

# AUTENTIČNI SKEPTICIZAM: RAZGRANIČENJE DIJALEKTIČKE PROTUTEŽE POZITIVNOJ EPISTEMOLOGIJI

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**AUTHENTIC SKEPTICISM: THE  
DELINEATION OF A DIALECTICAL  
COUNTERPART TO POSITIVE  
EPISTEMOLOGY**

DOCTORAL THESIS

Supervisor:  
prof.dr.sc. Filip Grgić

Zagreb, 2016



Sveučilište u Zagrebu

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DOKTORSKI RAD

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## Summary

Common traits identified through a critique of those arguments which serve as paradigm cases in the prevailing distinction between two types of skepticism in this dissertation serve as a stepping stone to a different interpretation of skeptical approach in philosophy. The interpretation primarily draws on authentic commitment to *skepsis*, inquiry, inherent to all original skeptical arguments, and thus represents a reading of skepticism based on genuine appreciation of the proclaimed aim to skeptical argumentation, which is to serve as a dialectical counterweight to that which is determined. As such, the reading of skepticism offered is far removed from those interpretations in which skepticism is portrayed as a theory of ignorance or negative dogmatism. Through the prism of traits identified in delineation of authentic skeptical approach, this study further investigates the causes and consequences of these latter interpretations, specifically in the form in which they appear in philosophical discourse of 20th century epistemology and epistemology of the day.

*Key words:* skepticism, Academic skepticism, Pyrrhonian skepticism, Cartesian skepticism, dialectical aim, dialectical counterweight, *skepsis*, authentic skepticism, phantom skepticism.

## Sažetak

S obzirom na brojna izdanja kojima je skepticizam predmet, bilo da se radi o pregledima, kritičkim osvrtima, ili obranama i zagovaranju skepticizma, čini se kako je riječ o jednoj od onih tradicija čiji je naziv dio osnovnog pojmovlja filozofije, te je time općepoznat; naime, čini se kako bi mnogi, ako ne i svi koji se bave filozofijom ustvrdili kako su upoznati sa ovom tradicijom ili barem jednim od njezinih brojnih dijelova, te kako ne bi bili u neprilici kada bi se od njih tražila definicija 'skepticitizma'. Moglo bi se, utoliko, zaključiti kako još jedna studija o skepticizmu nije potrebna. Međutim, često u odnošenju spram onoga što se čini poznatim i bliskim izostane temeljito razmatranje i propitivanje; pa je preispitivanje baš tog poznatog i bliskog dobrodošlo. Upravo je postojanje višestrukih opisa onoga što se podvlači pod naslov 'skepticitizam' u opsežnoj literaturi poslužilo kao poticaj pisanju ove disertacije. U kakofoniji glasova o skepticizmu, za i protiv skepticizma, ova disertacija je prvenstveno rezultat potrage za pojmovnom jasnoćom, te predstavlja pokušaj uspostavljanja harmonije u odnošenjima sa ovom tradicijom.

Čitatelj ne treba očekivati kako će na stranicama koje slijede pronaći prikaz svih onih pristupa u filozofiji koji su bivali podvedeni pod naziv 'skepticitizam' ili prikazivani kao oblici skeptičke misli, već temeljito razmatranje onih zajedničkih značajki koje čine skepticizam 'skepticitizmom', onog kontinuiteta na osnovi kojeg se ovaj pristup u filozofiji smatra tradicijom te stječe uvid u značaj i smislenost dijelova ove tradicije, nažalost često dovedenih u pitanje. Najbolje je stoga ovu disertaciju promatrati kao prikaz skepticizma u kojem se najprije odgovara na pitanje što *je* zapravo 'skepticitizam', iako se može steći dojam kako je riječ o obrani ove tradicije, jer se opisuje i značaj i smislenost skeptičke argumentacije, ili o reviziji skepticizma, jer su ponuđene smjernice za svaku sljedeću uporabu skeptičkih argumenata. Primjereno potrazi za pojmovnom jasnoćom, odgovor na pitanje o naravi skepticizma započinje razmatranjem porijekla naziva 'skepticitizam', ili preciznije, izvornog smisla naziva *σκεπτικοί*, smisla koji je potaknuo prve samoproglashene skeptike na izbor takve titule. S obzirom da je titula služila razgraničenju od ostalih smjerova u filozofiji, za očekivati je kako će prikaz skepticizma kojemu je izvorni smisao titule polazna točka podjednako imati oblik kritike skepticizma, razgraničenja onih značajki argumentacije koje odgovaraju odabranoj tituli (njezinom smislu i svrsi razgraničenja) od onih koji s ovom nisu u skladu.

Prvi dio disertacije je preliminarna kritika skepticizma. Polazeći od naziva *σκεπτικοί* koji jednostavno znači 'istraživači', u preliminarnoj se kritici upravo ono što se željelo istaknuti prisvajanjem ovakve titule drži prvom posebnom karakteristikom 'skepticitizma'. Naime, prije nego što ga je prisvojila tradicija koja je predmet ovoga rada, ovaj je naziv, što

se uostalom i čini primjerenim, opisivao sve filozofe. Iako se svi filozofi upuštaju u istraživanja i propitivanja, skeptici su prisvajanjem ove titule za svoj pristup ukazali na to kako oni, za razliku od drugih, ostaju odani istraživanju, dok za druge to istraživanje ima svoj kraj. Istaknuta privrženost istraživanju postaje jasnija ukoliko se primijeti kako na kraju argumenata kojima se skeptici služe ne pronalazimo *tezu*, nešto što je *određeno*, utemeljeno i potvrđeno tim argumentima kao *odgovor* na pitanje koje je bilo predmetom rasprave. Argumenti skepticizma tako nisu resursi koji donose odgovor, ovi argumenti završavaju nanovo utvrđenim problemom, pitanjem, ukazivanjem na nerazriješenost rasprave, *daljnjim* istraživanjem, a ne odgovorima. Prikaz skepticizma u ovoj disertaciji počinje ovim uvidom te time polazište ima u uvažavanju nastojanja izvorne skeptičke argumentacije, koja se očituje u opredijeljenosti za pitanje i predstavlja pomak od onog tumačenja koje ovaj pristup izjednačuje sa teorijom neznanja, odnosno negativnim dogmatizmom.

Tumačenja u kojima se skepticizam izjednačuje s teorijom neznanja, odnosno u kojima je prikazan kao pristup čija argumentacija završava potvrđenom negativnom tezom, su brojna. Pritom opisane, *navodno* skeptičke teze, najčešće imaju oblik negacije neke propozicije, ili preciznije, negacije kognitivnog statusa neke propozicije. Najopćenitija i najpoznatija *navodno* skeptička teza tako bi bila tvrdnja kako ne znamo ništa ili ne možemo ništa znati. Uzimajući u obzir privrženost (nastavku) istraživanja koju su skeptici pokušali istaknuti prisvajanjem naslova 'istraživači', prijedlog je ove disertacije kako se opisani prikazi skepticizma zapravo ne bave skepticizmom, odnosno ne bave se onim što bi bilo ispravno nazivano skepticizmom. Time disertacija ne dovodi u pitanje negacije i argumente kojima se negacija iznosi kao *dio* argumentacije 'istraživača', već se suprotstavlja tumačenju tih negacija kao *teza*. Naime, tumačenjem skeptičke negacije kao teze zanemaruje se karakteristična *usmjerenost* argumenata koje rabe oni koji *nastavljaju* istraživanje završavajući argumentaciju (ponovnim) postavljanjem pitanja. Priznavanjem *usmjerenosti* skeptičkih argumenata, negacija se pokazuje kao protu-teza odgovoru koji se dovodi u pitanje, ne teza kojom argumenti završavaju, pa se zanemarivanjem ove usmjerenosti zanemaruje dijalektička težnja izvornih skeptičkih argumenata, preciznije, težnja stavljanja u pitanje onog što se smatra određenim. Svaka interpretacija skepticizma koja ovaj pristup opisuje kao priklanjanje negaciji, ukratko, ne uzima u obzir složenost 'nastavljanja pitanja' te razmatra skepticizam u nepotpunoj formi. Uzimajući u obzir namjeru *nastavljanja* istraživanja te složenost postavljanja pitanja *nečemu*, prijedlog je ove disertacije kako negaciju koja je dijelom skeptičke argumentacije ne bismo trebali promatrati kao odvojenu od afirmacije kojoj se

suprotstavlja, odnosno argumente skeptika razmatrati odvojeno od argumenata njihovih protivnika.

Pošto tumačenja koja skepticizam izjednačuju s teorijom neznanja također rabe naziv 'skeptizam' za ono što opisuju, u svrhu postizanja pojmovne jasnoće u ovoj disertaciji će se za takve opise rabiti naziv 'fantomski skepticizam'. Naime, ovaj naziv čini se primjerenim jer sažima nekoliko značajki takva *navodnog* skepticizma. Skeptik koji potvrđuje negativnu tezu, najčešće je iluzija, privid, odnosno ne postoji, osim u mišljenju filozofa koji ga priziva u raspravu, onog filozofa koji najprije iznosi 'što bi skeptik imao za reći', ne bi li potom njegove tvrdnje opovrgnuo. Svakako, postojali su (i postoje) i filozofi koji su zagovarali i zastupali ovakav *fantomski* skepticizam, međutim, njihova argumentacija, iako oblikom oponaša argumente skepticizma, te se *čini* skeptičkom, u suštini nije ono za što se izdaje. Utoliko, fantomski je skeptik ili privid ili se prijetvorno prikazuje kao nešto što zapravo nije. Kako bi se što jasnije razgraničilo ono što ispravno možemo nazivati skepticizmom od onoga što ovaj naslov ne zavrjeđuje, u ovoj disertaciji se pristupe koji su vjerodostojni, uistinu onakvi kakvima se čine, koji odgovaraju izvornom naumu uporabe naziva 'istraživači', opisuje pod nazivom 'autentični skepticizam'. Prikaz skepticizma u ovoj disertaciji je prikaz složenosti onog pristupa koji *nastavlja* istraživanje. U ovakvom prikazu skepticizma, teorije neznanja i svako razmatranje skepticizma kao negativnog dogmatizma služe kao dobrodošla opreka, pri čemu se ukazivanjem na jasne razlike preciznije ocrta ono što ispravno možemo nazivati skepticizmom.

