of Shakespeare, Marx, and/or air. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 2015.

development of the forces of production, but in the wider sense of a reality, a time, and a thought finally behaving like the perplexing adventures that they are. The quest can only therefore continue even when nothing remains stable enough to be determined and decided.

It is worth recalling here a strange expression by Eckhart, one which is here, in this early Pyrrhonian context, stripped of any religious connotation. He writes: “just as the air which is illuminated is nothing other than illumination—it illumines indeed because it is illuminated.”⁸ A wonderfully cryptic saying that curiously captures what is at stake in the few fragments Pyrrho left behind. Pyrrho establishes that all things are undifferentiated and that nothing is fixed and guaranteed in reality, time, or thought. This undifferentiated nature can no longer be that established by the modes of substantial distinction, one which consolidates false identities and dubious non-contradictory states. This undifferentiated nature is as fickle as the mind’s thinking, as volatile as the air, as inconsistent as time itself. Hence Eckhart’s quasi-poetic comparison between air and illumination: “The air illumines because it is illuminated,” it “is nothing other than illumination.” The famous platonic light,⁹ which harshly and unnecessarily dichotomizes the viewer and the viewed and establishes the sovereignty of the subject gazing and the vulnerability of the other who has been objectified, dissolves here, with Pyrrho and Eckhart, into air because there is nothing left but air illuminating itself, time illuminating itself, thought illuminating itself. This does not mean that everyone, every thought, or thing is now dissolved into the oblivion of illuminating air, an empyrean or hyperuranion without shadows. Again, Pyrrho does not advocate for a community with too much light (or, as noted earlier, without light) which would indeed lead its members to fall into precipices. By recalling the metaphorical relevance of air and unshackling time from its measurements and centers of significance, Pyrrho simply frees us from the belief that we are singular logical beings steadfastly rooted to the earth and enlightening ourselves with beacons and light-cones that allow us to tirelessly shed more light, always more light. Without roots and without fixed all-seeing eyes, we become perplexing flurries serendipitously illuminating ourselves without enlightenment—air indeed contemplating air as Carré remarks in the passage quoted at the start of this essay.¹⁰

With regards to time, such a convergence with our windy or windless aporetic condition does not free us from the nasty constraints of the law of finitude or that of the to-come. The questions at this stage are indeed perhaps these: if all is air, do these laws then disappear? Is finitude swept up by a gust of wind or neutered by inert air? Is the radically Other no longer lurking beneath and/or surprising anything whatsoever? Is death no longer a thief in the night? And what of the laws of physics? The laws that Meillassoux sets aside because they do not satisfy his imperious rationality and unwavering materialism are simply that, laws, temporary laws that obey only fleetingly principles of sufficient reason and/or non-contradiction. We might not be able to overcome the grim reaper; we might not be able to guess further than tomorrow, and we might not be able to extricate ourselves from either

⁸ Eckhart, “See What Love,” in Schürmann, *Wandering Joy*, 2001, 136.

⁹ Plato, “The Republic,” in *Complete Works*, 1997, 508d, 1128.

¹⁰ In a fragment, Timon compares Pyrrho to the sun, but I suspect this reading is more that of Empiricus’ than Timon’s for the way it highlights the dangers of a dogmatic take on Pyrrhonism. Pyrrho of old would not blind anyone because even the light causing it would be unstable and undecided. Fragment T61 D, in Decleva Caizzi, *Pirroniana*, 2020, 146.

