

## Scepticism in the Global History of Philosophy

### *Expressing and Vindicating Scepticism – The Case of Zhuangzi*

1. All our lives we labour as slaves, and we do not see success. Weary and thus worn out from our labouring, not knowing where we will end up again -- how can we not lament this? As for people saying that this situation is at least not death, what benefit is there to it? When one's body transforms [i.e. decays] – and one's heart-mind along with it, also – how can this not be called a great sorrow? Are humans' lives inherently so muddled as this? Or is it that I alone am muddled? Among humans, is there anyone that is in fact not muddled? (*Zhuangzi*, chapter 2; my translation)
2. How do I know that taking pleasure in life is not a delusion? How do I know that we who hate death are not exiles since childhood who have forgotten the way home? (*Zhuangzi*, chapter 2; trans. Graham 2001 [1981], p. 59)
3. **How do I know that what I call knowing is not ignorance? How do I know that what I call ignorance is not knowing?** (*Zhuangzi*, chapter 2; trans. Graham (2001 [1981], p. 58)
4. Words are not merely the blowing of air. Speaking requires words; and that which the words express is especially unfixd. In reality (*guo*), is there something which words refer to? Or was there never something which words referred to? One considers them to be different from the chirping of baby birds. But is there actually (*yi*) a distinction? Or is there no distinction between them? (*Zhuangzi*, chapter 2)
5. A fish trap is there for the fish. When you get the fish, you forget the trap. A snare is there for the rabbits. When you get the rabbit, you forget the snare. Words are there for the intent. When you get the intent, you forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words, so I can have a word with him? (*Zhuangzi*, chapter 26; trans. Ziporyn 2020, p. 224)

#### Primary texts

[See W3 handout]

#### Further reading

##### *Self-refutation in ancient philosophy*

###### *Zhuangzi*

Van Norden, Bryan W. *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Lancaster: Hackett, 2011. [See p. 154 for a discussion of the fish trap passage in *Zhuangzi* with a tentative comparison to the ladder image]

Wong, David B. "Zhuangzi and the Obsession with Being Right." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2005): 91-10.

Wong, David B. "Constructive Skepticism and Being a Mirror in the *Zhuangzi*." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 44, no. 1-2 (2017): 53-70.

###### *Greek Philosophy*

Bailey, A. *Sextus Empiricus and Pyrrhonian Scepticism*. Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. [See ch. 10 on Sextus and self-refutation]

Burnyeat, Myles F. "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Later Greek Philosophy." *The Philosophical Review* 85, no. 1 (1976): 44-69. [Seminal study on self-refutation arguments in ancient Greek philosophy]

Castagnoli, Luca. "Self-bracketing Pyrrhonism". *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18 (2000): 263-328.

Castagnoli, Luca. *Ancient Self-refutation: The Logic and History of the Self-refutation Argument from Democritus to Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. [See especially pp. 251-307 for a discussion of self-refutation in Sextus – an expanded version of Castagnoli 2000]

Stough, C. "Sextus Empiricus on Non-Assertion". *Phronesis* 29 (1984): 137-164. [On the Pyrrhonian sceptic's use of language and the avoidance of inconsistency]

##### *Self-refutation in modern epistemology*

Mackie, J. L. "Self-Refutation--A Formal Analysis." *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1950-) 14, no. 56 (1964): 193-203.