Prije daljnjeg opisa rada potrebno je napomenuti kako razgraničenjem između autentičnog skepticizma i *navodnog*, fantomskog skepticizma, ova disertacija ne predstavlja još jedan prikaz dvojnosti skeptičke tradicije kakav se često susreće u bavljenjima skepticizmom. Takvom bi se mogla učiniti posebno onima kojima je povijest skepticizma barem donekle poznata, a upravo zbog odabranog polazišta u izlaganju. Naime, naziv 'istraživači' najprije je uporabljen od strane pironovskih skeptika kojima je nadalje služio i u ograđivanju od jednog dijela akademijske filozofije, koja se pak naknadno podjednako naziva 'skeptičkom', a u prikazu pironovaca ima oblik negativnog dogmatizma. Ovom disertacijom ne pokušava se utvrditi kako naziv pripada samo onima koji su ga prisvojili, odnosno samo pironovskoj tradiciji. Naprotiv, razmatranjem nesretnog spleta okolnosti kojim naziv skepticizam biva doveden u vezu s negativnim dogmatizmom, disertacija se zapravo suprotstavlja ne samo takvom stavljanju naglaska na razlike između pironovskog pristupa i akademijskih skeptičkih promišljanja već i prikazima dvojnosti skepticizma kakve se može susresti danas. U potonjim, nešto složenijim prikazima dvojnosti, jedan skeptik je pironovski

skeptik, a drugi kartezijanski skeptik koji se u radovima pojedinih autora dodatno pojavljuje izjednačen s akademjskim skeptikom te podjednako trpi stigmatu zastupanja negativnog dogmatizma. Upravo isticanje dvojnosti tradicije pokazuje se ovdje kao poticaj nastanku i ustrajnosti one vrste argumentacije koja se u ovom radu naziva 'fantomskim skepticizmom', posebne interpretacije navodnog kartezijanskog, odnosno akademjskog skepticizma koja, prema nalazima preliminarne kritike, nema potvrdu u argumentima autora i tradicije čije ime nose.

Tako se u okviru preliminarne kritike u prvom dijelu ove disertacije akademjski i pironovski argumenti, kao i argumenti skeptičke naravi koje iznosi Descartes, razmatraju kao primjeri autentičnog skepticizma, upravo zbog iskazane autentične težnje nastavku/nastavljanju istraživanja, te *usmjerenosti* argumentacije svojstvene pokušaju *nastavljanja* pitanja. Štoviše, razmatranjem upravo zajedničkih značajki ovih različitih pristupa u *nastavljanju* pitanja, preliminarina kritika pruža uvid u značajke autentičnog skepticizma. Temeljita raščlamba argumenata koji odgovaraju ovom nazivlju ukazuje kako i zbog čega se ovi mogu tumačiti kao postavljena dijalektička protuteža određenim instancama argumentacije u filozofskim i inim diskursima. Dodatno, pronalazak zajedničkih elemenata u argumentacijama koji se danas drže paradigmatiskim primjerima dvaju vrsta skepticizma omogućava daljnje razgraničenje autentičnog pristupa od fantomskog pristupa.

Argumenti fantomskog skepticizma ne mogu se tumačiti kao postavljena dijalektička protuteža. Stoga ga i nalazimo na tankoj granici s onim što Kant naziva *dogmatische Idealismus*, granici postavljenoj između sumnje u vanjski svijet i negacije njegova postojanja. O tom skeptiku-fantomu Heidegger posve ispravno tvrdi kako nikad nije pokazano da je ikad bilo takva skeptika (*Sein und Zeit*, 229). I njegova je vrsta 'sumnje' ona koju Wittgenstein oslovljava u *Über Gewissheit* (§ 119-120), u tvrdnji kako onoga koji sumnja u daljnje postojanje predmeta jednom kad više nema promatrača treba jednostavno pustiti da sumnja, jer je takva sumnja nevažna. Tvrdnja fantomskog skeptika ne čini se uvjerljivom. Ali skeptik koji predstavlja dijalektičku protutežu onoj misli koja teži odredbi ne pokušava sumnjati u opstojnost predmeta u trenutku kad ga prestanemo opažati. Argumentirajući *ad hominem* ovakav skeptik, autentični skeptik, ukazuje kako sama argumentacija filozofa vodi takvoj sumnji, kako je filozof taj koji bi trebao sumnjati. Autentičnog skeptika bi se dakle trebalo tumačiti u skladu s onim što je čini se njegova izvorna namjera, dovodenje u pitanje samog diskursa unutar kojeg filozof djeluje. Skepticizam se jedino tako pokazuje kao pristup čija je namjera stavljanje u pitanje onoga što se smatra određenim, odnosno pristup koji razotkriva još uvijek prisutno pitanje u odgovorenome. Prijedlog je ove disertacije da se upravo



zajedničke značajke izvornih oblika skeptičke argumentacije prihvate kao predložak koji može poslužiti u boljem razumijevanju skepticizma. Pritom preliminarna kritika koja ih ocrtava ne teži pružanju odgovora na pitanje primata pojedine skeptičke tradicije, niti ima za cilj pokazati kako su i u kojoj mjeri pojedini autori u iznošenju skeptičkih argumenata ili zastupanju skeptičkog pristupa nalazili inspiraciju u radovima drugih; cilj je prvenstveno ocrtati ono što skepticizam čini *skepticizmom* i jasno razgraničiti ovo od fantomskog pristupa i interpretacija. Nije zanemarena ni razlika u pristupima akademijskih skeptika, pironovaca i Descartesa. Tako se oni pristupi u dijalogu koji ostaju pri pitanju u preliminarnoj kritici nazivaju autentičnim skeptičkim pristupima, dok se filozofi koji razotkrivaju pitanje od kojeg kreću u potragu za odgovorom ili koje napuštaju tražeći odgovore drugdje, smatraju onima koji autentično rabe skeptičku argumentaciju. Potonji su, upravo zbog autentične uporabe skeptičkih argumenata, ponekad i sami prozivani skepticima, pri čemu se zanemarivalo njihovo nastojanje oko odgovora i dodatno izgubilo na jasnoći u razumijevanju i odnošenju spram skepticizma; utoliko je ovakvo razgraničenje bilo potrebno u potrazi za pojmovnom jasnoćom, te izradi predloška koji bi trebao služiti razumijevanju i jasnijoj klasifikaciji odnošenja spram skepticizma u filozofiji uopće

Kao jedan od poticaja pisanju ove disertacije poslužilo je odnošenje pojedinih radova suvremene epistemologije spram skeptičkih argumenata. Naime, iako je iznošenje teorije 'znanja' još uvijek istovrijedno suprotstavljanju skeptiku, same se ponuđene teorije u izvedbi ograđuju od udovoljavanja pitanjima i sumnji tog protivnika koji se proglašava nesuvislim. Takav skeptik ne odgovara opisu i nazivu *der Zuchtmeister* kakav mu je svojedobno dodijelio Kant (*Kritika čistoga uma* A 769/ B 797). Proturječnost inherentna ovakvom tretmanu skepticizma očituje se u uvjerenju da su zahtjevi koje *der Zuchtmeister* postavlja neutemeljeni i besmisleni, ali se u isto vrijeme ne bi trebali zanemariti, što za rezultat ima argumentaciju koja započinje razradom skeptičkog problema na koji se namjerava odgovoriti, a završava popratnom tvrdnjom uz zaključak kako nije važno ono što bi nesuvisli skeptik na izvedenu argumentaciju imao prigovoriti. Potrebno je napomenuti kako ovakav opis ne predstavlja iscrpan prikaz današnjeg epistemološkog promišljanja te ne može služiti kao opći opis stanja u području epistemologije, ali isto tako nije ni samo značajka radova rijetkih autora. Možda se treba i dodati kako takav odnos spram skepticizma nije prisutan tek u filozofiji današnjice te kako se tragovi takva odnosa mogu naći i u prethodnim vremenskim razdobljima i u drugim područjima filozofije. Ipak, postojanje takva odnosa, koji je najčešće značajka takozvanih dijagnostičkih pristupa skepticizmu, primjereno ukazuje na problem od interesa za ovu disertaciju, a to je gubitak dijalektičke uloge skepticizma u filozofskom diskursu. Drugim

riječima, skepticizmu se više ne pristupa kao da predstavlja 'die Dialektik alles Bestimmten' (kako ga svojedobno opisuje Hegel, usp. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Leiden: A.H. Adriani, 1908, 603).

Fantomski skeptik, čije se tvrdnje mogu činiti beznačajne i nesuvisle, svakako ima svoju ulogu u opisanom gubitku dijalektičke uloge skepticizma. Drugi dio disertacije je inspiriran upravo takvim uvidom te predstavlja 'autentičnu' reviziju fantomskih oblika argumentacije u suvremenoj epistemologiji. Podrobnije promatranje onih argumenata koji ne odgovaraju autentičnom opisu skepticizma ovdje je imalo za cilj ukazati kako (i koje) autentične značajke izvedene iz prvog dijela disertacije nedostaju u pokušajima suvremene uporabe argumenata, čime se, kroz ukazivanje na posljedice takvih nedostataka, iscrpnije određuje same značajke 'autentičnog skepticizma', te izvor značaja i smislenosti autentične argumentacije, bez referiranja na neko određeno povijesno razdoblje, odnosno neki poseban oblik argumenta. Potrebno je naznačiti kako ovaj dio disertacije nije imao za cilj pronalaženje krivaca za ustrajnost 'fantomskog skepticizma' ili njegovo 'oživljavanje' u suvremenoj filozofiji, jer sama fantomska interpretacija nije isključivi problem našeg vremena. S obzirom na ulogu navodne dvojnosti skeptičke tradicije u nastanku 'fantoma', i ovdje je odabir argumenata za analizu potaknut razlikovanjem dvaju vrsta skepticizma u njihovoj prilagodbi suvremenom diskursu. Odabrani argumenti tako odražavaju svojevrсни konsenzus u epistemologiji danas u odredbi 'popularnih' verzija iz obaju tradicija, te su kao primjeri navodno kartezijanske argumentacije odabrani radovi mladih Lehrera i Ungera, a kao primjerak navodno pironovske tradicije argumenti samo-proglašenog pironovca Fogelina.

