

CARNEADES' PITHANON: A REAPPRAISAL OF ITS ROLE AND STATUS

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A PERENNIAL complaint against ancient sceptics, both Academic and Pyrrhonian, is that, if they really had adopted the attitude which they claimed to adopt, it would be impossible for them to act. Ancient sceptics claim to suspend judgement about everything, to refuse to commit themselves positively to the truth of any proposition; but this tends immediately to provoke the question 'How, then, is any kind of human life possible for you and your kind?' In antiquity this was known as the charge of *apraxia*, 'inaction', and a version of it was levelled at the earliest Academic sceptic, Arcesilaus.¹ But the objection comes not

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¹ Recorded in Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1122 A. The term 'sceptic', as applied to Academics, is of course anachronistic (though well entrenched in the literature since antiquity), since it was the Pyrrhonists who first used it to refer to a philosophical attitude. Sextus himself, indeed, would *deny* that the Academics were sceptics in his sense (*PH* 1. 226–34). However, it is now widely agreed that Arcesilaus and Carneades, at any rate, were at least *intending* to be (what later came to be called) sceptics; that is, they were intending to refrain from positively assenting to any proposition. (All the works cited in n. 4 below agree in this general line of interpretation—despite major differences in their views about the details.) This opinion is shared, and argued for, in the present paper—particularly in sect. 1. Of course, it is quite another question whether they *succeeded* in maintaining the sceptical attitude; but then, the same thing may be said about Sextus—see just below in the main text. For a rather different view of what even Pyrrhonian scepticism involves, see Michael Frede, 'Des Skeptikers Meinungen', *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, 15–16 (1979), 102–29, trans. and repr. as 'The Sceptic's Beliefs', in Michael Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Frede denies that universal non-assent is any part of the sceptic's intended posture. This view has been argued against, in my view effectively, by Jonathan Barnes, 'The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, NS 28 (1982), 1–29, and Myles Burnyeat, 'The Sceptic in his Place and Time', in Rorty, Schneewind, and Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge, 1984).

only from the ancients; as recently as 1980, for example, Myles Burnyeat has levelled a version of the same charge against Pyrrhonism as represented by Sextus Empiricus, in a tightly argued, searching paper entitled 'Can the Sceptic Live his Scepticism?'² The plausibility of any kind of ancient scepticism seems, then, to be highly dependent on whether or not it can adequately answer such charges; and the sceptics, for their part, were very much aware of the need to do so.

My purpose is to examine the primary response to the *apraxia* charge offered by the second great Academic sceptic, Carneades—namely, his notion of the *pithanē phantasia*, the 'convincing impression'. In recent years both Arcesilaus and Carneades have been the focus of considerable attention; a number of papers have explored the series of moves and counter-moves that took place in the debate between these two and their main opponents, the Stoics, and the role in this debate of their various main pronouncements—including Carneades' discussion of the *pithanē phantasia*—is, in outline, well understood. But while the historical sequence of events has been greatly clarified, questions remain as to the philosophical cogency of some of these pronouncements. With regard to the *pithanē phantasia*, in particular, there is the question whether Carneades' account of it does not itself constitute an elaborate philosophical thesis of his own, and hence a violation of that very suspension of judgement which he is trying to maintain.³ A number of different suggestions have been offered in answer to this question; however, as I shall argue, none of them suffices to remove the problem entirely.

The central issue can be posed as follows. Can this notion of the *pithanē phantasia* do the work which it is designed to do, while permitting Carneades to remain true to his scepticism? My conclusion will be that Carneades is in a very tight corner in this respect—much tighter than most of his modern admirers imagine. It is possible that he can ultimately escape; but it is a great deal harder for him to do so than is usually realized. It is also harder than he himself probably realized. For in arguing for my conclusion, I shall be following out the implications of Carneades' utterances further than he, or any of his contemporaries, may have been able to see; certainly, I shall by the end

² In Schofield, Burnyeat, and Barnes (eds.), *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology* (Oxford, 1980).

³ It has often been claimed, from antiquity onwards, that Carneades was *not* in fact trying to maintain universal suspension of judgement. I shall be arguing below that this claim is mistaken (cf. n. 1 on the use of the term 'sceptic').

have gone beyond the available evidence concerning what Carneades actually said. I make no apology for this. On the contrary, I can think of no better tribute to an ancient thinker than that he is still able to stimulate us to serious debate with him. (For a long time it was only Plato and Aristotle who enjoyed this honour; only recently has ancient scepticism come to be seen as of lasting philosophical interest.) I should stress, though, that when I argue that Carneades' position contains difficulties which he himself may not have spotted, I shall not be raising any points which I do not think he *could* have comprehended, had he been exposed to them. In that sense, my discussion will not be anachronistic; rather, I shall be taking him on, I believe, in exactly the spirit he invites.

But before embarking on these difficult issues—which will occupy Section II of the paper—it is necessary to explain the purpose for which Carneades introduced the concept of the *pithanē phantasia*, and its relation to certain other important concepts. The best way to explain these matters is simply to offer a brief sketch of the central points in the debate between the Stoics and the Academics (both Carneades and his predecessor Arcesilaus) about *apraxia*, and to this Section I is devoted. My own reconstruction of the debate itself is not especially unusual or innovative; on many points I am in agreement with, and have been influenced by, other recent interpretations of the material.⁴ However, since part of my purpose in Section II is to assess some of these recent interpretations, it is essential that we spend some little time ensuring that the place of the *pithanē phantasia* in this debate is really clear.

⁴ The writings from which I have profited most are Pierre Couissin, 'Le stoïcisme de la nouvelle académie', *Revue d'histoire de la philosophie*, 3 (1929), trans. Jennifer Barnes and Myles Burnyeat and repr. as 'The Stoicism of the New Academy', in Myles Burnyeat (ed.), *The Skeptical Tradition* (University of California Press, 1983); David Sedley, 'The Motivation of Greek Skepticism', *ibid.*; Gisela Striker, 'Sceptical Strategies', in *Doubt and Dogmatism*; Myles Burnyeat, 'Carneades was No Probabilist' (unpublished); and the commentary in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, i [I.S.] (Cambridge, 1987), esp. sects. 39–42, 68–70. All of these will receive further mention in sect. II. On Arcesilaus specifically I have also learnt a great deal from Anna Maria Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza: Il dibattito tra Stoici e Accademici nel III e nel II secolo a.C.* (Elenchos Collana, 12; Naples, 1986); and from the reviews of this work by Henry Maconi, in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 6 (1988), and Julia Annas, in *Phronesis*, 33 (1988), 100–12.

I

Among the most important pronouncements credited to Arcesilaus are the following:

1. Nothing can be known (including that very statement).⁵
2. We should suspend judgement about everything.⁶
3. *To eulogon*, 'the reasonable', is the criterion for conducting one's life.⁷
4. Assent is not necessary for action.⁸

Of these, (1) and (2) are responses to the Stoic (presumably Zeno's) thesis of the cognitive impression; (3) seems clearly to be designed as a response to the *apraxia* argument—though it is not explicitly referred to as such in any of the ancient sources; and the same is true of (4) (except that here we are told explicitly that this is its role). Numbers (3) and (4), then, are presumably later than (1) and (2), since the *apraxia* argument is, in essence, an attack on (1) and (2). We can further, following Striker,⁹ distinguish two versions of the *apraxia* argument: (a) if nothing can be known (that is, if (1) is correct), there can be no basis on which to make decisions, and hence to lead one's life in any coherent way; and (b) if we withhold assent from every proposition (that is, if we act on the recommendation of (2)), we shall not be able to act at all, since action requires assent. In terms of this distinction, (3) is a response to (a) and (4) to (b).

An immediate and natural objection would be 'How can one determine what is reasonable without assenting to certain things?' This charges Arcesilaus with inconsistency in advancing both (3) and (4) together. More strongly, one might object 'How can one determine what is reasonable without *knowing* certain things?', which would be charging (3) specifically with a kind of self-refutation. The Stoics may well have launched these or similar attacks; while there is no direct evidence of their doing so in this period, the necessity for both assent and knowledge certainly figured in later Stoic objections against the Academy—as we shall shortly see. However, it is also quite possible that Arcesilaus developed his notion of 'the reasonable', connecting (3) and (4) as parts of a broader, unified response to both versions of the

⁵ Cic. *Acad.* 1. 45.

⁷ Sextus, *Math.* 7. 158.

⁹ 'Sceptical Strategies', 63–4.

⁶ Ibid. 1. 45, 2. 67, etc.; Sextus, *Math.* 7. 157.

⁸ Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1122 B ff.

apraxia argument, which would also be responsive to both the objections just mentioned; the more expansive reply may well have been along the following lines.

What it is reasonable for us to do is what it is natural to do; to act in accordance with 'the reasonable' is, then, to act *phusikōs*, 'naturally'—in accordance with *to oikeion*, 'the appropriate', to put it another way. There should scarcely be anything controversial in this; after all, the Stoics themselves, from Zeno on, had stressed the rationality inherent in the natural order, the status of humans as part of the natural order, and the importance of living in accordance with (one's own) nature. But now, it is not necessary, in order to follow one's nature, that one engage in any acts of assent; the faculties of impulse (*hormē*) and impression (*phantasia*) are by themselves sufficient to cause natural behaviour (this is the argument for (4)). But if behaviour in accordance with one's nature can occur without assent, and behaviour that is *eulogon* just is behaviour in accordance with one's nature, the conclusion seems clear. There is no necessity for behaviour that is *eulogon* to be preceded by assent, or by consultation of what one knows.¹⁰

If we can attribute this response to Arcesilaus, it is, at least superficially, a clever one, playing as it does on several central Stoic theses.¹¹ But equally, it is clear that the Stoics would have found it

¹⁰ The evidence that Arcesilaus may have responded in this way comes in the Plutarch text cited in n. 8, where much use is made of the idea of acting *phusikōs*, and of the notion of *to oikeion*. For a good brief discussion of this evidence, see Striker, 'Sceptical Strategies', 65 n. 29. Striker herself seems to talk of these references to acting 'naturally' as an *alternative* to the *eulogon*, but they could equally well be taken as a way of spelling out and defending that notion; this is the line taken by Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza*, 134–46 (esp. p. 137). True, we are never explicitly told that Arcesilaus intended this connection. (Ioppolo, p. 137, detects a reference to nature in Sextus, *Math.* 7. 158. However, there is only the solitary occurrence of the verb *pephuken*, in what seems to me an instance of the colourless, off-hand usage in which it is virtually equivalent to *esti*—much like the casual use of the English word 'naturally'.) But if some such connection was not intended, then first, the discussion of the *eulogon* becomes extremely bare and unsupported, and second, Arcesilaus' account of human action falls into two mysteriously unrelated segments. I will, though, stop short of suggesting that 'charity demands' we postulate such a connection; for, as we shall see, even if one was intended, the resulting position seems not to stand up for more than a few moments.