becoming or *différance*, but these are only provisional realities that we turn into laws simply in order to make sense of ourselves and of the immediate world that surrounds us. And the same goes with the fixed, flat spacetime of special relativity (without gravity), the dynamics of general relativity in which curvature gives rise to gravity, as well as our most unreliable biological and subjective experiences of time. Local or more precisely parochial to our tiny corner of the universe, these laws and these perspectives momentarily help us to articulate ourselves as well as we can. Comprehensible and even, sometimes, comprehensive, they help us to rationalize the nooks and crannies of our lost-in-space small blue dot, imposing differentiae where needed in order not to fall into precipices or vortexes of unreason.¹¹ Reason and human logicity have their scientific and everyday uses, including, for the latter ones, that of gently or abruptly letting oneself go into the good night or rage and rave against the dying light. Notwithstanding how we deal with these laws and perspectives, being passive towards all rational differentiae is the only thing that allows us to make sense of who we are, here and now, as we challenge the injustices of finitudes and the predictabilities of tomorrows. To emphasize the importance of this aporetic or perplexing attitude with regards to time, I will explore how past and future fair when thrown in the air. First, the past.

This passive, aporetic, and meteorological attitude is what indeed strangely allows us to reconsider *the past* as an endless chain of differentiae for which each historical marker signals a decrease in entropy the further away it is from the present: there was less entropy at the start of the universe than today. In the small neighborhood of our vast galaxy, such an entropic increase is usually understood as what is irreversible. This view is based on the direction of a constant rate of entropic increase, a rate that is easily confirmed across diverse fields of study using calculation as an organizing principle, such as history, of course, but also, biology, neurology, sociology, economics, earth sciences, astrophysics, etc. There is only one direction: further entropy and such a law is, like Aristotle's principle, radical and unquestionable.¹² And yet, it is also true, as noted in Chapter 5 and again at the end of Chapter 7, that it is not always possible to single out a *preferred* direction to time, which in turn means that entropy may not always necessarily increase. It can also potentially decrease, or it can also momentarily stop amidst a larger increase of entropy. A simple example of this is the fossil as a time-capsule for which a fossilized trace retains its lower entropy amidst the vast sweep of a much larger entropy, thus violating the second law of thermodynamics.¹³ What this shows is that if there are local slower entropies amidst larger faster ones, then it becomes questionable whether it is wise to deduct that the past is what

¹¹ If space and competence were not here in short supply, it would be necessary to justify why the past-present-future distinction (and its irreversibility) is only valid locally and not for the entire cosmos and that these local distinctions have no-truth value. For such an argument, including truth-values, see Saudek, "Beyond A-Theory and the Block Universe," 2020.

¹² "If your theory is found to be against the second law of thermodynamics, I can give you no hope; there is nothing for it but to collapse in deepest humiliation." Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, 1948, 74.

¹³ Another example would be a biological organism that manages to continue living by reducing its entropy while its habitat is tending rapidly towards faster entropy such as when consumed by fire. See Reichenbach, *The Direction of Time*, 1971, 152ff.

is obviously lost to low entropy.¹⁴ Our notion of the past as ordered and the future as disordered is just a random probability distribution as Boltzmann indeed notes.¹⁵ Amidst this random probability, the past is thus undifferentiated, unstable, and undecidable.¹⁶ It might harbor lower or higher local entropies, who knows? If there are such variations, it is thereby no longer possible to think of the past as a rigid set of decreasingly entropic differentiae established and articulated by an all-too-human chronology. To think otherwise, that is, to be certain of the entropic differentiae of the past and thereby to be certain of determinations such as “disorder” and “order,” is to abdicate to the way humans are right in their mastery of time and incredulity (to say nothing of skepticism) has been perilously discarded.¹⁷

Amidst such uncertainties, what truly gets lost here is neither the historical markers (such as a fossil, for example, and therefore the possibility to learn from it¹⁸) nor the entropic laws themselves. Pyrrho and Aenesidemus’ call to change our thinking about time does not do away with the entropic laws that govern it and give us all these local commonplace historical markers that give us our irreducible and unquestionable experience of time passing. While the Earth tirelessly rotates on its axis and the sun indefatigably sprints around the galaxy, it is unlikely that these will be rendered questionable any time soon. What gets challenged with Pyrrho and Aenesidemus is, most simply, *the logic of the chronometer*, the logic of this

¹⁴ I realise that there is a discrepancy between microscopic and macroscopic descriptions of thermodynamics and that at the microscopic level, physical processes can be reversed, but at the macroscopic level, they cannot, hence the direction of time. Aenesidemus’ time is all simply questions whether such an inalienable truth should be securely projected onto future constants. Is this not what Prigogine and Stengers say when they refer to dissipative structures in non-equilibrium conditions where “we may have transformation from disorder, from thermal chaos, into order.” See Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*, 1984, 12.