U drugom dijelu disertacije se kroz reviziju, razmatranje i preispitivanje fantomskih oblika skepticizma kroz prizmu rezultata preliminarne kritike otkriva kako fantomski oblici argumentacije, odnosno fantomska tumačenja skepticizma, ponajprije proizlaze iz pokušaja da se skepticizmu pristupi slijedeći obrasce koji bi bili primjereni pri odnošenju spram bilo kojeg drugog pristupa u filozofiji. U analizi ranih radova Keitha Lehrera i Petera Ungera tako se već sam pokušaj *obrane* skepticizma pokazuje kao prvi fantomski propust u odnošenju spram ove tradicije, od kojega su se, prema rezultatima preliminarne kritike, izvorni skeptici ogradili u opisima svoga djelovanja. Autentični skepticizam tako se dalje ocrtava kao pristup u filozofiji koji svoj značaj i smislenost ne pronalazi u sebi, već je, zbog inherentne usmjerenosti argumentacije i njegov značaj i smislenost *drugdje*, najčešće izražen u popratnim opisima pri autentičnoj uporabi skepticizma. Pristupajući skepticizmu na ovaj način, mladi Lehrer i Unger brane *navodne* skeptičke teze, koje tako u ovim fantomskim pristupima skepticizmu uzimaju mjesto *nastavljenom* autentičnom pitanju na kraju argumentacije. Usporedbom fantomskih

teza sa iluzornim *završetkom* autentične argumentacije, autentični skepticizam jasnije se određuje kao pristup čija je važna značajka upravo *izostanak teze*, a izostanak teze kao značajka skepticizma, pokazuje se pak neodvojivim od *izostanka resursa*, odnosno posebne značajke skepticizma koja se očituje u usmjerenosti izvornih skeptičkih argumenata, njihovom izvoru u filozofskom diskursu koji se dovodi u pitanje te samom odnosu spram ovih pri autentičnoj uporabi skepticizma. Potvrda 'skeptičke teze' u radovima Lehrera i Ungera je pak popraćena razradom argumenata koji ovima služe kao potpora, odnosno koji služe kao resursi u iznalasku i prihvaćanju tih teza kao *odgovora* na razmatrana pitanja. Specifična praznina autentičnog skepticizma (u ovom dijelu rada detaljnije opisana kao *ἀπορία–ἄπορος* sprega) nije poštivana ni u pristupu samoproglāšenog pironovca Roberta Fogelina, koji u svojim promišljanjima nije namjeravao braniti teze, niti ih zastupati, ali na njih pristaje upravo zadržavajući dio svoje argumentacije (kao resurs) kojega se, za razliku od izvornih skeptika, nije spreman odreći.

Ukratko, disertacija se sastoji od dvaju dijelova. U prvom dijelu, preliminarnoj kritici, analizi su podvrgnuti argumenti koji odgovaraju autentičnom skepticizmu, odnosno autentičnoj uporabi skepticizma. Time se ocrtavaju značajke onog pristupa koji argumentaciju završava nastavljenim pitanjima, te se ovaj pristup jasno razgraničava od teorija neznanja, odnosno negativnog dogmatizma. U drugom se dijelu, revizijom fantomskih oblika argumentacije, postiže još jasnije razgraničenje *navodno* skeptičke argumentacije koja završava potvrđivanjem odgovora od argumentacije privržene istraživanju. Dva se dijela argumentacije mogu čitati zasebno, iako su jedan drugome nadopuna u razotkrivanju izvorne naravi skepticizma. Razlikuju se stilom, prvenstveno jer se razlikuju oblici provedena istraživanja, ali i zbog razlike u naravi predmeta istraživanja. U analizi izvornih argumenata više je prostora posvećeno komplementarnim i suprotnim tumačenjima ovih argumenata. Činilo se, naime, neprimjerenim u preliminarnoj potrazi za autentičnim značajkama zanemariti komplementarna tumačenja i ne ukazati na prednosti pred suprotstavljenim tumačenjima argumenata koji su podvrgnuti analizi. U reviziji koja ponajprije polazi od rezultata takve potrage, rabi upravo ove rezultate u analizi argumenata, činilo se pak nepotrebnim govoriti o mogućim drugačijim pristupima argumentaciji koja se analizira. Što se tiče predmeta istraživanja, za očekivati je različit pristup u analizi helenističkih (post-helenističkih) tekstova i Descartesova rada, od pristupa rabljenog u analizi kojoj su predmet suvremeni argumenti. Dok je prva, za razliku od potonje, obogaćena većim povijesni odmakom, istodobno je (posebno kad su u pitanju helenistički i post-helenistički tekstovi) suočena s problemima koje vremenski odmak može donijeti, manjkom izvornih tekstova,

upitnim prikazima i tumačenjima, poteškoćama u pristupu postojećoj građi. Iako se razlikuju oblikom istraživanja, predmetom istraživanja i, posljedično, stilom, naglasak je u oba dijela disertacije stavljen na postizanje pojmovne jasnoće. Razgraničenje skeptičkog pristupa izloženo u ovoj disertaciji može tako poslužiti kao predložak boljem razumijevanju i jasnijoj klasifikaciji odnošenja spram skepticizma u filozofiji uopće, ali i kao poticaj ponovnoj ispravnoj uporabi skeptičkih argumenata, uspostavljanju istinskog dijaloga između skepticizma i filozofije, odnosno postavljanju pravih pitanja uporabom argumentacije na autentičan način.

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Abbreviations: Frequently cited names and titles

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Acad.</i>     | Cicero, <i>Academica</i>  |
| <i>Adv. Col.</i> | Plutarch, <i>Against Colotes</i>  |
| <i>APo.</i>      | Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i>   |
| AT               | Adam, Charles and Paul Tannery, eds. <i>Œuvres de Descartes</i> , vols. I–XII. Paris: J. Vrin, 1964-76.   |
| <i>Bibl.</i>     | Photius, <i>Bibliotheca</i>   |
| <i>Cat.</i>      | Simplicius, <i>On Aristotle's Categories</i>  |
| Cic.             | Cicero  |
| CSM              | Cottingham, John, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and (for volume three) Anthony Kenny, eds. and trans. <i>The Philosophical Writings of Descartes</i> , vols. I–III. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-91. |
| <i>Congr.</i>    | Philo Alexandrinus, <i>De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia</i>  |
| <i>De Comm.</i>  | Plutarch, <i>De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos</i>  |
| <i>De Fin.</i>   | Cicero, <i>de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum</i>  |
| <i>De Or.</i>    | Cicero, <i>Orator</i>   |
| <i>De Stoic.</i> | Plutarch, <i>De Stoicorum repugnantiiis</i>   |
| Diels            | Hermann Diels, <i>Doxographi Graeci</i> . Berlin: Weidmann, 1879.   |
| <i>DL</i>        | Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>   |
| <i>Ebr.</i>      | Philo Alexandrinus, <i>De Ebrietate</i>   |
| EHU (SBN)        | Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (prepared by Selby-Bigge and revised by Nidditch)  |
| <i>Fat.</i>      | Cicero, <i>De Fato</i>  |
| <i>Fug.</i>      | Philo Alexandrinus, <i>De Fuga et Inventione</i>  |
| <i>Her.</i>      | Philo Alexandrinus, <i>Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit</i>   |
| <i>LA</i>        | Philo Alexandrinus, <i>Legum Allegoriarum</i>   |
| LS               | Long, A.A. and D. N. Sedley, <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , vols.1-2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.   |
| <i>M</i>         | Sextus Empiricus, <i>Adversus Mathematicos</i>  |
| <i>Met.</i>      | Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>   |
| <i>NA</i>        | Aulus Gellius, <i>Attic Nights</i>  |
| <i>ND</i>        | Cicero, <i>De Natura Deorum</i>   |
| <i>PH</i>        | Sextus Empiricus, <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i>   |

- Praep. evang.* Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*
- Rep.* Plato, *Republic*
- Rhet.* Philodemus, *Rhetoric*
- Suppl. Hell.* Hugh Lloyd-Jones, and Peter Parsons, eds. *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, part I, vol. 11. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983.
- Theaet.* Plato, *Theaetetus*
- Wachsmuth Curt Wachsmuth, *Sillogaphorum Graecorum reliquiae*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1885.

## Introduction

Skepticism, much like any long-lived tradition in the history of philosophical inquiries, has seen a fair share of outlines, reviews and revisions, instances of advocacy, and attempts at defense. Given the vast literature in which skepticism, in one way or another appears as the subject matter, it is not surprising that most, if not all, contemporary scholars of philosophy would claim familiarity with this tradition or parts of it. Many authors have, at some point in their philosophical inquiries, felt inspired by skepticism, many were self-proclaimed skeptics, and many were designated as skeptics by others. The study before you is primarily a result of a personal effort to find conceptual clarity in dealings with skepticism, upon being inspired by it. Thus, though this study might be easily categorized as an instance of advocacy of skepticism, as it portrays skepticism as relevant, its defense, as it seeks to discard claims that skepticism is meaningless, and yet another attempt at its revision, as it suggests the path to take in an attempt to revive skepticism, it is perhaps best observed as an effort to establish harmony in the cacophony of voices on, for, and against skepticism. This harmony is sought through an outline of common traits, of the continuity which allows for skepticism to be understood as a tradition, and for the approaches which are part of this tradition to be understood as both relevant and meaningful.

It might sound presumptuous to suggest that skepticism is still in need of such an outline upon noting the widespread familiarity with this tradition and numerous dealings with it. Yet, sometimes in attending to that which feels most familiar least scrutiny is applied, and inasmuch as this tends to be the case in dealings with skepticism, this study serves as a required closer examination. The longevity of the tradition noted, the reader should not expect to find here, restated and analyzed, all of those arguments, texts, and opera which tend to be depicted as skeptical. The closer examination of skepticism, as conducted here, does not inquire into all instances of reasoning designated as ‘skeptical’, but inquires what it *is* that makes skeptical reasoning ‘skeptical’. The inquiry proceeds from the original sense of the title *σκεπτικοί*, namely the sense which inspired the first self-proclaimed skeptics to declare themselves ‘skeptics’. As the title served the purpose of delineation from other approaches in philosophy, an outline proceeding from it equally takes the form of a critique of skepticism, a delineation of those elements of argumentation which fit the title’s original sense (and purpose) from those that do not. This preliminary critique, in revealing that which is part of skepticism properly so called, here serves as a stepping stone to its further examination.

The title *σκεπτικοί* stems from *σκέπτεσθαι*, inquiring, exploring, thinking, and prior to being appropriated by the tradition discussed in this study it served to depict all philosophers.



The preliminary critique building on this insight takes precisely the contrast emphasized in the appropriation of the title as the first distinct contour of ‘skepticism’. While all who engage in philosophy are, in a specific sense, committed to inquiry, exploration, thought, in choosing this title the skeptics sought to emphasize that they, unlike others, remain continuously committed to it. Namely, a peculiar trait of the skeptical approach, the first distinguishing characteristic outlined in this study, is that at the close of arguments deployed by the skeptics one does not find theses professed as conclusively settled, the answers to the question debated established on the set of resources that these arguments represent. Thus, if it is customary to preface an outline of a particular approach in philosophy with a brief summary of the arguments utilized and the theses brought forth through them, it seems appropriate to the distinctive character of skepticism to begin its outline precisely with a notice that it doesn’t lend itself to the practices commonly used in dealings with other approaches in philosophy. While other philosophical approaches close the inquiry with the proposal of an answer, a solution to that puzzle which served to awaken the thought, skepticism is at its origin found as a distinct approach that offers no answers, but reestablishes the puzzle, reveals that the inquiry found no conclusive settlement, and that it is thus perpetuated. To appreciate this contrast noted in those original attempts at delineation is to observe skepticism primarily through the emphasized continuation of questions, and this is what this study seeks to do.