¹¹ Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza*, 137, downplays the extent to which Arcesilaus is here employing distinctively Stoic concepts—in contrast to most modern interpreters. Instead, she argues that in his stress on nature as guide to life Arcesilaus is indebted to his Academic predecessor Polemo (pp. 146 ff.)—who also influenced Zeno in the same way (Cic. *Fin.* 4. 14, 45); in addition, she suggests that the concept of *to oikeion* did not become part of Stoic ethics until Chrysippus, who introduced it in *response* to this argument of Arcesilaus' (pp. 174 ff.). This seems to me to go too far. I concede that (1)

unacceptable, for several reasons. First, they would still have objected strongly to Arcesilaus' (3); for the argument for (3) eliminates their distinction between perfect right actions and merely 'proper' actions (*katorthōmata* and *kathēkonta*)—and deliberately so. It was their contention that *katorthōmata* were attainable only by the sage, who was in possession of knowledge (*epistēmē*, in their very strong sense of that term); an act that had a *eulogon* justification, on the other hand, was merely a *kathēkon*.¹² Arcesilaus rides roughshod over this vital point in Stoic ethics by asserting that the *eulogon* is sufficient for the attainment of *katorthōmata*,¹³ and so implicitly denying the very

Polemō may very well have influenced Arcesilaus in this area; (2) D.L. 4. 36 (cited by Ioppolo, p. 138) affords evidence of a wider employment of the concept of 'following nature' in Arcesilaus; and (3) the general idea of harmonizing oneself with nature is in any case common in Greek philosophy at least as far back as Heraclitus. However, none of these points excludes the possibility that Arcesilaus, in developing his conception of living 'naturally', is also employing specifically Stoic concepts in an ironic and polemical way; and in fact it seems clear that he is doing just this. The terms *phantasia*, *hornē*, and *sunkatathesis* are all used here in their specific roles in the distinctive Stoic theory of action (indeed, the term *sunkatathesis* has virtually no previous philosophical usage of any kind), and all three of these are attested for Zeno. For *phantasia* and *sunkatathesis* see passages 40B, D, 41A, B in I.S.; for *hornē* see D.L. 7. 4, 110. As for *to oikeion*, it is true that the term is not specifically attested for any Stoic prior to Chrysippus; it is also true that the word itself is not an uncommon one, in or out of philosophy. However, the use of the term with the connotation 'appropriate to one's nature' is a distinctively Stoic, and somewhat technical, refinement of standard usage (see I.S. 57, texts and commentary, and cf. e.g. Plato, *Rep.* 468 D 3, or Arist. *NE* 1096^a31, 1098^a29, where the word simply means 'fitting' or 'suitable'). It is this usage which Arcesilaus is employing here; either, then, he is using the word, deliberately and repetitively, in a new and unusual way (later developed by Chrysippus), or else he is picking up on an already existing Stoic usage. Since, as noted above, he is clearly picking up on several other Stoic usages, it seems to me preferable to believe the latter.

¹² For the definition of the *kathēkon*, see D.L. 7. 107. For the *katorthōma*, and its restriction to the Stoic sage, see Cic. *Fin.* 3. 24–5, 32; also I.S. 59B, N, O—all of which are from Stobaeus—and commentary on sect. 59.

¹³ Sextus, *Math.* 7. 158. Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza*, 127–34, denies that Arcesilaus here has in mind the Stoic distinction between *kathēkon* and *katorthōma* (cf. n. 11 above). Indeed, she denies (p. 131) that such a distinction even existed in Stoicism prior to Chrysippus, stresses (pp. 127–8) that the term *katorthōma* was earlier used by Aristotle in the sense 'success' (though not a success achieved by evil means), and argues that Arcesilaus can very well be seen as using the term in this latter way. On the history of the Stoic distinction, Maconi, in his review, n. 53, cites Cic. *Acad.* 1. 37 against Ioppolo; this does ascribe the distinction to Zeno. (It would not be strange, as alleged by Ioppolo (pp. 131–2), for Zeno to have written a book *peri tou kathēkontos* if he also recognized the special category of the *katorthōma*, any more than it is strange for Kant to write extensively about the character of our duties, while also insisting that there is a crucial distinction between acting *from* duty and acting merely in accordance with duty.) But even if we ignore this testimony it is scarcely to be denied that Arcesilaus is referring to Zeno's definition of the *kathēkon*, that he is refusing to admit any distinction between a

possibility of the sage; what the Stoics would have regarded as distinctly second-rate—namely, the ordinary 'proper' behaviour of ordinary people—is, in Arcesilaus' truncated picture, the highest one can aspire to. On the other hand, while this manhandling of their ideas would indeed have outraged the Stoics, the non-existence of the Stoic sage was already entailed by Arcesilaus' (1) and (2); his conflation of *kathēkonta* and *katorthōmata* is bound up with his denial of the possibility of knowledge. In objecting to it, therefore, the Stoics would not really be objecting specifically to his response to the charge of *apraxia*, but to his entire stance.

Other objections might, however, justly be raised against Arcesilaus' (4) in particular, and against his explication of the *eulogon*—if that is what it was—in terms of the 'natural' and the 'appropriate'. One might ask, first, whether Arcesilaus has succeeded in giving us an account of any kind of distinctively human *action*, as opposed to mere instinctive behaviour. Despite the Stoics' insistence on the kinship of humans with the rest of nature, they also insisted that in one crucial respect humans are different. Humans are rational and morally responsible—and these two attributes are connected. On the Stoic view, as on all others I am familiar with, moral responsibility requires that one be acting voluntarily, which in turn requires the ability to make rational decisions. Arcesilaus' proposal that we can act *phusikōs* and without assent could not, then, be expected to satisfy the Stoics or, indeed, most other people; for it does at least appear to rule out any distinction between voluntary and involuntary action—and we have no evidence of anything Arcesilaus might have said to dispel this impression.

But does not the *eulogon* perform precisely this role? Arcesilaus said that the *eulogon* was the criterion of action; does this not secure us the possibility of rational choice? The difficulty is to see how the admission of the *eulogon* as a criterion of action is compatible with the removal of assent. We postulated that the notion of the *eulogon* may have been *connected* with, and filled out by means of, the account of 'natural' behaviour not preceded by assent. But in that case it is hard to see how it serves as a *criterion*, in any normal sense. The phrase 'criterion of action' suggests, above all, a method for deciding what to do. Sextus' report encourages this understanding of the *eulogon*; for he says that if

kathēkon as performed by the sage and a *kathēkon* as performed by the non-sage, and that Zeno did recognize *some* such distinction, even if he did not signal it by the term *katorthōma*. Ioppolo accepts all three points; given this, I do not see how she can doubt (p. 131) that the passage has an ironic anti-Stoic intent.

one suspends judgement about everything one will 'regulate one's choices and . . . actions (*kanoniei tas haireseis kai . . . tas praxeis*) by the *eulogon*',¹⁴ which certainly seems to imply conscious, rational decision among various alternative possible actions. Yet it is very unclear how anything that could be called 'regulating one's choices' could occur in the absence of assent to any of one's impressions; on what basis could a choice among alternatives be made, if not on the basis of at least some *beliefs*? It has been suggested that an action could be called *eulogos* if it could be seen *retrospectively* to have been justified by good reasons, even if, at the time, no assent and no deliberation among alternatives took place.¹⁵ But aside from the intrinsic obscurity of that suggestion, it does not give us a sense in which the *eulogon* can be said to 'regulate one's choices'; *eulogon* will turn out, instead, to be a kind of honorific title given after the fact to actions which turned out successfully. Even if an action can be said afterwards to have had good reasons in its favour, that does not explain how it can be said to be voluntary or chosen when assent played no part in its genesis.¹⁶

Suppose, then, that we abandon the speculation that Arcesilaus identified action according to the *eulogon* with 'natural', un-assented-to action. This will no doubt allow us to give some sense to the notion of the *eulogon* as regulating one's choices; but it will be at the expense of

¹⁴ *Math.* 7. 158.

¹⁵ By Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza*, 143–4, and Michael Frede, 'The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge', in *Philosophy in History*, 264, also his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, 209. Doubts about this idea are raised by both Maconi and Annas in their reviews of Ioppolo.

¹⁶ Ioppolo's suggestion (*Opinione e scienza*, 143–4) that such retrospective justification transforms the action from instinctive to voluntary seems to me unintelligible; either an action is, at the time of its performance, voluntary, or it is not. (Perhaps she means that *our estimation* of the action is thus transformed; but that takes us back to the same old problem. Why would we come to view the action as (having been) a voluntary one, and *stop* viewing it as (having been) merely instinctive, unless we also *forget* what is, *ex hypothesi*, the case—namely, that the action was the product of impression and impulse alone, without assent?) Maconi, in his review (p. 251), attempts to render the picture plausible in the following way. 'Perhaps, then, we should distinguish between *natural* urges and *irresistible* urges, denying that whenever I have a natural impulse to do something, then I do it. Such a gap between natural impulse and action will leave room for—and require the provision of—a criterion. Or again . . . we may feel several conflicting *natural* impulses at once. A criterion is then needed to select *one* of these impulses as the proper determinant of action' (emphasis original). But it is not clear how a choice as to whether or not to 'go with' one's natural impulse, or a selection among natural impulses, can occur unless we reintroduce the faculty of assent (or unless something like Carneades' notion of 'approval' can be made out (see below): but there is no hint of evidence that Arcesilaus tried to carve out any similar notion). In fairness, I should point out that Maconi himself is far from confident about this suggestion.

letting his account of decision and action collapse into two inconsistent portions, and exposing him once again to previous objections. Arcesilaus did say that action can occur *phusikōs* and without assent; but if so, what role is left for a determination of what is 'reasonable', and a choice on the basis of that determination? To repeat, such a process would seem to require either some knowledge or some opinions—neither of which can exist without assent; the denial of assent appears to make anything like deliberation and choice impossible.

Arcesilaus' account seems, therefore, to be less than fully consistent. His portrayal of the *eulogon* as a criterion by which to regulate one's choices seems not to cohere with his insistence that one need not assent to anything—whether these were intended as parts of a *single* account of human action, or as separate but complementary claims. He seems concerned, on the one hand, to present the sceptic as having the resources for a life that is both distinctively human and worth living; yet, by subtracting assent from his model of behaviour, he appears to cut off that possibility. Of course, it is always conceivable that he had some way, now lost to us, of rendering the whole picture coherent; but what this might look like is, to say the least, hard to imagine.