¹⁵ As Boltzmann says: “In the universe as a whole the two directions of time are indistinguishable.” Boltzmann’s famous equation $S = k \log P$ indeed relates entropy and probability: if entropy grows then, probability also grows. Boltzmann, *Lectures on Gas Theory*, 1964, 446.

¹⁶ If this argument is valid, then as hinted before with regards to the paradox of ancestrality, it is again no longer necessary to worry about ways of approaching such a past, whether through the correlation, for which the meaning of the fossil can only be apprehended on the basis of a Kantian human retrospection, or emancipated from it, for which the meaning of the fossil is grasped in-itself irrespective of humans. Such a problem is entirely predicated on the belief of the truthfulness of the logic of chronos, distributing its punctual dictats for both the correlationist and the emancipated scientist. In Pyrrho’s universe, there can be no such order and therefore no truthfulness to chronology. See Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 2008, 1-28 and Meillassoux, “Metaphysics, Speculation, Correlation,” 2011.

¹⁷ As Prigogine and Stengers say: “Thermodynamics remains the science of complex systems; but, from this perspective, the only specific feature of complex systems is that our knowledge of them is limited and that our uncertainty increases with time. Instead of recognizing in irreversibility something that links nature to the observer, the scientist is compelled to admit that nature merely mirrors his ignorance.” Prigogine and Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*, 1984, 239.

¹⁸ By qualifying the past as undifferentiated, unstable, and undecidable does not in turn abolish local lessons from history. Even if time is just air, history remains through the sedimentations occasioned by its unruliness. Although entirely dependent on Aristotle’s logical parcelling of time into measured unliveable non-contradictory now-points, these sedimentations can never become a repository of verifiable facts, but an undertaking that always already remains to be done. History is a “to do” on what time as air deposits and can thereby be measured. Each in their own way, the fossil and Auschwitz continue to signify as historically marked sedimentations that ethically *should* go on to play their roles in the furtherance and (hopefully) emancipation of local life. On this topic, see Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1996. For the corporeality of history, see Kirby, *Telling Flesh*, 1997, 121-4. I also address this topic with regards to the statement “never again” pronounced after the Rwandan genocide in Martinon, *After “Rwanda,”* 2013, 171-4 and 232-5.

technē that purports to give us an origin with a guaranteed low entropy, that dictates the tempo of our contemporary present, and lays claim to a destination of ever-increasing entropy.¹⁹ With time as air and with the tetralemma, our cherished timekeeper loses its ordered and ordering principle. While we continue to count the seconds, minutes, days, months, and years, while each of their memorable or forgettable differential trace recedes and fades away into the absolutely immemorial, nothing guarantees that such ordered process remains forever logical, let alone chronological. Who knows if the immemorial might not, one day, disturb once again our horizon of certainties, thus defying again our cherished clock.²⁰ However much we make elaborate calculations, the original logic of the chronometer was dubious all along. The immemorial never absconds from its unruly duty to disturb not only our expectations, but also all chrono-logical frameworks consolidated, lest we forget, during the Enlightenment.²¹ Pyrrho's tetralemma repeats thereby its lesson: Limiting oneself to narration and interrogation is all that can be done with any certainty with the datable and not so datable fragments of the past while the immemorial tirelessly challenge us all over again.