Consequently, the outline of skepticism offered in this study runs counter to those dealings with skepticism which interpret this approach in a manner customarily applied to other philosophies, namely those portrayals that could easily be prefaced with a statement of the supposed skeptical thesis and the outline of the argumentative structures that bring it about. In these, countered portrayals, supposed skeptical theses differ in content, but for most part take the form of denial of a proposition, or, specifically, denial of a cognitive status of specific propositions. The most general and perhaps most popular allegedly skeptical thesis would thus be the claim that we do not or cannot know anything. Those who seek to advocate or refute this and other such theses, much like all who seek to advocate or refute any thesis, try to reinforce or undermine the argumentative structure provided in its support. In recognizing the commitment to inquiry signaled in the appropriation of the title ‘skeptics’, this study suggests that such portrayals or dealings are not of/with skepticism, or more precisely, do not engage skepticism properly so called. This is not to say that denials and arguments yielding negative theses do not appear as part of argumentation properly depicted as skeptical; after all, one can find these in reports on those who chose the title and in writings of those responsible for its continued use. Yet, to treat these denials as ‘skeptical theses’ is to

neglect a distinctive directedness of all arguments utilized by those who did perpetuate the inquiry by closing their arguments with questions. This directedness is noticed once one acknowledges that the inquiry to which the ‘skeptics’ were committed was the inquiry *perpetuated*, that the questions at the close of arguments are *continued* questions in place of that which was suggested as conclusively settled; it reveals denials as counter-theses, not theses in their own right. To neglect it is to neglect the dialectical aim of original skeptical arguments, the aim to return to question that which is proposed as an answer. Thus, in treating skepticism as the approach ending in negating thesis, one observes it partially, as to observe the complexity of returning *something* to question is to recognize that in such a practice the negation and those argumentative structures bringing it forth cannot be divorced from the affirmation countered, and its argumentative support. The outline of skepticism in this study represents an attempt to capture the complexity of perpetuated inquiry in its completeness; hence the theories of ignorance and negative dogmatism of sorts, which might mimic most closely the argumentative moves of skepticism properly so called yet fail through the specified incompleteness, here serve as a welcome contrast in delineation of that which *is* skepticism.

For the purpose of conceptual clarity, as those who outline skepticism in the incomplete, negative theses-bound form, also propose to deal with skepticism, in this study such instances of argumentation which close with theses in form of denial will be addressed as ‘phantom skepticism’. Namely, such a title seemed appropriate as it summarizes several traits pertaining to these alleged forms of skepticism. The alleged skeptic, affirming the thesis of ignorance, seems to be, for most part, the body-less skeptic whose arguments are conjured by modern philosophers as “what the skeptic says,”<sup>1</sup> his existence being an illusion, bound to the mind of those who engage him in discussion. This is not to say that no one ever advocated phantom skepticism, yet such attempts, in closely mimicking skeptical argumentation, might *appear* skeptical, though they *are not*. Inasmuch, the phantom *skeptic* is either an illusion, or deceptively suggests himself as something of which he is only a counterfeit form. By way of contrast, to avoid contributing to the obscurity of ‘skepticism’ already noted, the skepticism outlined in this study is referred to as ‘authentic’ to signify the delineation from that which is fictitious and counterfeit, to depict skepticism which *is* precisely what it purports to be, i.e. skepticism, properly so called.

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<sup>1</sup> Description borrowed from Burnyeat, cf. Myles Burnyeat, “Introduction,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 1.

This brief description of the subject matter of this study might lead those familiar with the history of skeptical tradition to think that the outline that follows is yet another portrayal of a duality that one encounters in dealings with skepticism. Namely, in proceeding from the appropriation of the title ‘skeptics’, this outline might be wrongly assumed to insist that solely those who claimed it first, and for the purpose noted, are to be perceived as authentic skeptics. Historically, this would then translate into a claim that solely the tradition that traces its roots back to Pyrrho, an enigmatic figure endowed by his followers with a trait of not taking anything as conclusively settled, is properly skeptical. In delineating their approach from the approach practiced in Plato’s Academy long after Plato’s demise, today equally depicted as ‘skeptical’, Pyrrhonists described these ‘others’ as proponents of what one would call negative dogmatism. Though the title ‘skeptics’ soon came to be used for both traditions, the notion of duality was perpetuated through continuous emphasis on the differences between the two traditions, which have been the matter of controversy throughout history of philosophy. These days, this duality takes on an even more complex form, and seems to have translated into a curious requirement for all who wish to tackle skepticism to clarify which skepticism they are referring to. Specifically, today in those approaches which treat skeptical tradition as marked by duality, one skeptic is the Pyrrhonian skeptic, found and revived mostly from the works of Sextus Empiricus, and the other is the Cartesian skeptic, derived from Descartes’ “First Meditation,”<sup>2</sup> with the latter in some of the contemporary writings further appearing conflated with the approach practiced in Plato’s Academy, the very approach Pyrrhonists sought to distinguish themselves from<sup>3</sup>, and equally bearing the stigma of negative dogmatism. Contemporary neo-Pyrrhonists then, in attempts to distinguish their approach from negative dogmatism, point to this Cartesian skeptic as their negative dogmatist *skeptical* counterpart. It is not the intent of this study to perpetuate such stigmata of negative dogmatism, or, for that matter, the notion of duality. The distinction between authentic and phantom skepticism is not the distinction between the approaches of Pyrrhonists, and

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<sup>2</sup> For such a classification see Robert J. Fogelin’s, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Duncan Pritchard’s “Doubt Undogmatized: Pyrrhonian Scepticism, Epistemological Externalism and the ‘Metaepistemological’ Challenge” *Principia* 4.2. (2000): 187-214; Peter Klein’s “Skepticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, edited by Paul K. Moser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 336-362; Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, ed. *Pyrrhonian Skepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Michael Williams’ “Descartes’ transformation of the sceptical tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 288-314.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Klein, “Skepticism,” 337; repeated in his “How a Pyrrhonian Skeptic Might Respond to Academic Skepticism,” in *The Sceptics: Contemporary Essays*, ed. Steven Luper (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 77; and in Williams, “Descartes’ transformation,” 306.

Academics, or the skeptical argumentation outlined by Descartes, nor is it the distinction between two types of skepticism, as phantom skeptic is not a *skeptic* at all.

Still, it is easy to see why the attempt to outline authentic skepticism cannot be blind to such distinctions being made between those approaches which are often treated as paradigm cases of skepticism. The notion of duality and the emphasis on the differences between the supposed *two* types of skepticism, of which one is the negative dogmatists' kind, as described, perpetuate the notion that there *is* a phantom *skeptic*, continuously contributing anew to this counterfeit understanding of skepticism. Observed through the prism of authentic skepticism as outlined here, such a treatment of skeptical tradition can be diagnosed as insistence on dealing with specific skeptical arguments in their incomplete, phantom form. Namely, to understand the arguments casted by Academics and later Descartes as instances of negative dogmatism is to disregard that these instances of argumentation are, much like those Pyrrhonists put forth, also marked with that specific directedness pertaining to the approaches that continue the inquiry, arising precisely from the dialectical aim of putting (something) to question. As attention paid to the differences between the three noted approaches gives rise to the phantom reading of skepticism, it was deemed appropriate for the preliminary critique of authentic skepticism, conducted in the first part of this study, in search of its distinctive traits, to observe primarily their similarities. Thus, contrary to the notion of duality and the stigmata that perpetuate the *phantom*, the outline offered here can easily serve as an apology of the original Academic skepticism, and Descartes' efforts to capture the skeptical spirit, both serving here, alongside Pyrrhonists' argumentation, as instances of authentic dealings with skepticism, i.e. as instances of efforts to return to the question.

It goes without saying that the emphasis placed on the common traits of these approaches does not entail a complete disregard for apparent differences in the approaches of Academics, Pyrrhonists and Descartes. One such difference which needs to be noted here, though it is commonly recognized, is that Descartes' philosophical inquiries do end with a proposed answer. Descartes was not a skeptic; he made use of skeptical argumentation in his inquiries. Though Descartes himself seems to have avoided such a predicament, some philosophers, who similarly employed authentic argumentation as part of their inquiries, have, at times, suffered the fate of being proclaimed skeptics. This misguided approach to their philosophy disregards their efforts in answering a question (be it the one continued, or another, perceived as answerable) and further diminishes the clarity in dealings with skepticism. Hence, in order to address this impediment to the conceptual clarity sought here, in the preliminary critique the effort was made to distinguish 'authentic skepticism' from

‘authentic use of skepticism’; namely a distinction is made between the approaches of authentic *skeptics*, who remain at the point of exposition of the question, and the instances of authentic *use* of skeptical arguments by philosophers who either sought to expose the *continued* question in order to answer it, or to emphasize the un-answerability of the question in order to reframe the path of reasoning. Still, the difference between authentic *skepticism* and the authentic *use* of skeptical arguments is in the further inquiry by philosophers in light of the question revealed, and as this comes after the very argumentation deployed to return something to the question, it does not impede the search for common traits. Through revealing the common traits in these different instances of authentic argumentation, and thus, as noted, the distinguishing traits of skepticism properly so called, the distinctive form of their incomplete reading, the skepticism turned phantom, is equally revealed.

The trait of phantom skepticism readily visible even upon the brief introduction to this study is the absence of the dialectical aim in its inquiries, complemented consequently with a thesis at their close. This lack of dialectical aim, accompanied with a rather curious pervasiveness of phantom forms of skepticism, invites the verdict on meaninglessness and irrelevance of skepticism. Though such a verdict is not exclusive to our times nor to a specific area of philosophy, the odd treatment skepticism receives in epistemology of the day is revealing. While the role of skepticism as a dialectical counterpart seems to be acknowledged, as to offer a theory of knowledge or justification is still perceived as an effort to prove a skeptic wrong, one can find the theories offered being treated as though they need not be construed to meet the skeptic’s doubts. This seems far removed from the image of *der Zuchtmeister* Kant used to portray the very same character (*The Critique of Pure Reason* A 769/B 797). The rationale for such treatment of skepticism by epistemology of the day seems to be the belief that the ‘taskmaster’ is crazy, yet one should not simply disregard the tasks he sets forth<sup>4</sup>. Thus one finds epistemologists developing theories for the proclaimed purpose of answering the skeptic<sup>5</sup>, and, upon conclusion of their task, claiming that it doesn’t really matter whether the rambling skeptic likes the answer or not<sup>6</sup>. While it should be noted that the

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<sup>4</sup> Stewart Cohen states the issue in precisely these terms, as he notes, “[a]fter all, in the end, skepticism is crazy. But that does not mean you can simply dismiss skepticism.” In Stewart Cohen, “Contextualism Defended: Comments on Richard Feldman’s Skeptical Problems, Contextualist Solutions,” *Philosophical Studies* 103.1. (2001), 96.