Finally, there is a problem which I mentioned in the introduction in connection with Carneades, and whose applicability to Carneades we shall be examining in much greater detail later on; if one claims to suspend judgement about everything, how can one at the same time advance philosophical positions? In *asserting* that the *eulogon* is the criterion of action (whatever precisely that amounts to), and that assent is not necessary for action, Arcesilaus already seems to be in trouble; the very making of assertions, whether or not they are in themselves convincing, is inconsistent with a posture of universal suspension of judgement. Indeed, the assertion that nothing can be known, and even the recommendation that one suspend judgement about everything, put Arcesilaus in the same difficulty; with regard to all of statements (1) to (4), it may be objected that he is *taking a position*, which a sceptic cannot consistently do. The most popular way of extricating him from this problem is to argue that he is not in fact taking a position on any of these matters, but is simply showing the Stoics what *they* are committed to, given premisses which they accept; on this reading, Arcesilaus' entire production is a dialectical exercise designed to demonstrate that Stoicism collapses into scepticism. However, while I cannot discuss the question in the depth it deserves, it is very doubtful

that this interpretation can be sustained across the board.¹⁷ In any case, with regard to his replies to the *apraxia* charge, he still faces the numerous difficulties raised earlier, even if he can be cleared of this one.

Admittedly, much of this discussion has been speculative. But this much at least seems clear. Arcesilaus' replies to the charge of *apraxia*, in both its versions, look intriguing and promising on the surface; in particular, the way in which he manipulates Stoic concepts in anti-Stoic directions is certainly ingenious. Yet these replies fail to deliver on their promise; as far as one can tell, there is very little there beneath the surface sparkle. It would not be unreasonable, therefore, for the Stoics to continue to press the *apraxia* charge long after Arcesilaus had offered his replies; and in fact there is every reason to suppose that both versions of the charge were repeated by Chrysippus. On the one hand, Chrysippus appears to have argued that any minimally rational conduct of life requires that there be at least some cognitive impressions, and that wisdom and virtue, in the full sense in which the

¹⁷ Ironically, this seems to me most clearly true with regard to his attitude towards *epochē* itself. Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza*, 56–65, argues strongly that Arcesilaus did *practise epochē* in his own person—in which case he is not merely showing what the Stoics are committed to, but is maintaining his own sceptical stance; on the other hand, she denies (pp. 145, 157–8) that he *recommended epochē* as the desirable, or rationally required, philosophical position—in which case he would not, at least on this score, be subject to the objection that he is straight away *abandoning* that sceptical stance. Instead, *epochē* was simply the state in which he found himself after the rehearsal of opposing arguments. But Sextus, *PII* 1. 233 (*agathon . . . einai . . . tēn epochēn*), and Cic. *Acad.* 1. 45 (*nilil oportere neque profiteri neque adfirmare quemquam*), 2. 77, seem to me powerful evidence that he did positively recommend *epochē*—quite apart from the thorny question of whether he regarded *epochē* as the *telos*; on this see Maconi's review, sect. vi. Furthermore, if he did recommend *epochē*, this would seem to make it incumbent upon him also to reply, in his own person, to the *apraxia* charge; he could hardly promote *epochē* as *desirable*, on intellectual, moral, or whatever grounds, without responding to his audience's natural suspicion that *epochē* is incompatible with choice and action. (I do *not*, however, take the word *edei* in Sextus, *Math.* 7. 158, as by itself a reason to conclude that the *culogon* was Arcesilaus' own position; on this matter see the Appendix.) On at least two points, then, it seems to me that Arcesilaus is indeed liable to the charge of 'dogmatism'. Whether there are other areas where the same difficulty arises, and whether he has any other way of escaping the charge, I cannot consider here; similar questions are pursued in depth with regard to Carneades' *pithanē phantasia* in sect. II. One final matter is this. At various points above I have supported the idea that Arcesilaus is making use of Stoic concepts in ways which are designed to embarrass the Stoics. It might be thought surprising that I am now rejecting the purely dialectical interpretation of his pronouncements; for it is the supporters of that interpretation who are usually most keen to emphasize Stoic components. But there is no contradiction in maintaining both that Arcesilaus frequently makes ironic use of Stoic concepts and that he is trying, on his own behalf—with less than total success, as we can now see—to maintain a form of scepticism.

sage is wise and virtuous, requires knowledge, in the Stoic sense of a systematic and unshakeable body of cognitions.¹⁸ On the other hand, he is reported as having held that anyone who claims that action is possible without assent is talking 'nonsense and idle speculations' (*plasmata kai kenas hupotheseis*).¹⁹ These positions would be very much to the point as responses to Arcesilaus' (3) and (4) respectively. And so, when Carneades comes on the scene, the charge of *apraxia* is still very much alive in the Stoic camp.

Carneades was no less appropriate a target for this charge than Arcesilaus. First,

1. He argued that there is no criterion of truth—alternatively, that nothing can be 'grasped' (*comprehendi*) or 'perceived' (*percipi*) (including this very proposition).²⁰

This corresponds to Arcesilaus' (1), in that it is a direct attack on the Stoic thesis of the cognitive impression. (It is true that Sextus introduces it as having been aimed at *all* previous philosophers, and not simply against the Stoics.²¹ However, the Stoics are clearly the main targets. The argument for (1), as reported in Sextus, is essentially that if there were a criterion, it would have to be the Stoic one, but that since there cannot be a criterion along Stoic lines, there cannot be a criterion, period.) Second, according to his closest associate Clitomachus,

2. 'He rid our minds of assent—that is, of opinion and rashness'.²²

While this report attributes to Carneades a certain *performance* rather than any proposition, the performance corresponds to Arcesilaus' proposition (2) in the following way. Suspension of judgement (*epochē*) consists in the universal withholding of assent. While Carneades seems not to have explicitly recommended suspension of judgement,²³ this

¹⁸ For both points see Cic. *Acad.* 2. 22–7; the speaker here is Lucullus, a devotee of Antiochus, and Antiochus is later (2. 143) criticized as never having moved a step away from Chrysippus. For the latter point see also Stob. 2. 111. 18–112. 8 (= LS 41G); this text refers generically to 'the Stoics', but doctrines attributed in the doxography to 'the Stoics' may in general be assumed to have been held by, if not to have originated from, Chrysippus.

¹⁹ Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1057 A.

²⁰ Sextus, *Math.* 7. 159–65, for the first formulation; for the second formulation, and the self-applicability, Cic. *Acad.* 2. 28.

²¹ *Math.* 7. 159 (cf. 166).

²² Cic. *Acad.* 2. 108.

²³ As we saw, Arcesilaus' apparently vocal advocacy of *epochē* lays him open to the charge of self-refutation; see n. 17 above. Carneades' reticence on this score may be designed to avoid the same problem. For this contrast between the two, see further Sedley, 'Motivation of Greek Skepticism'.

report suggests that the intended, or expected, effect of his reasoning, like Arcesilaus', was that one refrained from assenting to anything.²⁴ The Stoics condemned the holding of opinions, by which was meant assenting to a non-cognitive impression;²⁵ and Arcesilaus had exploited this in the following argument. 'If the [Stoic] wise man assents to anything, he will hold an opinion (since, as argued elsewhere, *all* impressions are non-cognitive); but he will never hold an opinion; therefore he will not assent to anything.'²⁶ Carneades is presumably employing a similar strategy here. Given (1) above, *any* act of assent would constitute the holding of an opinion; and if one goes along with the Stoic idea that it is 'rash' to hold opinions (as Carneades seems,

²⁴ The sources are not in fact unanimous on Carneades' opposition to assent; at Cic. *Acad.* 2. 67 it is claimed that Carneades sometimes allowed that the wise man sometimes assents. However, at 2. 78 we are told that, according to Clitomachus, Carneades maintained this only for the purposes of argument (i.e. presumably as part of some dialectical strategy, not as a view which he himself accepted), and that the suggestion that this was Carneades' own position derives from Metrodorus and Philo. Cicero himself favours the verdict of Clitomachus; and we should do the same. For even aside from the weight given here by Cicero's own opinion, the evidence, slender as it is, indicates that Clitomachus was more closely acquainted with Carneades' ideas than Metrodorus. Clitomachus was Carneades' most assiduous pupil, and immediately succeeded him as head of the Academy (D.L. 4. 67, Cic. *Acad.* 2. 16). Metrodorus was initially an Epicurean, and only went over to Carneades later in life (D.L. 10. 9); indeed, Cicero (loc. cit.) declines even to list him as a pupil of Carneades, but instead reports non-committally that he 'was thought to have known Carneades well'. (Against this, Cic. *De orat.* 45 says that Metrodorus was one of the 'more diligent' pupils of Carneades, alongside the Academicians Clitomachus, Charmadas, and Aeschines; but here too he is listed separately from these three, implying that he is somehow *not* a *bona-fide* Academic.) Moreover, it is easy to see how Metrodorus' dogmatizing interpretation could have arisen. No doubt Carneades would say such things as 'Let us suppose that the wise man assents' (in some dialectical context, not as a statement of his own position); it is quite understandable that a not too wary listener would take this as expressing a view held by Carneades himself. By contrast, it is much harder to see how Clitomachus' interpretation could have arisen by a misunderstanding. Finally, see Cic. *Orator*, 51, in which Carneades is reported to have said that Clitomachus' sayings corresponded with his own (whereas Charmadas' only imitated his style). A further reason for thinking that (2) is indeed an accurate report of Carneades' activity is that version (b) of the *apraxia* charge, that action is impossible without assent, continued to be pressed by Antipater, Carneades' younger contemporary (on this see the text of Plutarch cited in n. 19 above); had Carneades conceded that assent was sometimes justifiable, this charge would immediately have lost its point.

²⁵ On this see Sextus, *Math.* 7. 157, where opinion is said to have been viewed by the Stoics as a mark of folly and moral failing. The 'folly' seems to consist, more specifically, in rashness or precipitancy. For *proptētēs*, 'precipitate', in relevant contexts see Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1056 F and the text of Stobaeus cited in n. 18 above; see also the Stoic virtues of *apropiōsia* and *aneikaiōtēs*, 'non-precipitancy' and 'non-rashness', in the anonymous Stoic text from Herculaneum papyrus 1020 (= I.S. 411).

²⁶ Sextus, *Math.* 7. 156-7, Cic. *Acad.* 2. 67.

from this report, to be willing to do), this means that one must refrain from assent altogether. (Arcesilaus too had endorsed the notion that holding opinions is 'rash';²⁷ that opinions are to be avoided seems to be common ground between Stoics and Academics—before Clitomachus' successor Philo, at any rate.)

How, then, did Carneades respond to the *apraxia* charge, in both its versions? To the first version—that the absence of cognitive impressions would leave us with no means of rationally conducting our lives—he responds with the assertion which will be our main subject:

3. The *pithanē phantasia* can serve as a criterion for conducting one's life.²⁸

And to the second version—that action of any kind is impossible without assent—he responds with

4. Assent is not necessary for action; there is another kind of 'approval', short of assent proper, which will suffice.²⁹

Let us now look at each of these points, but especially (3), in more detail.