This passive attitude is what also strangely re-opens *the future* now freed of all doxastic perspectives and rational prognostications. Without differentiae, stable referents, and decidedness, the horizon of expectation suddenly opens itself to what is incommensurable and can never be caught up in contingency plans. There is no longer a "here" and a utopian or dystopian "over there." In lieu of a future-present, this capitalizable and domesticable future, we return to a future un-encroached by the present, a future suddenly without metric returns, a future so unrecognizable that it defies even human imagination, a future as unpredictable as the path of a hurricane or of a gentle breeze. Who knows indeed if one day, for example, we might accomplish Fedorov's "common task" allowing us to resurrect all the dead and, outside of all earthbound particularisms, self-design humanity by coalescing all past and future human endeavors so as to achieve a communism on a cosmic scale hereto inconceivable.²² Who knows indeed? The arrow of time with its entropic increases (or decreases) do not prevent it one bit. Our aeriality—i.e., not our imagination, but our propensity to flip any meaning or context whatsoever just like a gust of wind—does not generate absurd miracles or delusional fantasies; it only proves that nothing, not even the guaranteed futures that can be foreseen or designed today (mostly apocalyptic), can determine anything whatsoever. Our future is as radically uncertain as any global winds resulting from the clash between solar flares and Earth's climate, to say nothing of galactic

¹⁹ For lack of space, I address neither the issue of speed nor the much broader one of *technē* in this essay. On speed, see, amongst others, Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, 1986 and Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*, 2007; on *technē*, see Stiegler, *Technics and Time I*, 1998.

²⁰ As noted before (footnote 60, Chapter 6), the immemorial does not descend or surprise out of some unfathomable void, from behind or from within. "It" always emerges from what is memorable and therefore "amortized." See Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 2001, 118 and for a commentary, 141-3.

²¹ As is well known, the French mathematician Marin Mersenne used a pendulum to define the second for the first time in 1644.

²² See Fedorov, *What Was Man Created For?* 1990. I realise this comes close to what Meillassoux says when he envisages, in a teleological fashion, a fourth world after matter, life, and thought. This fourth world is that of justice which has not yet arrived but can be discerned on the horizon. This is for me the product of a linear thinking that still abides to a chronological view of time rich in epochs and eons and to a secretly Christian eschatological perspective. By referencing Fedorov, I am less concerned with his soteriological Orthodox views than the incalculable probability of an undecided future. See Meillassoux, "Divine Inexistence," 2011, 90-121.

or universal gravitational tugs and pulls. Once again, to see or hear this, we simply need to recall the tetralemma, observe, and either narrate and/or remain silent—mere acts that accord with difficulty with our cherished propensity to tirelessly bring everything under the rule of some punctual or timeless principle ready to colonize the future, chronometer and logic operators in hand and, of course, scribes and historians in tow. If the stringent logic of the chronometer is not upheld, then being passive towards all rational futural differentiae is indeed the only thing worth pursuing to gently attenuate the horrors and hopes of the future, even the most legitimate ones. Just like the past, the future in such freedom remains undifferentiated, unstable, and undecidable.

The key to this non-colonizable future, to this future that can never be calculated, is its allergy to instrumentalization and this is again what distinguishes Pyrrho and Aenesidemus' future from that of Meillassoux. When considering the future, Meillassoux only posits himself amidst a chronology as continuing to chase his Pyrrhic victory. This chase, he suggests, must occur with the help of his readers. Meillassoux indeed hopes that the critiques that have been and continue to be addressed to his ideas will in the end reinforce the supremacy of his argument. With such a strategy, he does not just parrot, but literally extend Aristotle's *elenchus* and turns all his future readers not only into advocates of his speculative methodology, but also into his own personal instruments. Here is how he instrumentalizes the future through his readership:

"The examination of the determinate conditions for absolute unreason should strive to multiply objections, the better to reinforce the binding texture of its argumentative fabric. It is by exposing the weaknesses in our own arguments that we will uncover, by way of a meticulous, step by step examination of the inadequacies in our reasoning, the idea of a non-metaphysical and non-religious discourse on the absolute."²³