<sup>5</sup> One example is Keith DeRose’s diagnosis that “[c]ontextualist theories of knowledge attributions have almost invariably been developed with an eye toward providing some kind of answer to philosophical skepticism.” In Keith DeRose, *The Case for Contextualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 41.

<sup>6</sup> Thus Michael Bergmann notes of the argumentation he outlines that “[i]t is true that this will not be philosophically satisfying for the skeptic. But the fault is not with externalism. It is with the skeptic

treatment of skepticism by epistemologists these days is not exhausted by the preceding description<sup>7</sup>, nor is, again, such treatment exclusive to epistemology or our times, the description does bring into focus the fact that skepticism seems to have lost its dialectical grip on determinate philosophy, the philosophy which closes its inquiries with what it perceives as ‘conclusively settled’. The dialectical grip of authentic skepticism is in the directedness inherent to the practice of putting to question, the directedness the phantom form misses. The phantom skeptic, lacking such directedness, is conceived as posing questions where he should not, and affirming the skeptical theses regarding the objects, cognitive status of which one is not interested to defend. That is why we find such skepticism idly sharing a blurred border with what Kant refers to as *dogmatische Idealismus*, border set upon a distinction between doubt in the external world and the negation of it; and it is of this phantom character that we find Heidegger rightly claiming that it hasn’t been demonstrated that there ever ‘was’ a ‘real’ skeptic (*Sein und Zeit*, 229). It is his type of ‘doubt’ that Wittgenstein addresses in *Über Gewissheit* (§119-120), stating that one who doubts in the continued existence of things, once there’s no one who sees them, should be left to doubt since his doubt is not of relevance. Phantom skeptic’s theses do not seem compelling, but are perceived as unfathomable ramblings no one would (or could) actually accept; his questions, in lacking directedness, are revealed as presumptuous, loaded questions, irrelevant to the topic being discussed. Phantom skeptic is hence perceived a nuisance, in the end rightfully ignored. But the authentic skeptic, representing the dialectical counterweight to what is determined<sup>8</sup>, is not claiming to doubt the continued existence of things once we avert our eyes. Arguing *ad hominem*, this character should be understood as claiming that, given a specific philosophical account, the philosopher proposing it should doubt that. In other words, he should be read as doing what he set out to do, putting to question that which is proposed as an answer, and, as the outline in this study should further reveal, putting this answer to question precisely on the grounds on which it was proposed as an answer. On this reading, it is on the philosopher to prove that his answer, and

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and her tendency to have doubts when she need not (...).” In Michael Bergmann, “Externalist Responses to Skepticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*, ed. John Greco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 521.

<sup>7</sup> Nor should it be understood as limited to the authors or the works cited. If one needs to be more specific, such an approach mostly pertains to those responses to skepticism labeled as ‘diagnostic’ in recent classifications of dealings with skepticism; cf. Michael Williams, *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 146.

<sup>8</sup> Description borrowed from Hegel, who refers to skepticism as ‘die Dialektik alles Bestimmten’; cf. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leiden: A.H. Adriani, 1908), 603; in this study intended simply as a notice that the authentic skepticism appears as the dialectical counterweight to what is perceived as *the* answer (in form of affirmation and negation alike).

the argumentative structure that brings it forth, is not susceptible to such a conclusion. This is much more compelling than the theses, or the argumentation of the phantom. If authentic skeptic is a nuisance, he is not a nuisance one can easily ignore.

Upon revealing the traits of skepticism properly so called, further examination of these traits is conducted for the purpose of revealing the nature and the sources of its relevance and meaningfulness, the reasons for which it is not easily ignored nor dismissed. As noted, authentic skepticism is outlined through observation of the common traits of arguments cast by Academics, Pyrrhonists and Descartes. This approach was chosen in contrast to the notion of duality of skeptical thought which gives rise to the phantom understanding of skepticism. Much the same insight guided the choice of arguments that serve in efforts to further reveal the character of authentic argumentation. Yet, in this further examination, conducted in the second part of this study, the path chosen was reverse, in a manner to be specified. With the traits of authentic approach to skepticism revealed through a thorough analysis of instances of arguments which rightfully bear this title, it was deemed appropriate for the relevance and meaningfulness of these to be further observed through an analysis of approaches in which they are conspicuously missing, namely, through analyzing what is absent and consequently lost in 'skepticism's' phantom form. To counter the notion of duality again, the phantom forms of advocacy of skepticism of both Pyrrhonian and Cartesian kind were subjected to analysis, in the form they take in contemporary philosophy. It serves well to note here that these perhaps need not have been chosen from contemporary philosophy, as the advocacy of phantom skepticism does not exclusively appear in our times<sup>9</sup>. The choice to observe these more recent forms of counterfeit skepticism was guided by the noted treatment of skepticism in contemporary epistemology, and can be observed as an attempt to restore the dialectical counterpart to philosophical inquiries of the day. It is for this purpose that the analysis conducted, primarily to the effect of further outlining skepticism properly so called, takes the further form of authentic revision of the phantom forms. Lastly, the goal of this authentic revision was not to find culprits for the revival of phantom forms of skepticism in contemporary philosophy, and the instances of argumentation chosen should not be observed as such. The arguments chosen merely reflect what seems to be the consensus in

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<sup>9</sup> If a sample is needed, Hegel's critique of Schulze's work detects some of the deficiencies which are in this study distinguished under the title 'phantom skepticism,' cf. G.W.F. Hegel, "Verhältniß des Skepticismus zur Philosophie, Darstellung seiner verschiedenen Modificationen und Vergleichung des neusten mit den alten," *Kritischer Journal der Philosophie*, 1.1. (1802), 1-74. Reprinted in *Between Kant and Hegel: texts in the development of post-Kantian idealism*, rev.ed., trans. and ed. George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris (New York: State University of New York, 1985; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 311-363.

contemporary epistemology as to what would be instances of argumentation from Cartesian and Pyrrhonian traditions; or, more specifically, the commonly mentioned ones. Thus, early writings of Keith Lehrer and Peter Unger are used as instances of the supposed Cartesian skepticism, and the arguments by Robert J. Fogelin serve to represent Pyrrhonian side, of which he is a self-proclaimed member.

In summary, this study proceeds from the preliminary critique of authentic skepticism, conducted in its first part, to the authentic revision of skepticism's counterfeit phantom form, which constitutes its second part. The two parts of the study may be read separately, although they are meant to complement each other in revealing the genuine nature of skepticism. These differ in style, primarily because the form of inquiry conducted differs, but also as the dealings with Hellenistic (post-Hellenistic) writings, writings of Descartes, and contemporary works are, after all, expected to differ. Namely, in the analysis of authentic arguments, conducted for the purpose of outlining skepticism properly so called, it would seem presumptuous not to address alternative interpretations or fail to mention those complementary to the ones suggested; the same is not the case in the revision of instances of argumentation which admittedly proceeds from the findings of the critique previously conducted. Furthermore, the investigation of authentic forms of skepticism in the first part of this study needed to address and reflect the problem of scarce and, at times, questionable resources, difficulties in approaching at times ambiguous extant texts, in short, all those problems one is faced with when looking into the origins of skeptical tradition. The dealings with the origins of skepticism, much like the dealings with Descartes, are, on the other hand, enriched by the greater historical distance, in comparison to the dealings with their contemporary counterparts. Though differing in form of inquiry, nature of the subject matter and, consequently, style, the emphasis in both parts of this study is mainly on achievement of discursive clearness<sup>10</sup>. Such a choice is not unexpected in the study in which clarity in dealings with skepticism is sought, yet it serves well to note this in the final remarks to its introduction. Namely, many authors might have, in seeking to outline skeptical argumentation, fared better in the achievement of intuitive or aesthetic clarity, in utilizing examples and metaphors to clarify the argumentation presented to the readers. The approach these authors took is not mistaken in itself, and the authentic skeptics themselves did not shy

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<sup>10</sup> I use the conceptions of intuitive and discursive clarity as they are differentiated in this passage from *The Critique of Pure Reason* (A XVII-XVIII): "As regards clearness, the reader has a right to demand, in the first place, discursive or logical clearness, that is, on the basis of conceptions, and, secondly, intuitive or aesthetic clearness, by means of intuitions, that is, by examples or other modes of illustration *in concreto*."



away from such practices in the descriptions of their approach, and these practices are noted throughout the study. Still, due to an insight that emphasis given to modes of illustration and examples might on occasion lead away from conceptual clarity to the loss of focus on the issues at hand, this study will not provide the reader with a novel illustration or example revealing the potency of skepticism. The hope is that the offer of conceptual clarity will be equally satisfying.

## Part I. Delineating skepticism

Pre-philosophical use of the label ‘skeptic’ is common. When someone is labeled a ‘skeptic’ in a regular conversational context, this is usually to say that one is prone to doubt, that he is not easily convinced or credulous, that he questions the topic at hand and is not persuaded by any of the offered arguments. This questioning attitude attributed to ‘everyday skeptics’ sits nicely with the Greek origin of the word employed to depict them, for *σκεπτικοί* are the inquirers, as *σκέπτεσθαι* is inquiring, exploring, thinking. This openness to inquiry, apparent in the choice of the word to depict their stance and still existing in everyday conversational context, seems to be lost in some of the descriptions of ‘skeptics’ one finds in epistemological writings, namely, in dealings with *phantom* skepticism as outlined in the Introduction. Since ‘openness to inquiry’, openness to “the fact that answer has not been settled”<sup>1</sup>, is the distinctive mark of the dialectical reading of skeptical arguments, the delineation of *authentic* skepticism, thus, can be treated as an attempt to trace back the loss of the original sense of the word *σκεπτικοί* in epistemological writings, a falsification which did not spill over into the everyday; in other words, to locate the point of origin of the ‘phantom’, supposedly ‘skeptical’ proponent of negative dogmatism.