While the *pithanē phantasia*—or, for short, the *pithanon*—is mentioned frequently in Cicero's *Academica*, the only detailed report of its workings is at Sextus, *Math.* 7. 166-89. This comes immediately after Sextus' discussion of Carneades' (1); and Sextus makes the transition by saying that Carneades is 'effectively compelled' (166) to produce a criterion for conducting one's life. It is not further specified why, or by whom, he is 'compelled' to do this; but it can hardly be doubted that the 'compulsion' came, at least in part, from the Stoics with their charge of *apraxia*.³⁰ In any case, the account begins with a detailed classification of impressions. Impressions can be considered in both their subjective and their objective aspects (168); in their objective aspect they are either true or false, while in their subjective aspect they are classifiable in the following schema (169-72):

²⁷ Cic. *Acad.* 1. 45, 2. 66. Another indication of Arcesilaus' antagonism towards opinions is the *enthusiasm* with which he appears to promote suspension of judgement; on this see again nn. 17, 23 above.

²⁸ Sextus, *Math.* 7. 166-89, and frequently in Cic. *Acad.* 2 (e.g. 33, 99).

²⁹ Cic. *Acad.* 2. 104.

³⁰ Cf. the word *edēi* in Sextus' report on Arcesilaus' *eulogon*. On this, and on the significance of the term 'compelled' in connection with the question whether the *pithanon* is Carneades' own thesis, see the Appendix.

APPEARING TRUE		NOT APPEARING TRUE	
<i>(pithanē)</i>		<i>(apithanos)</i>	
vividly	dimly	appearing false	true but not appearing so

Of these, both of the *apithanoi* impressions and the *pithanē* but dim impression are ruled out as the criterion; in the latter case, the reason (172) is that it is not such as to convince us or to induce assent³¹ (since it does not reveal itself and its object clearly), and the same reason, I take it, applies in the former cases too. We are left, then, with the *pithanē* and vivid impression as the criterion (173). Carneades goes on, however (174–5), to point out that some such impressions may be false, or true and false.³² This realerts us to the fact that this alleged criterion will not actually do the work usually expected of a criterion of truth, namely to enable us to decide what is true and what is false; and the passage looks at first sight like yet another sceptical attack on the idea of a criterion. But Carneades is not speaking in a sceptical spirit here. On the contrary, he goes on (175) to say that we should *not* distrust this kind of impression because of the rare occurrence of falsehood; on the whole such impressions are true, and in fact the standard we employ in making our judgements and decisions is precisely that of what is true ‘on the whole’. So despite the admitted fact that the *pithanon* cannot serve as a criterion in the strict philosophical sense, it can do perfectly well as a criterion for the conduct of life—which is what he claims to be providing here—as is shown by the fact that we employ standards of this kind all the time (note the word *sumbebēken*; he is reminding us that this is how things actually are).³³

³¹ This seems to imply that the *pithanon* does induce us to assent—which would be curious, given Carneades’ general opposition to assent. However, it is possible that ‘assent’ is here used in a weaker sense than usual, as equivalent to what is elsewhere referred to as ‘approval’; see again Cic. *Acad.* 2. 104, which does allow that ‘assent’ can be used in this weaker sense (though it is the stronger kind which is to be thought of as *genuine* assent). In making this suggestion I am following I.S. commentary on sect. 69.

³² This relies on Burnyeat’s emendation *echein kai (tautē kai) tēi koinēi* (suggested in ‘Carneades was No Probabilist’); the detailed argumentation of the passage is very obscure without this alteration.

³³ There are many other allusions in the passage to the way we in fact proceed in ordinary life—e.g. 178, 182, 183, 184, 188, all of which are presented in a descriptive rather than a prescriptive tone. Burnyeat, ‘Carneades was no Probabilist’, goes so far as to suggest that there is *no* normative component in the discussion, but this is surely an exaggeration; to take just one example, the phrase *teleiōtatēn poiōusa tēn krisin* (181) hardly looks like pure description.

The remainder of the passage gives an account of two higher levels of ‘convincingness’. What we have so far is described as the first and common criterion; but in addition there is the impression which is both convincing and unimpeded (*aperispastos*), and the impression which is convincing, unimpeded, and tested (*diexōdeumenē*) (176–81, 181–3). The first of these is an impression that is not made doubtful by any other impression. In any given situation we shall have a great many impressions; and if these impressions are all mutually supporting (as opposed to some of them seeming to tell against the truth of others), then we find the whole set of impressions more convincing than we would find a single isolated convincing impression (176–7). This point is then illustrated by numerous examples, notably the case of Menelaus and his confusion over the true and the phantom Helen (which is a case where the impressions *fail* to meet the standard of being ‘unimpeded’). When we come to the third level, the impressions must not only be mutually supporting (though they are still that—note the word *sundromē* twice in 182); they must also each be scrutinized—we are to observe carefully whether or not there are features which should make us suspicious of impressions which initially seemed convincing. This is compared with the practice of scrutinizing prospective holders of political office; and many examples are given of the kind of features we must beware of (182–3). An impression, or a set of impressions, which passes these tests is the most trustworthy of all. But all this, of course, is quite consistent with the claim that in no case is absolute certainty to be had; we can conduct our lives very efficiently with this procedure, but even it does not amount to a criterion of truth, as that term was normally understood. The final sections (184–9) make the point, again with examples, that which of the three levels we employ in any given case depends on what is at stake, and whether we have time to reflect. If the matter is trivial, or if there is no time for reflection, we use the first level; in more important matters we use the second level; and in matters that contribute to happiness (that is to say, in the most important matters of all) we use the third level.

Now, it is clear that this is a very much better answer than Arcesilaus’ to the Stoic objection that without cognition there is no basis on which to make decisions. As we saw, the Stoics could have responded to Arcesilaus’ notion of ‘the reasonable’ by saying ‘How can you determine what is reasonable without knowledge of certain things, or without even assenting to certain things?’ As was also noted earlier,

Arcesilaus may have had a reply to this objection. But the reply itself appeared to reduce all action to something like instinctive behaviour; it failed to offer any satisfying picture of what it is to make decisions, sensible or foolish—any satisfying picture of practical reasoning, as we might put it nowadays. At the same time, his account erases the important Stoic distinction between the full-scale virtue of the sage and the merely ‘proper’ action of ordinary decent folk. Carneades, on the other hand, has offered us a very full picture of the nature of decision-making, which seems to allow rationality a large role in action, and which allows distinctions to be made between well- or ill-considered judgements. He has explained in considerable detail how one can distinguish between impressions, all of which are non-cognitive, in respect of trustworthiness; and these distinctions seem to leave us with a perfectly good way of making decisions. Of course, the possibility of knowledge, or of the perfectly wise Stoic sage, is not admitted; but we still have a basis for conducting our lives in a rational and coherent manner, and we can still make a quite viable distinction between a kind of practical wisdom, or good sense, and imprudence or folly. Indeed, the Stoics themselves would have to admit that in a great many cases something less than cognition will have to do as a basis for decisions (for some examples see Cic. *Acad.* 2. 109—these examples, while not explicitly attributed to Carneades, are embedded in a discussion of his ideas); in view of this, one might well think it perverse of them to insist on any further resources for decision-making beyond the ones Carneades has offered. At any rate, as a reply to the *apraxia* charge Carneades’ account of the *pithanon* appears at first sight to be extremely compelling.

But the Stoic still has the other version of the *apraxia* charge with which to attack Carneades. In acting in accordance with those impressions which he finds most convincing, is not the Academic assenting to those impressions? For does not action of any kind require assent? Carneades’ response to this objection was given by (4) above, which occurs in a passage of the *Academica* which Cicero claims to be an almost verbatim summary of Clitomachus.³⁴

What this passage argues is that withholding assent from an impression is not the same as being totally indifferent to it; we can act on impressions, and we can answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to questions, without assenting to the impressions in question. There is something that is

³⁴ For the claim that it is almost verbatim see 2. 102.

called ‘following’ an impression, or ‘approving’ it (*sequentes, adprobari*; see also *utetur, sequitur, probet* in 2. 99), which is sufficient for action and theory but which falls short of actual assent. Now, Cicero’s discussion is not much more enlightening than that; and it remains obscure what this ‘approval’ which is not assent is supposed to be. Part of the trouble may be that we are not clear enough on what is included in assent itself; without knowing how strong the notion of assent is, we cannot say whether there is indeed room for something in between assent and total indifference. However, if we agree to suppose that the claim does make sense, it looks as though, once again, Carneades can do better than Arcesilaus. For the natural response to Arcesilaus’ (4)—his proposal that assent could simply be omitted from the list of necessary conditions for action—seemed to be that he was collapsing the distinction between voluntary action and mere instinctive processes; this talk of ‘approving’ impressions, on the other hand, does seem to imply the possibility of rationally based discrimination between different types of impressions, and hence the possibility of genuine choice. Particularly suggestive is the final sentence of *Acad.* 2. 104, which says that not all impressions are ‘approved’, but only ‘those which are not impeded by anything’ (*ea quae nulla re impediuntur*). This is surely a reference to the notion of ‘unimpeded’ impressions, as employed in the discussion of the *pithanon*. The ‘approval’ of impressions will presumably depend, then, on the outcome of the kinds of scrutiny described a few pages back. If so, it will be by no means automatic; rather, it will be very much a matter over which we exercise control.

All of this depends, though, on our being able to make sense of this notion of ‘approval’ which is not assent. I shall not here attempt to determine whether or not this can be done. What I shall be arguing, however, is that a great deal turns on this question—not simply the viability of (4) itself, but also the viability of (3) and, in an important sense, of Carneades’ entire stance. In the end, I shall suggest, Carneades needs something like the distinction between ‘approval’ and assent if the *pithanon* is to withstand all objections (though I suspect he did not himself perceive that this is so). Before reaching this conclusion, however, we need to look in considerable detail at a further objection which may be raised to the account of the *pithanon*. Here, I think, we encounter issues of deeper philosophical interest than hitherto; and to these issues the remainder of the article is devoted.