The aim is clear: he wants his readers to do all the heavy lifting to then claim the trophy of meaning afterwards: yes, he, alone, reached the absolute, after all. If this wasn't enough, Meillassoux is also able through such a harnessing of critiques to give birth to the power of hyper-chaos and transcribe it for us, mere mortals. He writes:

"For it is by progressively uncovering new problems, and adequate responses to them, that we will give life and existence to a *logos* of contingency, which is to say, a reason emancipated from the principle of reason—a speculative form of the rational that would no longer be a metaphysical reason."²⁴

Meillassoux's "logos of contingency" is not Pyrrho and Aenesidemus' aporetic logos. His logos is one that his reason extricates from the labours of his readers and *gives life to* radical unreason. It is not, therefore, a logos in an ancient Greek sense, but once more an all-too-human logic that Aristotle would be proud of. The French philosopher's almighty reason has here again triumphed, this time, with a mastery of rationality that gives him the ability to deliver a logic of contingency—non-contradictory hyper-chaos time in act. Meillassoux' Pyrrhic victory thus continues to be chased after all, resting on others' rebuttals as well as

²³ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 2008, 77.

²⁴ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 2008, 77.

suggestions and argumentations, including this very essay. Thankfully, Pyrrho and Aenesidemus' logos prevents any such instrumentalization of the future. Their logos graciously absconds from the (hopefully) rational logic that led the writing of this essay, but whose arguments no doubt can only happily evaporate away by the light of new knowledge.

Carré's novel ends most appropriately with this recognition that if one frees oneself from dichotomizing a priori concepts, then nothing measured or immeasurable remains, and the perplexing path opens beyond silence towards imperturbability (*ataraxia*). Carré writes:

"Pyrrho: I wonder... what more I could show you... Enough with speech! We are now up the Erymanthos Mountain, and we won't be starving any time soon or freeze to death! Here's what I propose, Eurylochus: we shall keep and share this cave for winter after filling it with all kinds of nuts and of anything else that we will find in the surrounding area that can keep. In the Spring, we shall say our goodbyes: the Erymanthos of the heart is as immeasurable as Egypt, Persia, and India combined. In the Autumn, we will start collecting again what we need for the cold season. If I can give you my advice, Eurylochus, it would be good if, during the course of all four seasons, we remain without judgement or desire, in plain equanimity and above all without good sense. If we manage that, we will no longer need words, imagination, or reason.

For everyone concerned, both Pyrrho and Eurylochus disappeared to themselves and to one another in the snow-capped peaks of the Erymanthos Mountain. They had offered themselves to the mud of the mind and the clarity of the sky, a distinction that only an unbiased gavel can settle. Patience without senselessness, slow dissolution... Anywhere but in the land of doxa, the measured and the immeasurable have no meaning at all."²⁵

No more conflicting positions can survive Pyrrho's Erymanthian heights, not because he operates in high altitude and is therefore unsoiled by the murkiness of endlessly conflicted human affairs, but because on Mount Erymanthos or on any other place on earth or in the universe, there are no longer any figural or conceptual elevation or abyss, and all kinds of measurement, whether doxastic or epistemological, whether a priori or a posteriori are no more than are not, etc. Contrasts dissolve, opinions are attenuated, passions are dissolved, and imperturbability (*ataraxia*) can only reign in the same way that it reigns in the perplexing energies of nature.²⁶ Nature is made up of perplexing energies not because it is either still and silent or stormy and discordant but because it is most simply a beguiling and stupefying reality at one with itself. In this aporia that knows no *odos*, logos occurs without rules determining the order, without logic imposing its dictates on what effectively suffers none, and above all, without clocks dictating the tempo. In this odd world that Aristotle and Plato would of course reject outright, Meillassoux might begrudgingly accept even if it is short of the ultra-rationalist absolute he longs for but can never fully explain, we can at last

²⁵ Carré, *Yavana*, 1991, 360-1, my translation.