### I. 1. The title and the (original) traditions

The delineation of authentic skepticism conducted here proceeds from the insight that insistence on duality of skeptical thought contributes to phantom skepticism, continuously perpetuating such counterfeit understanding of skepticism. Yet, if the task of delineation of skepticism building on this insight was to simply start at the point of emergence of the two traditions in Hellenistic period, Academic and Pyrrhonian, both depicted as ‘skeptical’, and curiously intertwined in efforts to segregate themselves from one another, this chosen starting point of enquiry could easily be perceived as arbitrary and self-serving. Namely, it would seem to self-servingly preclude the investigation of the earlier traces of what is *now* considered ‘skeptical’ thought<sup>2</sup>, and the investigation of *all* who were at that point in time

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 1989/2004), 357; Even though it is not to be dealt with in this study, Gadamer’s analysis of the conduction of authentic dialogue in his outline of Platonic dialectic, and especially the tendency of opinion to propagate itself (ibid., 359), nicely portrays the difficulty and benefits behind remaining ‘open’.

<sup>2</sup> An abridged portrayal available in My-Kuyong Lee, “Antecedents in early Greek philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13-36; Jacques Brunschwig, “Introduction: the beginnings of Hellenistic epistemology,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 229-241 (on epistemological turn).

called *σκεπτικοί*, arbitrarily starting amid the period in which the title of ‘inquirer’ was used to denote all philosophers<sup>3</sup>. While it might seem that the former notice, on the long-lived nature of ‘skeptical’ arguments, could be easily circumvented by mentioning Hellenistic age as the period in which what we today call ‘skepticism’ found fertile ground as a distinct and refined attitude in philosophical inquiries, which did acknowledge its predecessors, it is easily noticeable that the former, on the term designating all philosophers, cannot be avoided in an effort to delineate skepticism. After all, such use of the term seems appropriate, if one is to keep to the sense of *σκέπτεσθαι* from which the title stems, as all philosophers are easily understood as being of inquiring, exploring, thinking kind<sup>4</sup>. With this in mind the very claim to the title ‘skeptics’ might seem as a corruption of its true sense. A task of delineation of skepticism cannot afford itself such a simple characterization. In such a task precisely the impetus leading the choice of a title, which one could perhaps otherwise charitably take to have been furthered precisely for the features implied, presents itself as the suitable starting point.

Of course, the search for those instances in which the term is used in abridged form of the title in the traditions depicted as skeptical is not without difficulties. In it one faces a twofold problem of scarce resources. Prominent early figures, honored by their successors for promoting skeptical thought, hadn’t left behind any writings. This is true of Pyrrho, whose name one branch of Hellenistic skeptics chose to depict their approach, Arcesilaus under whose lead Academy turned ‘skeptical,’ and Carneades the second prominent head of ‘skeptical’ Academy. Furthermore, the efforts of their immediate successors to document their approach are lost to us, and of the writings that did exist we learn solely from extant fragments or summaries and mentions by doxographers and later philosophers. Thus the work of Timon, the student of Pyrrho who earned the title of a “prophet of Pyrrho's views” (*MI* 53), reaches us in fragments; and even less fortunate was the fate of the reports on Academics, Clitomachus’ efforts being an illustrative example. In succeeding Carneades, this head of Academy was renowned precisely for his industrious efforts to report on his work and write

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Karel Janáček, “Das Wort *σκεπτικός* in Philons Schriften” *Listy filologické* 102 (1979): 66; Gisela Striker, “Sceptical Strategies,” in *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, ed. Malcolm Schofield, Myles Burnyeat and Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980/2002), 54; David Sedley, “The motivation of Greek Skepticism,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 20; Carlos Lévy, “The New Academy and its Rivals,” in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 448.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Philodemus (*Rhet.* I 191.4 Sudhaus); Janáček calls this (‘*der Forscher*’) ‘the affirmative sense of *σκεπτικός*’ (ibid.); the claim that the younger skeptics have falsified the sense (*Sinn*) of the term in the following text is his.

down the arguments casted in Academic style. Supposedly authoring more than four hundred treatises (*DL* IV 67; *Acad.* II 16), Clitomachus was even criticized for an overly detailed and lengthy approach in outlining the arguments (*M* IX 1). Still, none of his treaties reach us, and neither do the less numerous books of his successor Philo of Larissa. Of Timon's extant fragments, with regard to the task at hand, solely one invites attention. There is an instance in which he uses 'σκεπτοσύνη' in his description of Xenophanes (cf. *PH* I 223)<sup>5</sup>, yet though it might be appealing to think that Xenophanes is portrayed lamenting on being "unversed in the doubts of the Sceptic"<sup>6</sup>, the concept in question is commonly understood in the unabridged sense of 'inquiry'<sup>7</sup>. The abridged use of the concept is, as noted, seemingly of a much later date<sup>8</sup>.

More precisely, the evidence seems to suggest that the sense of the term of interest to this study originated solely with the post-Hellenistic skeptics. The abridged use seems not to have been in place in first century BCE, when Aenesidemus in distancing himself from the argumentation of the Academy<sup>9</sup>, used the title 'Pyrrhonist' for his own approach. Though only a summary of one of his works, *Pyrrhonian Discourses*, reaches us, the absence of the abridged use there<sup>10</sup>, coupled with an insight that in his time<sup>11</sup>, and by those who seem to have

<sup>5</sup> Fr. 833 *Suppl. Hell.*, 59 Diels, 45 Wachsmuth.

<sup>6</sup> Bury's translation, emphasis added; for all of Bury's translations noted in this study, cf. Robert G. Bury, ed. and trans. *Sextus Empiricus*, vols. 1-4. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933-49).

<sup>7</sup> As in Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, ed. and trans. *Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), unless noted otherwise, the translation of *PH* used throughout the study; cf. Lévy, "The New Academy," 448.

<sup>8</sup> Numenius *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* XIV 6.4 tends to be used as proof that at the time of Timon, the narrow use of the term as a title for the school did not exist (there Arcesilaus is associated with the 'School of Pyrrho')

<sup>9</sup> The sentence above is intended solely to summarize what has been reported on the content of the first book of the work to be noted (cf. Photius, *Bibl.* 212, 169 b), and in this I make no judgment on whether or not he was a member of the Academy. Some interpret the notice of dedication to Academic Tubero (Photius *Bibl.* 212 169b33) as a sign that he was a member of that tradition as well, cf. Gisela Striker, "Academics versus Pyrrhonists, reconsidered," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 135ff ; Jonathan Barnes, "Antiochus of Ascalon," in *Mantissa: Essays in Ancient Philosophy IV*, ed. Jonathan Barnes and Maddalena Bonelli (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), 403-404; The interpretation of the notice of dedication depends on whether one reads it as inscribed to "one of *his fellow* Academics" or to a "certain *member of* Academic sect," namely, on whether one finds that *συναιρεσιώτης* in the dedication takes the direct form of 'companion of ...' or general sense 'a member of a sect'. Caizzi argued for the latter option, from rarity of the use of *συναιρεσιώτης* and the other instances of use of the term by Photius, complementing these with further arguments to effect that Aenesidemus never was a member of Academia (cf. Fernanda Decleva Caizzi, "Aenesidemus and the Academy" *The Classical Quarterly*, 42.1. (1992): 182ff).

<sup>10</sup> Photius, *Bibl.* 212.

<sup>11</sup> The noted Philodemus (*Rhet.* I 191.4 Sudhaus);

been familiar with his work<sup>12</sup>, the term is still used in its unabridged form allows us such an assumption. The same can be said of Cicero, who studied under Philo, and whose appreciation for Academic ‘skeptical’ approach at the time when in Greece it was “almost bereft of adherents” (*ND I 11*)<sup>13</sup> preserved for us their way of argumentation; he doesn’t seem to have used the term either, or more precisely, its Latin cognate. In surviving parts of two different editions of *Academica*<sup>14</sup> it does not appear, nor does it appear in works of those who seem to have been familiar with complete texts of both editions. The term is assumed to have been introduced into Latin vocabulary solely in the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup>, following the translations of Greek texts. As evidence of this serves the surviving text of *Attic Nights* by Aulus Gellius, in which it appears solely in Greek characters, precisely the text that can serve to elucidate (at least partially) the unfortunate path that led to its corruption. From Gellius’ text, which tends to be mentioned as the oldest extant text in which the term is used in the narrow sense of a title designating a specific approach in philosophical inquiries<sup>16</sup>, we learn that it is the Pyrrhonists who also go by the title *σκεπτικοί* (*NA XI V1*)<sup>17</sup>. Further evidence to support the assumption that the use of the term in such an abridged form was common in second century CE comes from the report on Theodosius, of whom we learn that he titled his book *Skeptical Chapters* (*Σκεπτικά κεφάλαια*), and furthermore displayed caution regarding the use of ‘Pyrrhoneans’ as the title for skeptics (*DL IX 70*). That the latter title, as suggested by

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<sup>12</sup> Philo, *Ebr.*, 98, 202 (the latter being of more significance as it appears in the same context as the modes of Aenesidemus, i.e. 169-205), *LA III 238*, *Her.* 247, 279, *Congr.* 52, *Fug.* 209-210.

<sup>13</sup> Tubero being a shared acquaintance of both Cicero and Aenesidemus leaves those claiming Academic background of the latter to explain Cicero’s seeming ignorance of him (cf. Caizzi, “Aenesidemus,” 181.)

<sup>14</sup> Namely, the second book of the first edition, commonly referred to as *Lucullus*, here cited as *Acad. II*; and the first part of the second edition, here cited as *Acad. I*; a detailed description of the composition and later influence is available in Charles B. Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus*. (Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media, 1972). Unless otherwise noted, the translation of *Academica* used in this study is from Harris Rackham, trans. *Cicero: De Natura Deorum, Academica* (London: William Heinemann, 1933).

<sup>15</sup> Ambrogio Traversari’s translation of Diogenes Laertius’ writings into Latin tends to be credited for the introduction of the term, even though translations of Sextus’ *Outlines* were also existent at that time, cf. Charles B. Schmitt, “The Rediscovery of Ancient Skepticism in Modern Times,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 233; Luciano Floridi, “The rediscovery and posthumous influence of skepticism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 268.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Striker, “Sceptical Strategies,” 54.

<sup>17</sup> For the notice on Gellius’ use of *appelantur* exclusively for Pyrrhonist tradition, signaling thus the ‘title’ form, cf. Sedley, op. cit., n. 62.

Theodosius, prevailed is confirmed in the best preserved opus<sup>18</sup> from Pyrrhonist tradition, that of Sextus Empiricus, where this title is the one most frequently used.