II

We have seen, in outline, the nature of Carneades' discussion of the *pithanon*, its role in rebutting the *apraxia* charge, and its place in the wider debate between the Academics and the Stoics. We have also seen that, as a response to the *apraxia* charge, it seems to be both subtle and powerful. At any rate, it would seem to give the Stoics a great deal more to think about than did the parallel response of Carneades' predecessor Arcesilaus. However, at this point its very subtlety and elaboration may present a problem for Carneades. Given the detail with which the account is worked out, it looks very much as if the *pithanon* constitutes a full-fledged philosophical doctrine to which Carneades himself is committed.³⁵

Why is it an *objection* to the *pithanon* that it is a doctrine to which Carneades is committed? In outline, the answer should be clear, given our brief glance in Section I at an analogous objection raised against Arcesilaus. The point is that, if this is so, then there would seem to be at least some impressions to which Carneades is, after all, assenting—namely, the impressions whose propositional content comprises the *pithanon* doctrine itself. If the *pithanon* is Carneades' own thesis, he must apparently be assenting to the impression that the *pithanon* is the criterion for the conduct of life, to the impression that there are three distinct levels of 'convincingness', each appropriately sought in different circumstances, and so on. The term *phantasia*, usually translated by 'impression', is not limited to *sensory* impressions (even though sensory impressions constitute a very large class of *phantasiai* and also, for the Stoics, enjoy a certain kind of epistemological primacy

³⁵ There appears to be no evidence of this charge being made by the Stoics or by other contemporaries of Carneades; but it was made by the Pyrrhonists, and has recurred in modern times. For Sextus' claim that the members of the New Academy were negative dogmatists and not sceptics see *PH* 1. 226–31 (by 'New Academy' he means Carneades and Clitomachus—on this see 220). The objection, at least in its modern guise (though not as formulated by Sextus), charges Carneades with a variety of self-refutation, and self-refutation arguments were indeed used against the Academics by their contemporaries; see e.g. Lucr. 4. 469–72, which probably derives from Epicurus (on this see Myles Burnyeat, 'The Upside-down Back-to-Front Sceptic of Lucretius IV 472', *Philologus*, 122 (1978), 197–206). However, there is no contemporary example of precisely this objection; the charge that occurs in Lucretius is rather that on their own thesis sceptics do not *know* whether the thesis itself is true, so that they contradict themselves. Despite this lack of direct evidence, though, it is likely that Carneades at least understood that this was a charge to which he might be vulnerable—whether or not he actually faced it in his lifetime; on this see further n. 53.

among the totality of *phantasiai*). Any time it would be legitimate to say, in English, 'I have the impression that *P*', it will be legitimate to speak of one's having a *phantasia* to the effect that *P*; and hence the positive assertion of *any* propositions, including those which comprise philosophical theses, will count as the assenting to certain impressions.³⁶ And so, it may be said, if the *pithanon* is indeed a philosophical position of Carneades' own, he will have failed to maintain his professed posture of total non-assent. He may have provided a very adequate basis for rational decision, and hence rebutted the *apraxia* charge, but it will be at the expense of backing down from his initial sceptical stance—and hence, in effect, conceding to his opponents their main point, which is that the sceptical stance is an impossible one to maintain. Carneades cannot, then, *both* assert the *pithanon* as his own thesis *and* remain a true sceptic; if he truly has 'rid our minds of assent' (including his own mind), he cannot assent to the account of the *pithanon* itself.³⁷

A natural move at this point would be to invoke the distinction introduced in Carneades' (4). One might, that is, suggest that Carneades does not assent to his account of the *pithanon*, but only 'approves' it; in this case, while he will be in some sense endorsing the *pithanon*, it will be in a way which is consistent with his sceptical posture (that is, with his posture of universal non-assent). If this notion of 'approval' is intelligible at all, it is not clear why this would not work. However, I want to put aside this suggestion for the moment. We shall return to it eventually; but for now I want to consider whether, even aside from the obscure distinction between 'approval' and assent, there may not be ways to absolve Carneades of the charge that the *pithanon* is a doctrine to which he assents. For it is precisely this which several modern scholars have claimed to do.

As we have seen, Carneades' account of the *pithanon* is elaborate and ingenious; and one's initial reaction may well be 'How could this

³⁶ For further detail on these points see Michael Frede, 'Stoics and Sceptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions', in *The Sceptical Tradition*, repr. in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*.

³⁷ This charge of 'dogmatism' (as it might have been called by the Pyrrhonists) need not, of course, be limited to Carneades' (3); it could just as well be applied to *any* proposition which Carneades might be thought to have asserted in his own person. (Again, compare the parallel discussion of Arcesilaus in sect. 1.) Note that Carneades is not exonerated from this charge by the mere fact that he claimed not to *know* anything (and, as we saw, applied (1) to itself). One can certainly assent to some proposition without claiming knowledge of its truth; a commitment to, or positive assertion that, *P* is quite compatible with the recognition that one might be wrong.

not be Carneades' own thesis? He appears, for all the world, to be arguing for a position, as any other philosopher would do; if he is not doing this, what else could he be up to? The traditional interpretation was that he was indeed doing this; that the *pithanon* was Carneades' own positive position—assented to, of course, in a tentative spirit, and not as something for which he claimed certainty, but assented to none the less.³⁸ Recently, however, this interpretation has fallen into some disrepute; it has been thought to rest on an unwarranted conflation of Carneades with later Academics. Philo of Larissa seems clearly to have accepted, and (following Metrodorus) to have attributed to Carneades, the view that assent is sometimes appropriate. However, Clitomachus denied that this was Carneades' view, and there is good reason to prefer his testimony.³⁹ But once we insist on separating Carneades from these later Academics, it is clear (for the reasons given just now) that he cannot consistently assent to the account of the *pithanon*; and various efforts have been made to show that he need not, in fact, be seen as assenting to it.

Two distinct types of interpretation have been proposed. The first consists in arguing that Carneades is not offering the *pithanon* as a doctrine in his own person, but is instead offering it as an *ad hominem* reply to the Stoics, telling them what they should do if they are worried about *apraxia*.⁴⁰ (This approach resembles a prominent interpretation of Arcesilaus, mentioned in passing in Section I.) The second consists in finding some other proposition, or series of propositions, with which the *pithanon* might be placed in opposition; on this view, then, the *pithanon* was intended to stand in the relation that the Pyrrhonists called *isostheneia*, 'equal force', with this other, opposing proposition or series of propositions, the result being that one withheld assent from either. In either case, the discussion of the *pithanon* is a piece of dialectical strategy, not a piece of Carneadean doctrine.

In favour of the first type of interpretation is the undoubted fact that the account of the *pithanon* employs a great deal of Stoic terminology.⁴¹ First of all, the term *pithanon* itself had a respectable place in Stoic thinking. At D.L. 7. 75, in a discussion of Stoic logic, a *pithanon axiōma* is said to be a proposition which 'leads towards assent'. In addition,

³⁸ See e.g. Charlotte Stough, *Greek Skepticism* (University of California Press, 1969), 58.

³⁹ On this see again n. 24 above.

⁴⁰ For further discussion of the feasibility of this see the Appendix.

⁴¹ Several of these Stoic parallels were brought to my attention by Burnyeat, 'Carneades was No Probabilist'.

there is a three-level Stoic classification of impressions recorded in Sextus (*Math.* 7. 242 ff.), the first level being in terms of *pithanotēs*, the second in terms of truth and falsehood, and the third in terms of cognition (*katalēpsis*) or its absence. As we saw, Carneades also begins by giving a classification of impressions in terms of *pithanotēs*; and it is hard to doubt that this classification was devised in full awareness of the Stoic one. At any rate, Carneades' classification abounds in Stoic notions (*phantaston*, cf. *SVF* 2. 54 (Aetius); *phantasioumenon*, cf. Sextus, *Math.* 7. 229, 231; *emphasis*, cf. D.L. 7. 51).

Further Stoic echoes occur at levels 2 and 3 in Carneades' account. Chrysippus used the term *perispaō* to refer to the diverting of an impression (or strictly, of cognition) by opposing arguments;⁴² Carneades' term *aperispastos* would appear to be picking up on this. Again, the discussion of the second level is introduced by the comment that impressions *allē ex allēs ērtētai*, 'connect with one another'. This recalls a passage of Alexander (*SVF* 2. 945) in which we are told that there is a causal nexus in the universe, the whole series of causes fitting together (*ērtēmenon*, *sunērtētai*) in an infinite sequence; and the Stoics also used the term *sunartēsis* to refer to logical consistency (see Sextus, *Math.* 8. 430). Finally, at the third level, the word *dokimazomen*, 'scrutinize', while recalling the political process of *dokimasia*, is also reminiscent of a series of passages which refer to a character called the *dokimastēs*, 'scrutinizer' (*SVF* 3. 124–6), who appears to be an expert at judgements of value (and so is presumably identical with the Stoic sage).

The *pithanon* passage, then, is replete with Stoic material;⁴³ and this, as I said, lends credence to the idea that the *pithanon* is intended as an *ad hominem* reply to the Stoics. On the other hand, it does not simply borrow this material, leaving it unaltered; it reorganizes it in an original way. The initial classification of impressions in terms of *pithanotēs* is reminiscent of the Stoic classification—deliberately so, I suggested; but it is a *reworking* rather than a mere copying of Stoic notions. For example, the true but dim impression seems to be Carneades' own

⁴² Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1036 D–E.

⁴³ Several other elements in Carneades' discussion recall ideas and terms attributed by Sextus to some people he calls 'the younger Stoics' (*Math.* 7. 253). However, it is not clear that these are further cases of Carneades borrowing from the Stoics; more probably, I think, the younger Stoics were people after Carneades who were forced by arguments of his into making some concessions—in which case, of course, it is the Stoics who are echoing Carneades, not the other way round. However, I cannot discuss the matter here.

idea; and the relations between *pithanotēs* and truth or falsehood are considerably different in Carneades' account and the Stoic one. Again, the Stoic notions I drew attention to in levels 2 and 3 are used by the Stoics themselves in contexts somewhat unlike those in which Carneades uses them; most notably, one of them contributes to a characterization of the Stoic sage, whom Carneades would not, of course, admit as a possibility.

So the general picture that emerges from the *pithanon* passage is of a lot of Stoic material modified in an original and not particularly Stoic way. Now, these original elements and reorganizations may seem to create a difficulty for the idea that Carneades, in presenting the *pithanon*, is telling the Stoics what they should believe, as opposed to offering views of his own. Certainly, he is doing more than simply showing what in fact follows from Stoic premisses (contrary to what the Stoics themselves assume), for not all the premisses are Stoic; for example, he presents his own classification of impressions, seemingly in *opposition* to the Stoic one. In its most straightforward version, therefore, the *ad hominem* interpretation will not work.⁴⁴ However, we might try imagining a more complex version of this strategy. Maybe Carneades is not simply showing what follows from views that the Stoics accept; maybe he is, in some cases, offering them improved versions of their own positions. The general aim is still to tell the Stoics what they should say, given their concern about *apraxia*, but he does not simply take over Stoic materials and deduce an unpalatable conclusion; rather, he rearranges some of these materials in a more satisfactory way (that is, in a way that the Stoics themselves might be persuaded to agree was more satisfactory), and *then* deduces the unpalatable conclusion. Carneades is saying, then, how the Stoic *should* argue if he is to give the best possible argument for a criterion for living. He will be well advised to improve on the Stoic classification of impressions (for example); but even with such rearrangements he will not get a strict criterion of truth. Even so, why should he not be satisfied with what he has got? After all, plenty of resources for rational deliberation still remain; and anyway, as we saw earlier, it is not as if even the Stoic sage can expect to attain certainty in every case in which a decision is needed. On this interpretation, therefore, Carneades is not endorsing these arguments, despite their apparent originality in the

⁴⁴ This straightforward version is essentially that of Couissin, 'The Stoicism of the New Academy'.

use of Stoic concepts; rather, they are designed to pacify the Stoics, and are handed to the Stoics for their own adoption.⁴⁵