²⁶ In saying that *ataraxia* is ultimately living in perplexity, I obviously go against the usual interpretation of this term in Pyrrhonian scholarship, which sees it as a state of serene calmness. For such a view, see Kalaš, "The Problem of Truth, Happiness and Self-Refutation," 2019; Svavarsson, "Tranquillity: Democritus and Pyrrho," 2013; Svavarsson, "The Pyrrhonian Idea of the Good Life," 2015; and Svavarsson, "Two Kinds of Tranquillity," 2011.

be relieved from the need to brace ourselves from the tempests of our hearts and minds, letting them occur in equanimity, not because we are strong and steady in body and mind, but because we are peacefully, that is, aporetically at one with perplexing nature, with all its gentle breezes and vengeful outbursts. In the end, the imperturbability (*ataraxia*) of Pyrrhonian perplexities can only outdo the Pyrrhic victories of rational neo-materialists.

Even though human conflicts (with itself and the environment) will not obviously be abolished, the joining together of perplexities (human and nature's logics) allow us to glimpse at the way logos expresses itself aporetically. This does not mean capturing, coercing, or harnessing logos so as to force it yet again brutally into a logical submission. The reign of imperturbability knows both the peace and quiet of the herbaceous borders and the frightening eruptions of a volcano. *Ataraxia* also knows both the hurly burly of the chaise longue resplendent with pressing nows and languorous sensations as well as the violent devastations caused onto humans by human themselves in their tireless need to always inflict harm and injury. Realising this simple, but all-so-strange reality and the composure it implies make rural idyllic settings, infernos, and warzones nothing but aporias expressing themselves, that is, perplexing expressions that know no poros, no urban dystopian solutions, no promised paradises, and no future safe haven. Realising this confusing and baffling reality and its accompanying state also makes religious temples and business centres—these places of worship always aspiring for “more”—lose all their ostensibly blessed and seemingly grounded realities since the “more” in question knows no meteorological security. Finally, realising this vexing and infuriating reality and the aplomb it calls for make the idea of an applicable Pyrrhonic praxis impossible because the crisis and the struggle suddenly lose their force of generality.²⁷ There will never be an end to struggles. Crises of identity (*idem*), sovereignty (*ipse*), opinion (*doxa*), or of any other human logic will never wane. But *next* to these struggles and crises, there can *also* be the engendering of a certain sensitivity that hears and sings in tune with logos. In this context, *ataraxia* is thereby nothing but a navigation of logics (*phusis* and customs), not in order to bring them together or sublate them, not in order to resolve them or overcome them, but in order to continue a little longer in an equally aporetic manner, in a similar perplexing manner so as to actively be at one with logos. *Ataraxia* can only indeed be achieved if the two logics are aligned with this *logos* that never settles. It is only then that the logic of the struggles and crises will wane in the perplexing turmoil.

Whither to then? For centuries, humans have enjoyed the comforting delusions of being masters of time: The past was simply, as noted earlier, a pit to be foraged and its contents

²⁷ This is what separates all the preceding developments from Althusser's aleatory materialism, which, alas, cannot be addressed here. Suffice to note that Althusser's aleatory materialism is primarily preoccupied with a scientific and Marxist conception of crisis as key to transform the real. It focuses on revolutionary struggle and how it can happen anywhere and at any time. While it rightly ignores origins or ends and emphasizes contingency and chance, the gist of this late thought is how to engage and harness the aleatory aspects of empirical and concrete forces and how to precipitate an a-teleological world constituted solely of discrete encounters bound and sundered by chance and event. Such engagement and harnessing show that (like Meillassoux's attempt to secure an an-hypothetical principle of non-contradiction as the condition of hyper-chaos) human logic still attempts to master nature's logos which would be untenable to Pyrrho who would neither engage let alone harness that which is resistant to human differentiae. See Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 2006, 260-1. See also Negri, “Notes on the Evolution of the Thought of Louis Althusser,” 1996; and Lewis, “Althusser's Scientism and Aleatory Materialism,” 2016.