It is thus with the post-Hellenistic extant texts that one should begin the inquiry into the nature of the term's abridged form of the title. If the report from Gellius at least implies that the aforementioned charitable assumption would not be unwarranted, as he explains that the Greek name used for Pyrrhonists is of approximately the same meaning as “‘*quesitores*’ et ‘*consideratores*’” (loc.cit.), inquirers, examiners, ones who reflect, consider, the contrast that the title *σκεπτικοί* was supposed to set forth is explicit in Sextus' report on the differences between philosophies. There the ‘skeptics’ are differentiated by their continued investigation, where all others come to an end of inquiry (*PH I 3*), dogmatists in thinking they have discovered the truth and Academics in (supposedly) asserting that things cannot be apprehended. This contrast can hardly be understood as a corruption of the genuine sense of the title. If anything, the sentiment conveyed seems to be that, given the genuine sense of the title, those *still* inquiring bear it. The absence of a conventional halt in inquiries seems to be a feature shared by all of the additional titles Sextus appropriates for his tradition. For this continuous engagement in investigating (*ζητεῖν*) and inquiring (*σκεπτεσθαι*), the ‘skeptic’ is also addressed by the synonym title ‘zetetic’ (*ζητητικός*), i.e. their persuasion, as Sextus notes, is also called ‘investigative’ (*ζητητική*, *PH I 7*)<sup>19</sup>. The title ‘aporetic’ (*ἀπορητικοί*), already used by Aenesidemus in differentiation of Pyrrhonists from supposedly ‘dogmatic’ Academics (Photius, *Bibl.* 169b 38-41), Sextus informs us, again comes from investigating and puzzling over (*ἀπορεῖν*, *PH I 7*) everything, and from being perplexed (*ἀμυχανεῖν*) on whether to assent or deny; and the title ‘suspensive’ (or ‘suspender,’ *ἐφεκτικός*) again signals that at this close of inquiries for skeptics stands not the customary end in an answer, but quite the opposite to conventional closure, “abstention from assertion”<sup>20</sup>, a suspension of judgment. Yet, for all Sextus' efforts to convey this difference in ‘skeptical’ approach, interestingly enough, the thesis that ‘nothing can be apprehended’, which he attributes to Academics, is

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that this best preserved opus gave Sextus a status in the history of philosophy which he might not deserve, as his work might have been exclusively derivative; cf. Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen; Van Gorcum & Comp., 1960), 17. Due to assumptions that Sextus was more of a compiler of sources than an original author of argumentation he outlines, it should be noted that, in the following text, whenever I assign a statement to Sextus, this should be read ‘Sextus or the author he was following’.

<sup>19</sup> For Janáček (“Das Wort *σκεπτικός* in Philons Schriften,” 66) this is the title which they failed to corrupt.

<sup>20</sup> *ἀφασία* - the description attributed to Timon, cf. Aristocles *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* XIV 18 4; cf. *PH I* 192-3 (*κ' περὶ ἀφασίας*)

precisely what we find associated with the term ‘*scepticus*’ introduced into Latin vocabulary, as noted, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

In this identification of inquiring, investigative, aporetic and suspensive approach, the answerless approach of continuous questioning, with negative dogmatism, the unfortunate fate of the term reveals itself, as does the role the (supposed) duality of skeptical thought played in its corruption. The title ‘*σκεπτικοί*’ seems to have been claimed by Pyrrhonists, but soon, due to the noticed similarities, it came to be used to depict the Academic stance as well. This we find noted already by Aulus Gellius (*NA XI V 6-7*), who reported that the titles, including the one of *σκεπτικοί*, which Sextus had (later?) explicitly reserved for the Pyrrhonists<sup>21</sup>, were used to describe both them and the Academics alike. The aforementioned unfortunate fate of the term might be summarized in a neat progression: the concept was introduced by those who wanted to stress they were different from the dogmatists, affirming and denying alike, the school associated with negative dogmatism (in this differentiation) came to be referred to by the same title, and finally – in a cruel twist – negative dogmatism was identified with the term in question<sup>22</sup>. Whether or not negative dogmatism was the stance of Academics has been reinvigorated as a topic for study among the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars, the debate is ongoing, and the literature on the topic is vast. It needs to be of interest to this study as well, but only indirectly, as the distinction Sextus makes represents a good ‘tool’ for resolution of what remains the main concern here, namely, to delineate ‘skepticism’ properly so called which would fit the title of ‘inquirers’. The analysis of the charge is useful as it outlines the traits of negative dogmatism, or as some contemporary authors called it - a degenerate form of skepticism<sup>23</sup>, as opposed to authentic reading, while comparison of traditions, in analyzing the validity of the charge and noting how and why the title chosen was applied for both, offers an insight into what might go wrong with the interpretation of skeptical arguments. In as much, if the sense of the title, what it was supposed to convey, needed to be sought and clarified in post-Hellenistic writings, the search for the phantom needs to begin with the differentiation that predates it, through observance of what we know, and what we can conclude of the two traditions.

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<sup>21</sup> Others being *ἐφεκτικοί* and *ἀπορητικοί*, interestingly, the title ‘searcher’, noted above, is missing.

<sup>22</sup> On the transmission of the thought on ‘skepticism’ through the Middle Ages into modern times and the consequence that ‘skepticism’ came to be identified with dogmatic skepticism cf. Michael Frede, “The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge,” in *The Original Sceptics*, ed. Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 146-151.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Frede, “The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent,” 150.

*Brief proviso regarding the timelines*

It is commonly presumed that Theodosius' caution regarding the use of title signaling association to Pyrrho as a figurehead might have triggered the preference for the title 'skeptics' later on<sup>24</sup>. Theodosius' delineation of inappropriate ascription of the title 'Pyrrhonists' does not, when observed in isolation, explicitly reveal the traits of the 'skeptics' sought in this study; it does, however, reveal something of relevance to be noted before the inquiry at hand can proceed. Of his delineation we learn the following (*DL IX 70*)<sup>25</sup>:

Theodosius in his *Skeptical Chapters* denies that Skeptical philosophy (τὴν σκεπτικὴν) should be called 'Pyrrhonist'; [1]for, since other people's movement of the mind is unattainable (ἀληπτόν) to us, we shall never know what Pyrrho's disposition (διάθεσιν) was like, and without knowing that, we cannot call ourselves 'Pyrrhonists'; moreover, [2] Pyrrho was not the first to invent Skeptical philosophy; [3] nor did he hold any doctrine (δόγμα); [4] only he who in manners and life resembles (ὁμότροπος) Pyrrho is entitled to call himself a Pyrrhonist.

The quoted passage again brings forth the notion of the long-lived nature of the skeptical argumentation [2], and it is precisely the claim to philosophical precedents and the intricate relation to Pyrrho that is of interest to us here. What has been discussed under the title 'agnosticism of Theodosius'<sup>26</sup> [1], seems to have been adopted by later skeptics, as Sextus is equally cautious in noting that their approach is *sometimes* called Pyrrhonian "from the fact that Pyrrho *appears to us* to have attached himself to Skepticism more systematically and conspicuously than anyone before him" (*PH I 7*, emphasis added). Yet, it should be noted that caution can and has been attributed to Aenesidemus' approach to Pyrrho as well<sup>27</sup>. Even if the cautiousness of his successors is taken as a signal that, in line with Pyrrho's approach as they present it [3], they make no positive assertions<sup>28</sup> even in this respect, there remains the fact that even those not burdened with such skeptical scruples cannot agree on resolution of the puzzle that Pyrrho's disposition presents. This enigmatic figure is probably the best example from the skeptical traditions of how wide of an array of readings might arise due to the problem of scarce resources, more or less questionable testimonies, or perhaps even the

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Striker, "Sceptical Strategies," 54; Sedley, "The motivation of Greek Skepticism," 20; Richard Bett, *Pyrrho, His Antecedents and His Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 56, n.84-5; Brunschwig, "The beginnings," 241.

<sup>25</sup> Translation modified from Roberto Polito, "Was Skepticism a Philosophy" *Classical Philology* 102.4 (2007): 342.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jacques Brunschwig, "Once again on Eusebius on Aristocles on Timon on Pyrrho," in *Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 211.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Giovanni Reale, "Ipotesi per una rilettura della filosofia di Pirrone di Elide," in *Lo Scetticismo Antico*, ed. Gabriele Giannantoni (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1981), 246, n. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Option mentioned, and discarded by Richard Bett, *Pyrrho, His Antecedents and His Legacy*, 56.



elusiveness of skeptical approach; eight different interpretations of his “disposition” have been catalogued, ranging from ‘epistemologico-phenomenalistic’ to ‘practico-ethical’, from ‘metaphysical’ to ‘antimetaphysical’ readings<sup>29</sup>, all drawing from the scattered fragments reporting on his stances. While it wouldn’t prove useful for the purpose of this study to undergo an in-depth analysis of Pyrrho’s attitude, elsewhere interpreted both as doctrine-free and doctrine-bound, acknowledging the enigma that the first protagonist on the list of Hellenistic skeptics (as far as dates go) *is*, and perhaps *was* even for his proclaimed successors, serves as a fitting prelude to a proviso which is in order, regarding the timelines of the traditions to be investigated.

Such an enigmatic figure, if the above is read carefully, bears the burden, endowed by his later followers, for both the title ‘Pyrrhonism’ and ‘skepticism’ through what might seem no fault of his own; Aenesidemus being credited for the former, and Theodosius’ professed agnosticism for the spread of the latter. As fate would have it, Pyrrho was also one of the first names mentioned in the debate on similarities between the two supposedly different traditions. Thus we are left to ponder whether Arcesilaus, in turning Academy ‘skeptical’, plagiarized Pyrrho complementing his approach with knowledge of recent dialectical techniques, as Timon suggested, and Stoic contemporaries readily accepted<sup>30</sup>; or if Timon himself plagiarized, tailoring the portrayal of Pyrrho’s approach in such a way to present him as ‘wiser’ than Arcesilaus’ emerging Academic skepticism<sup>31</sup>. This puzzle of primacy is further entangled by claims to renowned philosophical precedents coming from both traditions<sup>32</sup>. In this, Theodosius’ critique is revealing, as in it one finds caution in approach to the enigmatic figurehead, complemented with a notice of a much longer line of descent, and a notice in which the title bearing his name is preserved, albeit in a limited form. Perhaps this critique, as it stands, is fitting for a school (*αἴθεσις*) which one cannot call a school but a tradition (*DL I 20*), as it isn’t and doesn’t profess to be a school in a conventional sense of adhering to doctrines, but in a specific sense of way of life, conduct followed<sup>33</sup>. Yet, having the title preserved by pointing to “manners and life” [4] of Pyrrho is not without controversy, as it is precisely the stories of Pyrrho’s overly doubtful conduct that Aenesidemus had to

<sup>29</sup> See Reale, “Ipotesi”, 247-288, for details on each reading; short list of readings in Brunschwig “The beginnings,” 241, n. 36.

<sup>30</sup> *DL IV 33*; Numenius *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* XIV 5.11-14; *PH I 234* ; suggested in Sedley, “The motivation of Greek Skepticism,” 15-17.

<sup>31</sup> As suggested by Michael Frede, “Book review, Stough 1969” *Journal of Philosophy* 70.21 (1973): 806; and Brunschwig, “The beginnings,” 250.