What of the second type of interpretation, according to which the *pithanon* is designed to be juxtaposed with some other theory or account, with a view to inducing suspension of judgement about both? The technical term *isostheneia*, used in the description of this procedure, is admittedly Pyrrhonian; however, there is good reason to believe that this type of strategy was well established in the Academy as well. Diogenes Laertius reports that Arcesilaus was the first to suspend judgement *dia tas enantiotētas tōn logōn*, 'because of the opposition of arguments'.⁴⁶ And probably the best-known anecdote about Carneades is that, while on his ambassadorial mission to Rome, he delivered, on successive days, two equally powerful speeches about justice, one for and the other against;⁴⁷ the intended effect of this performance, we may plausibly assume, is that the two opposing arguments as it were cancel each other out, so that one is left assenting to neither. If Carneades offers the *pithanon* in the same spirit, then he is again not endorsing it as his own theory, but is simply throwing it out as an equally persuasive alternative to something else. But the obvious next question is 'As an equally persuasive alternative to what?' There are two possibilities here. The *pithanon* might, on the one hand, be intended to be juxtaposed with the Stoic argument for the cognitive impression; on this view, the Stoics gave their argument, Carneades responded 'Here is an equally persuasive view of what the criterion is', and the appropriate reaction is suspension of judgement.⁴⁸ On the other hand, it might be intended to be juxtaposed with Carneades' own argument against any criterion of truth, i.e. (1) above; on this reading, he argues, equally persuasively, first that there is no criterion, then that there *is* a criterion, namely the *pithanon*.⁴⁹ This latter version may have the advantage of corresponding more closely with Carneades' procedure in the anecdote, where both sides of the opposition are delivered by Carneades himself; it also explains how (1) can avoid being Carneades' own thesis (something which would in any case need to be done in a

⁴⁵ This is the interpretation of Burnyeat, 'Carneades was No Probabilist', and (much more briefly stated) of LS—see commentary on sect. 69.

⁴⁶ 4. 28.

⁴⁷ Cic. *Rep.* 3. 9; Lact. *Div. inst.* 5. 14. 3–5 (= LS 68M).

⁴⁸ This interpretation is hinted at, though not developed, in Striker, 'Sceptical Strategies' (see pp. 82–3).

⁴⁹ This is the interpretation of Sedley, 'The Motivation of Greek Skepticism'.

full account of his thought), at the same time as explaining how the *pithanon* can avoid it.

It might be objected against both versions of this interpretation that the *pithanon* is not presented as a criterion of truth, but as a criterion for the conduct of life—and hence, that it is not fit to stand in opposition with an account having to do with the criterion of truth (either one which says that there is *no* criterion of truth, or one which says that the criterion of truth is the cognitive impression). The result of the juxtapositions envisaged above would not be suspension of judgement, because, on either version, the two juxtaposed arguments would not represent opposing positions on the same subject.⁵⁰ But this objection, I think, would be mistaken. While Sextus does introduce the *pithanon* as a criterion for the conduct of life, he later (*Math.* 7. 173) refers to it as a criterion of truth; and indeed, there is no need to take his initial characterization as implying otherwise. We need not read him as saying that, having abolished the criterion of truth, Carneades was compelled to offer something else *instead* (i.e. something *other* than a criterion of truth) by which to conduct one's life; his point might rather be that, despite having argued that there was *no* criterion of truth, he was compelled—since we have to live our lives somehow—to formulate *some* sort of criterion (sc. 'of truth') for the conduct of life. But even if this is not granted—even if the text does talk as if there are two separate types of criteria—the distinction between the two types may very well be Sextus' own. Sextus himself explicitly distinguishes between the criterion of truth and the criterion of action, maintaining that the latter type, but not the former, is required by everyone, including the sceptic.⁵¹ Given the context in which the *pithanon* is introduced—that is, as a response to the *apraxia* charge—it would be natural for Sextus to see it as a criterion of action rather than as a criterion of truth.⁵²

⁵⁰ This objection was suggested to me by Tony Long.

⁵¹ *PH* 1. 21–2.

⁵² Admittedly, the *pithanon* is not a criterion of truth in the original, strict sense, since it admits the possibility of falsehood; and so the original point of the objection, that the *pithanon* does not balance the arguments that it is designed, on the present line of interpretation, to balance, may still seem forceful. But I am not convinced. A clever interlocutor might indeed say to Carneades 'But your *pithanon* is not a *proper* criterion of truth; and so you have not given us equal and opposed arguments, as you claimed to have done'; but to this Carneades could have had a whole battery of replies available. 'What is wrong with this criterion?', he might say; 'it will meet all our needs perfectly well. As I mentioned, it will even provide us with a basis for decisions on that most important matter, happiness. So why on earth should you deny that it is a criterion? What more could you reasonably expect from a criterion?'

Both types of interpretation seem, then, to withstand initial criticism; we are now faced with the question whether there are nevertheless reasons for favouring one type over the other. To this question the answer, it seems to me, is a resounding 'no'. We have no ancient text which explicitly tells us how Carneades responded to the charge that the *pithanon* is his own doctrine;⁵³ so we are obliged to rely on our own speculations as to how he might have replied to it. And the twin speculations, that he intended the *pithanon* as an *ad hominem* reply to the Stoics, and that he intended it as one of a pair of opposing arguments designed to induce *isostheneia*, both seem highly defensible; we have seen that each one has a number of points which may be adduced in its support. Besides, I see no reason why we have to choose between them. Commentators seem to assume that there must have been some *one* strategy by which Carneades warded off the objection that the *pithanon* is his own doctrine; but why should he not have sometimes used one strategy and sometimes another, depending on the context of the discussion? On some occasions he might have presented the *pithanon* as a pacifier for the Stoics, and on others as an argument to be juxtaposed with some other opposing argument. (Moreover, the opposing argument itself might have been sometimes the Stoic argument for the cognitive impression, and sometimes his own argument against any criterion of truth; for the indications favouring the latter over the former were, as we saw, only marginal.) Not only is there no obvious *basis* on which to select one of these interpretations over the other, but there seems no obvious *reason* for doing so either. It is plausible to think that Carneades wanted to avoid the imputation of theses to himself, and just as plausible that he would have welcomed any available means to achieve that purpose.

There is, in any case, no shortage of ways in which Carneades *could* have responded to the objection that he is putting forward a philosophical position; and so his status as a sceptic, which the objection is supposed to undermine, may now seem once more secure. However, this is not the end of the story. The original objection was that Carneades could not *both* assent to the *pithanon* and be a true

⁵³ Indeed, one might even wonder whether this particular charge was levelled against him in his own lifetime at all; as noted above (n. 35), there is no direct evidence of any contemporary discussion of the matter. On the other hand, the extreme difficulty experienced even by Clitomachus in finding out what Carneades' own views were (see *Cic. Acad.* 2. 139) does imply that Carneades was very unwilling to express views in his own person—which in turn suggests strongly that Carneades was at least aware of the possibility of such a charge.

sceptic. We have now found ways in which, despite the elaborate account of the *pithanon*, he *can* be a true sceptic; but he now seems to face another dilemma (or perhaps the reverse side of the original dilemma). If the *pithanon* really is not Carneades' own doctrine, how can it serve the function, which it seems clearly intended to serve, of rebutting the charge of *apraxia*? Carneades argued that there was no criterion of truth; his opponents replied that if that were so, there would be no basis for any rational conduct of life; and Carneades replied in turn by saying 'Yes, there is; the *pithanon* can serve this purpose perfectly well'. This was the scenario we reviewed in Section 1. But now, if the *pithanon* is not a position to which he himself assents, it is hard to see how it can play this role. For in this case he will not after all be saying, in his own person, 'The *pithanon* is a perfectly good basis for the rational conduct of life.' If the *apraxia* charge is one to which he needs to respond, he cannot offer a response and then immediately distance himself from it; for then he will not in fact have responded to the charge.⁵⁴ Suppose that I argue for the proposition that *Q*, and someone responds 'But if *Q*, then *P*', where *P* is a consequence which we agree needs to be avoided. Suppose then that my counter-response is of the form 'No, it is *not* the case that if *Q*, then *P*; but please don't think that I am committing myself to what I just said.' Now, the first part of this blocks the suggestion that I am forced to accept the undesirable *P*; but the second part reopens that possibility. If I refuse to endorse 'It is not the case that if *Q*, then *P*' (even while *saying* it), I have not left myself with the means to avoid accepting *P*. So if *P* really is something which I had better not be forced to accept, I had better endorse some argument to the effect that *Q* does not entail *P*. Carneades seems to be in exactly this situation. In refusing to endorse his account of the *pithanon*, he is not leaving himself with any means to rebut the suggestion that rationally directed action is impossible; so if that suggestion is indeed an unacceptable one to him (as is seemingly implied by the fact that he comes up with the *pithanon* in the first place), he is in trouble if he fails to endorse what he says about the *pithanon*.

How can Carneades escape this dilemma? One attractive answer would be this. The suggestion that rationally directed action is impossible is not, after all, one that is unacceptable to *him*; it is unacceptable to the Stoics, and it is the Stoics that he is trying to

⁵⁴ In certain respects he will be like the person (discussed by G. E. Moore) who says '*P*, but I do not believe that *P*.'

comfort with his account of the *pithanon*. This point, in fact, was already implicit in the interpretation of the *pithanon* as designed to pacify the Stoics. On that interpretation, Carneades was telling the Stoics what *they* should do to escape the *apraxia* which, according to them, would result from the absence of any cognitive impressions. But if that is what he was doing, he must not have regarded the *apraxia* charge (or at any rate, this version of it) as problematic to himself personally. The *pithanon* was indeed developed as a response to the *apraxia* charge. But the charge was not one which he felt the need to respond to in his own person. Instead, he concentrated on producing a response to it which would satisfy the Stoics (and maybe others besides), since it was the Stoics who found the non-existence of the cognitive impression to have this unacceptable consequence.

On this view, then, Carneades is not, in offering the *pithanon*, telling us how *he himself* can act rationally, but how the Stoics can do so. 'So you are worried that rationally directed action is impossible', he is saying. 'Very well, here are some suggestions as to how you can do very nicely in that regard; try using the *pithanon*, as people seem to do in ordinary life anyway. Of course, *I* am not committing myself to the claim that the *pithanon* gives one a way to conduct one's life rationally; *you* are the ones who insist on the need for a means to do this, not me. But given numerous other things you accept, it seems to me that the *pithanon* would suit your needs perfectly well; so stop bleating to me about *apraxia*.'

Thus it seems, according to the current line of thought, as if the dilemma I posed for Carneades three paragraphs back is not one which need concern him. We saw earlier that the 'pacifying' interpretation of the *pithanon* seemed plausible, and that, if he did offer the *pithanon* in this spirit, he could escape the objection that he is putting forward a positive doctrine. We have now seen, in addition, that to offer the *pithanon* in this spirit is implicitly to shrug off the *apraxia* charge itself (and this point, I think, has not been made sufficiently clear by those scholars I mentioned as favouring this type of interpretation). Of course, the *apraxia* charge would presumably have taken the form 'If there is no criterion of truth, *none of us* can direct our lives rationally', and not the form 'If there is no criterion of truth, *we Stoics* will be unable to direct our lives rationally'. But in offering the *pithanon* as a pacifier for the Stoics, Carneades is implicitly resisting the suggestion that a concern for directing one's life rationally is one which everyone, even an Academic, is bound to have. Nor is it surprising that he would

resist such a suggestion; after all, that concern would itself be just one more commitment, and commitments were precisely what he was attempting to avoid.