brought to light, the present was tirelessly a present never present enough, and the future was just an empty territory to be conquered. The untimely moment has come not for these delusions to be yet again shattered, but for them to be once more questioned so as to perhaps reveal this forgotten fact that time never offers itself to human beings' despotic hand. Time has no nebulous origin, a shaky syncopated middle akin to a faucet dribbling from a leaky washer (the maintenance man is never going to change it), or a designated arrow pointing to an equally nebulous telos. All change at will without reason. For centuries, humans have enjoyed the comforting delusions of being masters of reality: the planet was free to grab and exploit, physical inner and outer spaces were there to be conquered, nothing stood in the way of men. Here again, the untimely moment has come not for these ambitions to be yet again crushed, but for them to be again questioned so as to reveal this other truth that reality has its own logos, even amidst the ravages caused by human logic. The little creatures crawling over Earth's surface need to simply hear it and tune to it. All change at will without reason. For centuries, humans have enjoyed the comforting delusions of being masters of themselves: The "I" thinking provided the legend of mastery,²⁸ consciousness and its dark side became fictional worlds also up for grabs,²⁹ nothing was deemed unenlightenable to such a steady subject superciliously temporalizing itself as time itself. Here too, the untimely moment has come not for these hallucinations to be yet again punctured, but for them to be gently questioned so as to not easily equate punctuality with subjectivity and therefore with something tameable and programmable. Our minds are naturally chaos, and no therapist, guru, calming app, or learning A.I. can come to the rescue. All change at will without reason. In this wondrous and disenchanting whirlwind, time, reality, and thought can perhaps finally come into their own. All indeed can at last beat once again fiercely and noisily or eerily and stillly against the desolate ruins of at least *a few* past and future dreams and fears.³⁰

How is one then to level with this surreal degree of confusion and unpredictability of Pyrrho's meteorology, how is one to be at one with the turbulence of aporetic logos and reach *ataraxia*? Since there is no incentive to fall down precipices, the above suggestions do not imply giving in to madness, this false anchor invented by a rationality caught up in its own logical alienation. In the last quote taken from Carré's novel mentioned above, there is a strange form of conduct that *might* just go in tandem with an aporetic logic. While Pyrrho and Eurylochus offered themselves to the mud of the mind and the turbulence of the sky, they not only remained without judgement, in plain equanimity, they also went about their final years "without good sense." If it were a case of making "good" sense, then Pyrrho and Eurylochus would then consider themselves to be fair and reasonable and they would comfort themselves with the knowledge of their moral upstanding. But the tetralemma

²⁸ As Nancy showed, the thinking "I" is nothing other than a fable because at the moment when thought tries to seize itself, it seizes nothing at all, except an empty image of itself. See Nancy, *Ego Sum*, 1979. For an earlier English version of one of the texts, see Nancy, "Mundus Est Fabula," 1978.

²⁹ For a history of the invention of the unconscious, see Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1974, 375-421 and Gardner, "The unconscious mind," 2003.

³⁰ While not appropriating the gesture, I nonetheless give here, Glissant's inspiring avenue of thought and action: "Our quest for the dimension of time will therefore be neither harmonious nor linear. Its advance will be marked by apolyphony of dramatic shocks, at the level of the conscious as well as the unconscious, between incongruous phenomena or 'episodes' so disparate that no link can be discerned. Majestic harmony does not prevail here, but (as long as for us the history to be discovered will not have encountered the past so far misunderstood) an anxious and chaotic quest." Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 1989, 106-7.