All this, I say, is historically plausible as an account of Carneades' attitudes. The attitude which would prompt him to produce the *pithanon* in order to pacify the Stoics would be one of nonchalance towards the *apraxia* charge itself.⁵⁵ And if such an attitude was justifiable, then there would be no need for him to offer the *pithanon*, or any other response to the *apraxia* charge, in his own person. But now, *was* this attitude justifiable? Was Carneades *entitled* simply to shrug off the concern for directing one's life rationally, as being something that burdens only the non-sceptic?

It looks as if he was not. If my reconstruction of the debate (or any other recent reconstruction) is anywhere near the mark, Carneades' argumentative strategy itself exhibits an exemplary concern for the standard philosophical virtues of rationality, logical coherence, and consistency. All the appearances suggest that one of his major goals in life was to show that the Stoics' attacks on him fell short—in particular, that his own sceptical stance was not, in fact, an impossible one to maintain. He rebuts these attacks as would any other philosopher, with rational argument; and in doing so, apparently with great gusto, he seems to show that the canons of rational argument are ones to which he himself is committed.⁵⁶ If he was really uncommitted to rationality, he need not have regarded the objections of the Stoics as requiring any kind of a response; he need not even have entered a debate with them. If it is suggested that, even in engaging in rational argument with them at all, he is perhaps only playing along with the Stoics and others—for some dialectical, *ad hominem* purpose, and not

⁵⁵ I should stress that the argument of the last few paragraphs is not intended to cast doubt on my earlier contention that both the 'pacifying' interpretation and the *isostheneia* interpretation of the *pithanon* are historically plausible, and that they are in no way mutually exclusive. We have now found an important extra dimension to Carneades' attitude, if he offered the *pithanon* as a 'pacifier'; but this does not at all imply that he could not also, at times, have offered the *pithanon* as one of a pair of equally powerful opposing arguments.

⁵⁶ In using the phrase 'the canons of rational argument', I do not mean to imply that what it is to argue rationally could be encapsulated in some entirely determinate (and trans-historical) list of maxims. Nevertheless, I assume that a commitment to arguing rationally would necessarily include such things as a concern to avoid contradiction or self-refutation, or a concern to present one's opponents with arguments which, given their own assumptions, they would be bound to accept. It is these kinds of concerns which Carneades appears pre-eminently to display; and it is these very concerns, I wish to argue, which *threaten* the consistency of his scepticism.

because he is himself concerned with adhering to the canons of rational argument—the reply is that having dialectical purposes itself presupposes adherence to the canons of rational argument.⁵⁷ Without such an adherence, he could simply have adopted his sceptical stance and ignored all further opposition; Pyrrho seems to have done something of precisely this kind.

It might be said that adherence to the canons of rational argument, and having a concern for *living one's life* in a rationally directed fashion, are two rather different things—and that it is the latter which the *apraxia* charge addresses, not the former. But this would be a mistake. The *apraxia* charge is to the effect that, if there are no cognitive impressions, *rational decisions about what to do* are impossible. This certainly does create difficulties for the conduct of life, in the everyday sense; but it also creates difficulties for anyone who wants to mount a rationally compelling argument. Mounting a rationally compelling argument requires, precisely, making rational decisions about what to do—or, more precisely, making rational decisions about what to *say* at any given point in the debate; for, as we all know from Austin, speaking is a kind of doing.⁵⁸ So if rational decisions are impossible, the conducting of rational arguments is impossible; the *apraxia* charge does not apply only to 'actions' of a gross physical kind.

To sum up the last few pages, then, Carneades' dilemma is this. He must either concede the *apraxia* charge or respond to it. It might seem that he could concede it, denying that it constitutes any kind of problem for him (but suggesting that it is only a problem for non-sceptics). However, as we have just seen—though Carneades himself probably did *not* see it—conceding the *apraxia* charge would include conceding that it is impossible to conduct a philosophical debate in accordance with the canons of rational argument; and everything we know about Carneades militates against the idea that this concession would be remotely palatable to him. On the other hand, if he wishes to respond to the *apraxia* charge, then he seems obliged to offer the account of the *pithanon* in his own person, as a doctrine to which he

⁵⁷ What if he does not even really have any dialectical purposes, but is simply playing a big game with the Stoics, in which he *pretends* to accept the standards of rational debate? In that case, the need to defend himself against the *apraxia* charge, while yet not abandoning the true sceptical stance, is part of the game too; so he cannot ignore it without throwing in his hand.

⁵⁸ If this reference to Austin jars by its anachronism, see Plato, *Crat.* 387 b 8–9 for the very same point. The idea that speaking is doing was not *discovered* by Austin; it merely received a new and special emphasis in his work.

assents—in which case he has backed down from his sceptical stance. Indeed, his apparent strong commitment to the canons of rational argument would itself surely constitute a backing down of the same kind.

If there is any possible way out of this impasse, it seems to be the following. Carneades would somehow have to deny that his *adherence* to the canons of rational argument amounts to a *commitment* to them, and deny that his *offering* the account of the *pithanon*, in his own person, amounts to his assenting to it. Let me try to describe the kind of attitude he would need to adopt, if such denials were to be made good (and let me emphasize that in the following description I am going well beyond any of the evidence concerning the actual attitudes of Carneades himself; I am speculating about what attitude he *would* have had to adopt *if* he was to remain fully consistent and fully a sceptic—a feat which, very possibly, he did not in fact manage). Suppose that Carneades does not positively commit himself to the canons of rational argument; suppose, instead, that he simply *finds himself* proceeding in accordance with them. That is, for any given dialectical move, he does not make it on the grounds that this is the rationally appropriate move to make at that point in the argument, and one should always make the move that is rationally appropriate; indeed, he does not have *grounds* for making it at all. Rather, this is simply the move which he finds himself inclined to make at this point; and in general, he finds himself inclined to offer remarks which are in fact in accordance with the canons of rational argument. This is simply a fact about his own dispositions—a fact which he and others can note with interest, but which does not betoken any *commitment* on his part to the canons of rational argument. Now, if this is the situation, then the *apraxia* charge, the charge that the absence of cognitive impressions would make rational decisions impossible, would be one which, again in accordance with the canons of rational argument, he would find himself moved to respond to, and to respond to in his own person. For, as was suggested above, this charge, if correct, would entail that conducting a rational argument would itself be impossible; and the canons of rational argument dictate that, when someone claims that your position entails that a procedure which you yourself habitually employ (in this case, the very procedure of conducting rational arguments) is impossible, you offer as powerful a rebuttal as you can. However, the rebuttal itself—in this case, the *pithanon*—need not be positively endorsed, any more than the canons of rational argument are

positively endorsed; for the *pithanon* too is one of these responses which, given the way his mind works, he finds himself coming out with. It is not that he is offering the *pithanon* merely as a pacifier to the Stoics; he is genuinely offering it as a defence of his own stance. But in offering it, he is not *assenting* to it; it is merely the response that, at the moment, he observes himself being inclined to give.

Does this story make any sense at all? Could there be such a thing as 'going along with' the canons of rational argument in this non-committal way, or 'offering' an elaborate account, such as that of the *pithanon*, without actually assenting to it? I am not sure. At any rate, if this had been Carneades' posture, he would have been, in a clear sense, radically detached from the workings of his own mind; his own most profound sayings and thoughts would be ones with which he would be declining to identify. But maybe this kind of detachment, or non-identification, is after all possible. I shall not attempt to resolve this issue; it would take a great deal of discussion.⁵⁹ What I do wish to observe is that, in attempting to rescue Carneades from his dilemma, we have been driven to embrace the possibility of an attitude towards propositions which is *between* full-scale assent and total indifference—which does not constitute a commitment to their truth, but which does involve adhering to them in some weaker sense. In other words, we have been led to embrace precisely the kind of distinction that we know Carneades himself employed, namely, the distinction between 'approval' of an impression and assent to it. We were unclear earlier about whether that distinction could be made out; now we are unclear about whether the story told in the previous paragraph is a coherent one. My point is that it is the same unclarity which we are facing in both cases; the story will be coherent if, and only if, Carneades' notion of 'approving', or 'following', an impression makes sense.

It follows that Carneades' response to version (a) of the *apraxia* charge ultimately *depends* on his response to version (b). The only way in which he can *both* respond, in his own person, to the charge that the absence of cognitive impressions would make rational decisions impossible (which, given his own practice of rational argumentation, he needs to do) *and yet* not be assenting to his account of the *pithanon* (which he must not do if he is to remain a true sceptic) is if a

⁵⁹ For discussion of the closely parallel issue which arises with regard to Pyrrhonism, see Burnyeat, 'Can the Sceptic Live his Scepticism?', Barnes, 'The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist', and Mark McPherran, 'Skeptical Homeopathy and Self-Refutation', *Phronesis*, 32 (1987), 290–328.

distinction can be made out between assent and 'approval'. We decided, at the beginning of Section II, to avoid trying to make use of that distinction; but now we have been forced back to it. Whether Carneades himself understood this intimate connection between these two parts of his output is impossible to say with certainty; I am myself inclined to think not, but I frankly cannot demonstrate this. At any rate, the upshot is that it is a lot harder for Carneades to maintain his position (if 'position' is what one wants to call it) than has been implied by most recent discussions of the *pithanon*'s status. That he did use one or more of the strategies suggested in these discussions for avoiding the objection that the *pithanon* is his own thesis is likely enough. What I have argued is that—whether or not Carneades, or his contemporary opponents, realized it—these strategies do not *suffice* to clear him from all objections. To see whether he can be entirely cleared, we would have to undertake a detailed scrutiny of this alleged distinction between assent and 'approval'; there has been some useful discussion in this area, but the matter is far from having been fully explored.⁶⁰ I do not intend to embark on any such investigation now.

Regardless of the cogency of that distinction, a central point that has been illustrated here is the kind of difficulty involved in attempting to maintain the ancient sceptical posture. Difficulties that are in many ways similar to those discussed in this paper seem to face the Pyrrhonian sceptic—whether or not they can ultimately be overcome.⁶¹ Recent scholarship has tended to narrow the gap that was traditionally thought to exist between Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism. Despite my criticism of some other treatments of Carneades, my argument is at any rate in fundamental agreement with this trend. For precisely in emphasizing the difficulties inherent in Carneades' scepticism—difficulties which, as I say, are analogous to those which have been brought against Pyrrhonism—I have drawn attention to the amount of common ground between the two movements.

APPENDIX

On *edei*, *apaitoumenos*, and *epanankazetai*

In *Math.* 7. 158 Sextus says that 'it was necessary' (*edei*) for Arcesilaus to provide a criterion for the conduct of life. Ioppolo⁶² lays great emphasis on this word, taking it as support for the view that the *eulogon* was presented by Arcesilaus as his *own* position. For if the *eulogon* was intended merely as a criterion that the *Stoics* might use—i.e., if the whole performance was purely dialectical—it would be odd to suppose that Arcesilaus *had to* provide it; why would he be obliged to help his opponents? In their reviews, both Maconi and Annas endorse Ioppolo in this reasoning. However, it is not so clear to me that the word *edei* licenses any such inference. First, the word could be a piece of misguided editorializing by Sextus or his source; but even if we take it at face value, it seems to me that there is another possible way of understanding the point, as follows.

Sextus has just given us an argument of Arcesilaus' according to which the Stoic sage must suspend judgement. Now, suppose that Arcesilaus failed to reply to the *apraxia* charge; in that case, he will have told us that the sage must adopt a posture which makes rational choice impossible. But, it might be argued, if the posture of *epochē* makes rational choice impossible, that by itself refutes any argument to the effect that it must be adopted, by the sage or by anyone else. A position the adoption of which makes rational choice impossible is inherently unbelievable, and hence can be dismissed. One need not concern oneself with what the arguments for that position might be; it simply makes no sense to suggest that anyone is rationally bound to adopt it. This style of approach is apparent in Aristotle—see *Metaph.* 1008^b12 ff., 1010^b3 ff. Here sceptical positions are ruled out precisely on the ground that they are incompatible with rational choice among alternative actions, so that it is not a practical possibility that anyone should really believe them; this alone is sufficient for them to be dismissed, regardless of what the arguments in their favour might be. In the same kind of way, the sage, when faced with Arcesilaus' argument to the effect that he must suspend judgement, might have simply replied 'No, it is *not* the case that I must suspend judgement. For if I did, I would be unable to make rational choices. Hence the posture of *epochē* is inherently unadoptable, and so I can cheerfully dismiss it; by the same token, I can cheerfully dismiss your argument to the effect that I must adopt it.'

This kind of anti-sceptical digging in of the heels, I say, would be available to the Stoic *if* Arcesilaus did not reply to the *apraxia* charge. Arguably, then, the sense in which Arcesilaus 'had to' provide a criterion of action is this: he 'had to' show how the *sage* can act, compatibly with suspension of judgement, in order to make good his claim that suspension of judgement is the attitude the

⁶⁰ On this see Striker, 'Sceptical Strategies', 76–82, and Frede, 'The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge'.

⁶¹ For discussion of these see again the papers cited in n. 59 above.

⁶² *Opinione e scienza*, 123.

sage must adopt. This would not be a matter of gratuitously offering the Stoic a helping hand (Maconi and Annas are right that it would be strange for Arcesilaus to have done this), but of defending his *omni* previous argument against a certain style of anti-sceptical objection. I am not saying that this is the *only* possible reason why Arcesilaus would 'have to' offer a criterion of action; obviously, Ioppolo's simpler explanation is possible too. My suggestion is merely that there is at least *one* possible reason why he would 'have to' do this which is consistent with the *eulogon's not* being offered as Arcesilaus' own position. Hence, I would resist the attempt to draw conclusions about the status of the *eulogon* from the word *edei* itself.

Now, it might be felt, first, that I have represented the matter exactly back to front. Surely, it might be said, if the impossibility of rational choice is a decisive count against *epochē*, and Arcesilaus has shown that the sage must adopt *epochē*, then it is the sage who is in trouble, not Arcesilaus. But this would only be so if what Arcesilaus had done in the previous passage was to infer the necessity of *epochē* purely from Stoic assumptions; in that case, it would indeed be the sage who had failed to see the impossible consequences of his own position. But (despite what some interpreters imply) Arcesilaus has not *merely* rearranged some Stoic assumptions, and shown that they pointed to *epochē*. Certainly, he has made plentiful use of Stoic assumptions—as he would need to do, if he is to have any hope of forcing a conclusion on the Stoics; but he has also *controverted* a crucial set of Stoic theses, by arguing against the possibility of the cognitive impression (*Math.* 7. 153–4). (Nor does this latter argument consist merely of Stoic assumptions; on the contrary, the claim that no true impression is such that there could not be a false one just like it (154) is the direct negation of a Stoic tenet, and is supported by what Arcesilaus presents as the verdict of experience.) It may be that Arcesilaus does not personally *endorse* the reasoning in this passage; perhaps it is only *ad hominem*, intended to drive the Stoics into an unwelcome position (I cannot now take up this tricky question). But the argument is certainly of Arcesilaus' own construction, and contains at least some non-Stoic materials; whatever game, dialectical or otherwise, he is playing at this point, this is evidently *his* move in that game. And so, if it is legitimate for the Stoic to reply, in Aristotelian fashion, 'The adoption of *epochē* is a practical impossibility, and therefore arguments to the effect that I or anyone must adopt it can be dismissed', it is, after all, Arcesilaus who is at the receiving end of this reply—unless, of course, he can show that the Stoic's adoption of *epochē* is *not* a practical impossibility.

But second, it may be felt that this is a very feeble and far-fetched reply, of which the Stoics would not have wished to avail themselves for a moment. Modern commentators are at liberty to view it as feeble and far-fetched. However, as I have suggested, it is essentially the same as a type of argument which Aristotle apparently takes to be serious and powerful; it is not

implausible, then, that the Stoics, who borrow liberally from Aristotle, might also have found it tempting. In fact, the reason why many moderns may find it ludicrous is because it does not occur to them that questions about the bearing of sceptical conclusions on action are even *relevant* to the *truth* of those conclusions. This is because they assume that discussions of scepticism are (to borrow a felicitous term) 'insulated' from ordinary life. (For the same reason, they find G. E. Moore's response to scepticism laughably naïve; for Moore never entertains the possibility of such insulation.) But no such assumption was made in antiquity.⁶³ And if we leave aside the anachronistic notion of 'insulation', it is by no means immediately obvious how a sceptic could circumvent the kind of move I have described. It would be useless to offer further sceptical arguments; for the approach is not to dispute any of the sceptic's arguments directly, but to 'just say no' to their conclusions.⁶⁴ The suggestion that the Stoics may have had this move in their arsenal seems to me, therefore, neither historically implausible nor philosophically insulting.

I have gone on at some length, since I recognize that my line of thought is not a familiar one. A parallel issue arises concerning Carneades, and about him we can now afford to be much briefer. (Note, however, that Ioppolo reads Carneades differently from Arcesilaus in this respect.⁶⁵) As was observed earlier, we are also told by Sextus (166) that Carneades was 'compelled' (*epanankazetai*) to provide the *pithanon* (also 'demanded', *apaitoumenos*). Again, let us leave aside the possibility that these terms are unwarranted insertions by Sextus or his source (probably Antiochus—see 162); even apart from that, I do not think their occurrence is any more significant with regard to the status of the *pithanon* than is the use of the word *edei* in connection with Arcesilaus' *eulogon*. The point *might* be that Carneades is 'compelled' to explain how *he* can make rational choices, given his denial of any criterion of truth. On the other hand, it might be that he is 'compelled' to show the *Stoics* how *they* can make rational choices, compatibly with the conclusion (that there is no criterion of truth) which he has just forced upon *them*. For unless he can do this, they might object 'No, you are mistaken in thinking we must accept that there is no criterion of truth; in fact such a position (and hence your argument for it) is clearly to be rejected since, were one to adopt it, one would be unable to make rational choices.' As with Arcesilaus, the conclusion which Carneades forces upon them is not arrived at exclusively through the assembling of Stoic premisses; *he* made up the argument, and so he is vulnerable to the objection.

⁶³ On this (and on the unorthodoxy of Moore) see Burnyeat, 'The Sceptic in his Place and Time'.

⁶⁴ Paradoxical as it may seem, this may be one of the profoundest things one can do with sceptical arguments. On the profundity of G. E. Moore, and on the dangers of trying to beat the sceptic at his own game, see Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford, 1984), esp. ch. 3. Stroud does not, however, discuss ancient scepticism.

⁶⁵ *Opinione e scienza*, 208.

(To take just one point, he too uses the non-Stoic claim that for every true impression there could be an exactly similar false one.) The words *apaitoumenos* and *epanankazetai* themselves, then, do not tell against the dialectical interpretation. (Nor, again, do the words *kai autos* and *kai kath' hauton*. These do not imply that Carneades had to provide a criterion of action for his own use; rather, the point is simply that *he too* had to provide one—just as Arcesilaus did.)

There is, however, one way in which Carneades' situation does differ from Arcesilaus'. I suggested above (n. 17) that despite the inconclusiveness of the use of *edei* it was nevertheless plausible to read Arcesilaus as offering the *eulogon*—or at least, as *needing* to offer the *eulogon*—in his own person, on the ground that he seems to have promoted *epochē* as a *good*. But there is no analogous motivation for reading the *pithanon* as Carneades' own position (cf. n. 23), and so no analogous reason to doubt that the *pithanon* was intended as an *ad hominem* argument for the Stoics' consumption. (Whether he could consistently intend it in this way is questioned in the main text; that he *did* so intend it is, however, affirmed as plausible.)

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VIRTUE AND THE GOODS OF FORTUNE IN STOIC MORAL THEORY

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THE Stoics accept the eudaimonistic assumption of most Greek moral philosophers: agents desire their own *eudaimonia*, which is the only intrinsic good. This thesis is both a descriptive, psychological claim since human beings do want their own happiness (Stob. 2. 77. 16–25 = *SVF* 3. 16)¹ and a normative claim since persons ought to want happiness as the final good (Stob. 2. 46. 5–10). Although Greek ethical theorists justify moral virtue by how it contributes to an agent's

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¹ I shall supply the corresponding *SVF* reference for cited passages where possible. The abbreviations used for sources include:

Cicero, <i>Academica</i>	<i>Acad.</i>
<i>De finibus</i>	<i>Fin.</i>
<i>Tusculanae disputationes</i>	<i>Tusc.</i>
Diogenes Laertius	<i>D.L.</i>
Epictetus, <i>Dissertationes</i>	<i>Diss.</i>
Plutarch, <i>De communibus notitiis</i>	<i>Comm. not.</i>
<i>De Stoicorum repugnantiis</i>	<i>Stoic. repugn.</i>
<i>De virtute morali</i>	<i>Virt. mor.</i>
Seneca, <i>Epistulae morales</i>	<i>Ep.</i>
<i>De vita beata</i>	<i>Vit. beata</i>
Sextus Empiricus, <i>Adversus mathematicos</i>	<i>Math.</i>
<i>Pyrrhonicae hypotyposes</i>	<i>PH</i>
Stobaeus, <i>Eclogae</i>	<i>Stob.</i>
<i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i>	<i>SVF</i>