prevents this. No principle can withstand it. This means that Pyrrho and Eurylochus cannot proclaim or broadcast any new or recalled interpretation of “the good.”³¹ When all is air and no moral posturing is stable enough to impose itself as a longstanding or repeatable ethical conduct, there can be no “good” to aim for or ascertain as true. Pyrrho and Eurylochus’ life “without good sense” simply emphasizes not an ethics of the erratic or the irrational which, again, would be a form of anarchy, but an ethics at one with a logos without “why?” “what?” or “for whom.” As such, their ethics is, as Lyotard intimates with regards to his own libidinal ethics, that is, with regards to a *mode* of conduct that rejects the false dictates of moral rationality (principles, laws, commandments, maxims, codes of conduct, etc.) and takes the muddy sensuousness of affects, and therefore of nature, seriously, an *ars vitae*. He writes:

“Our danger... lies in building a new morality with this consolation, of proclaiming and broadcasting that the libidinal band is good, that the circulation of affects is joyful, that the anonymity and the impossibility of figures are great and free... But it is not an ethics, this or another, that is required. Perhaps we need an *ars vitae*... but then one in which we would be the artists and not the propagators, the adventurers and not the theoreticians, the hypothesizers and not the censors.”³²

Similarly, Pyrrho and Eurylochus’ life “without good sense” hints at a type of conduct in symbiosis with logos, that is, unstructured by moral rights and wrongs without altogether falling into a lawlessness that would be contrary to “what is common,” including customs. This is not a new morality or amorality. And this is also not a form of emotivism or intuitionism for which the senses are prioritized over reason. This is an ethical coalescence with logos that rationally knows the dangers of human logic (with its extreme tailspins) and yet goes along with the many unpredictable swerves and sharp turns, languid courses and monotonous flight paths of meteorology, human and nature logoi together.

Eight centuries after Pyrrho’s death, his fellow-countryman, Stobaeus (fifth century AD) wrote in his famous *Anthology* of Greek authors:

“Thinking of ending the idea of debate altogether, Pyrrho once stated that, for him, there was no difference between life and death. When asked ‘Why aren’t you dead then?’ He replied: ‘Because it’s the same thing.’”³³

A century later and in a faraway country, the Greek Byzantine administrator and epigrammatist Julianus (sixth century AD), quipped in one of his seventy-one epigrams:

³¹ There is much evidence of this impossibility in the many critiques that were addressed against Pyrrho and his followers. See, for example, Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, 1931, Book II, Chapter 13, §42-3, 129, also in Fragment T69 B, in Decleva Caizzi, *Pirroniana*, 2020, 148.

³² Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 1993, 11.

³³ Fragment T19, in Decleva Caizzi, *Pirroniana*, 2020, 134. Subsequently paraphrased in Carré, *Yavana*, 1991, 201.

“A: Did you die, Pyrrho? / B: I withhold judgement. / A: After your final lot, do you say to withhold judgement? / B: I withhold judgement. / A: The grave put an end to your scepticism.”³⁴

Both quips ironically put an end to conventional scepticism, one which Pyrrho himself would most likely not have approved of because it retains the doubting subject as a sovereign centre of significance and celebrates the impossibility of determining knowledge by stock-piling ready-made sceptical arguments *à la* Empiricus. However, in doing so, such fateful quips also, alas, sealed the fate of Pyrrho’s thought for the two millennia that follow. It is high time to re-open the grave in which late scepticism buried Pyrrho and allow air back in. I hazard that if early Pyrrhonian thought with its Buddhist antecedent is indeed reconsidered in its own term, then we might just escape our own fate, namely, that of having to dig humanity’s own grave for having blindly obeyed logics and principles that know no breath whatsoever. Once the air is let in, the winds will, no doubt, begin to howl, the minds will be freed, and time will at last be undone.

³⁴ Fragment T92, in Decleva Caizzi, *Pirroniana*, 2020, 156.

Bibliography Chapter 11 – Conclusion

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