<sup>32</sup> For the claims of Academy see Sedley, *loc.cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *PH I 16, 17*

address in using him as a figurehead (*DL IX 63*). Thus, one could note that the title ‘Pyrrhonism’ might have been preserved for the same purpose that Aenesidemus’ choice of Pyrrho in coining it seems to have served, namely, to stress the primacy of this approach to that of Academy. This deepening puzzle of primacy can be summarized in saying that even before the use of title ‘skeptic’ became commonplace, issues arose as to who was ‘original’ in such an approach, such that temporal precedence cannot simply be used to resolve them. These issues precede, perhaps inspire and certainly bring to question even the title ‘Pyrrhonism’. Yet, originality and temporal precedence, though of importance for the traditions investigated, need not be the concern of the delineation of authentic skepticism, except to note what is recognized in importance allotted to such issues. In attempting to avoid and to cast a plagiarism charge, one implicitly grants the similarities between two approaches, the very similarities which in this instance, after all, must have led to debates and treaties being written as to whether the two traditions differ at all (*NA, XI 5.6*), and to the joint descriptions by the titles. It is these similarities, as much as the efforts of Pyrrhonists to distinguish themselves by the title ‘skeptics’, that one needs to look to in an attempt to understand the path that led to the corruption of the sense of ‘inquirers’. As noted, it is precisely in these efforts that the title of ‘inquirers’ serves the purpose of emphasizing the contrast between the two traditions, and the peculiarly unfortunate fate the title endured, in becoming precisely what it proposed not to be, reveals itself. If similarities noted fit the genuine sense of the investigated title, i.e. the features emphasized by it, then proving the charge flawed, and the differentiation between the traditions strained, offers an insight into the falsification of the label ‘σκεπτικοί’ and the creation of the ‘phantom’. To do this, one can sidestep the puzzle of primacy as it appears, much like the falsification of the term at hand, more as a consequence than as a cause of the revealing interplay (differentiation). That being said, the proviso can be stated, namely, that even though the interplay between the traditions is of relevance, resolving the dispute on temporal precedence which appears as a part of this interplay, identifying the point of origin, need not be the focus of this study, as what causes the puzzle is much more revealing than the answer to the question ‘who came first’. If a specific example is needed, though both Arcesilaus (*DL IV 28*) and Pyrrho (*DL IX 61*) tend to be credited for the notion of suspension of judgment, delineation of authentic skepticism gains nothing with an answer on who devised it first; it is served by unveiling how this notion fits the title bound to inquiry which was chosen to emphasize the contrast with dogmatism, and how it diverges (or can be understood to diverge) from it. Thus, with the proviso in mind, the task may proceed.

## I. 2. The ‘inquirers’, the inquiry and the close of arguments

Since the efforts of Pyrrhonists to differentiate their approach from other philosophies play a significant role in understanding skepticism properly so called, and their treatment of Academy in this differentiation allows for the understanding of skepticism’s phantom form, it is precisely with these efforts that the task of delineation should commence. The most fundamental difference, as Sextus reports, is in the result of investigations, and in this philosophy simply follows a pattern present in all efforts to investigate (*PH I* 1-3):

(1) When people are investigating any subject, the likely result is either a discovery, or a denial of discovery and a confession of inapprehensibility, or else a continuation of the investigation. (2) This, no doubt, is why in the case of philosophical investigations, too, some have said that they have discovered the truth, some have asserted that it cannot be apprehended, and others are still investigating. (3) Those who are called Dogmatists in a proper sense of the word think that they have discovered the truth – for example, the schools of Aristotle and Epicurus and the Stoics, and some others. The schools of Clitomachus and Carneades, and other Academics, have asserted that things cannot be apprehended. And the Sceptics are still investigating.

It has already been noted that Sextus sought to emphasize the continuous engagement in investigating which marks and distinguishes the approach of ‘skeptics’ for whom the inquiry results (solely) in further inquiry. Here it serves well to stress again that the remaining two fundamental kinds of philosophy are not marked by lack of investigation or inquiry *simpliciter*, but by a lack of *continued* inquiry. In this Sextus’ ‘dogmatists’ (*οἱ δογματικοί*), differ from those currently being described as dogmatic, as today the description serves to signal a self-opinionated stance, marked by lack of investigation and authoritatively affirmed doctrines<sup>1</sup>, whereas for Sextus the title in its “proper sense” refers simply to philosophers who end their inquiries with what they think is a discovery of the truth sought, an answer. It is interesting that Sextus in the quoted passage does not treat Academics’ assertion as plainly dogmatic, or them as “dogmatists specially so called” (*ἰδίως καλούμενοι δογματικοί*). His Pyrrhonist predecessor Aenesidemus did not shy away from describing them as dogmatic. In Photius’ summary of the first book of his *Pyrrhonian Discourses*, the differentiation

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<sup>1</sup> For the translation of ‘*οἱ δογματικοί*’ as simply ‘the Dogmatists’ as potentially misleading, cf. Barnes, “Ancient Skepticism and Causation,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 149, 187, n. 1; similar notice on limitations behind pejorative tone of the word ‘dogmatists’ in Annas and Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1-2. In the following text I will for most part use ‘dogmatists,’ noting that in this context the title simply means ‘those advocating a specific philosophical doctrine.’ The description ‘doctrinaire’, suggested by A.A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 71C is also used.

Aenesidemus suggests (supposedly reported almost verbatim<sup>2</sup>) builds precisely on the dogmatism of Academics (*Bibl.* 169b 38-41):

He says that the Academics are dogmatic (*δογματικοί*) in that they posit (*τίθενται*) some things without wavering (*ἀδιστακτως*) and unambiguously deny (*αἴρουν ἀναμφιβόλως*) others. The Pyrrhonists, on the other hand, are aporetic and free of all dogma.

In comparison of the two efforts at differentiation, it might be compelling to assume that Sextus' choice of words precisely suggests the absence of doctrines or unambiguous denial in Academics' approach. Namely, a closer reading of the Greek text provides us with an interesting result. Sextus states twice that Academics “*have asserted* (*ἀπεφήναντο*) that truth cannot be apprehended”, and *ἀποφαίνεσθαι* could mean both ‘to argue for’ and ‘to declare’, much like ‘assert’ which might stand for ‘defending a claim’ and ‘affirming’ or ‘stating strongly’<sup>3</sup>. If one *argues for* a claim, one needs not necessarily be understood to end the inquiry by *affirming* the claim argued for. This lexical ambiguity is revealing for the delineation at hand, as a continuous inquiry does not preclude the ‘inquirer’ from *arguing for* something. The distinction is, as Sextus himself stresses, in the *results* of investigations. The general tone of Sextus' dealings with the Academy in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*<sup>4</sup> though, especially under Carneades and Clitomachus, clearly shows that he accuses them for a halt in inquiry unfitting of the title ‘inquirer’. He specifically notes (*PH I 226*):

The members of the New Academy, if they say that everything is inapprehensible, no doubt differ from the Sceptics precisely in saying that everything is inapprehensible. For they make affirmations (*διαβεβαιοῦνται*) about this, while the Sceptic expects it to be possible for some things actually to be apprehended.

If his categorization (in *PH I 3*) leaves room for assumptions as to whether he aspired to portray the Academics in the same (dogmatic) light as Aenesidemus did, this description of them as *affirming*, i.e. *maintaining strongly* that all is inapprehensible, clearly fits the unwavering approach that his predecessor described. While it should be noted here that Sextus does not accuse Arcesilaus in the same manner, and is willing to describe him as following the ‘skeptical’ way of not making assertions “about the reality or unreality of

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<sup>2</sup> At least according to Photius, *Bibl.* 169b 38

<sup>3</sup> Burnyeat similarly builds on the two senses of ‘argued for’ (argued for and endorsed, and argued for but not endorsed), cf. Michael Burnyeat, “The Sceptic in His Place and Time,” in *The Original Sceptics*, ed. Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 95, n. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Couissin rightly notes that perhaps he's more trustworthy in *M VII–XI*, and connects the hostility in *PH* with Sextus' (or the authors' Sextus follows) concern to differentiate Pyrrhonists from Academics; cf. Couissin, “The Stoicism of the New Academy,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 45.

anything” (*PH I* 232)<sup>5</sup>, one might add that he is equally willing to describe both Arcesilaus and the New Academy as being dogmatic in the positive sense in other matters<sup>6</sup>. It could equally be noted that Aenesidemus’ accusations can be interpreted as targeting all Academics<sup>7</sup> or solely his contemporaries led by Philo of Larissa<sup>8</sup>. Yet, the nature of the task of delineation requires these notices to be made now solely in passing, as whom the finger was pointed at is secondary to the charge itself, understanding of which allows for the outline of the skepticisms’ phantom form. For much the same reason, the delineation can sidestep (for now) the allegations for dogmatism *specially so called*, as ‘positive’ dogmatic stances are treated (by Sextus) as a separate category from the two that appear conflated in the ‘phantom’, in which the title of one is attributed to the dogma of the other. Thus, it is primarily the nature of Academics’ supposed affirmation of inapprehension, whomever it was attributed to, that requires scrutiny.

To affirm or maintain strongly, with confidence, that ‘nothing can be known’ seems to be, as was noted quite early on, quite an unreflective halt to inquiries. Lucretius has picturesquely portrayed in *De natura rerum*, following Epicurus<sup>9</sup> or one of his Epicurean predecessors<sup>10</sup>, the charge of self-refutation (*περιτροπή*)<sup>11</sup> such an affirmation invites (IV 469-472)<sup>12</sup>:

Again, if anyone thinks that nothing is known, he knows not whether that can be known either, since he admits that he knows nothing. Against him then I will refrain from joining issue, who plants himself with his head in the place of his footprints.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *M VII* 150-58

<sup>6</sup> In *PH I* 233-234, *M VII* 158 for Arcesilaus, *PH I* 226-231, *M VII* 166-89 for the New Academy; these accusations will be discussed further in the following text.

<sup>7</sup> As in Paul Woodruff, “Aporetic Pyrrhonism,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 6, ed. Julia Annas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 166ff.

<sup>8</sup> Interpretation I consider more likely as well, cf. Myles Burnyeat, “Can the Sceptic Live his Scepticism?,” in *Doubt and Dogmatism*, ed. Malcolm Schofield, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 31, n. 22; see also Couissin, “The Stoicism of the New Academy,” 56.

<sup>9</sup> According to Burnyeat, who suggests that target is Metrodorus, cf. Myles Burnyeat, “The upside-down-back-to-front sceptic of Lucretius IV.472” *Philologus* 122 (1978), 200.

<sup>10</sup> Some attribute the passage 469-521 to Colotes as the source, Academics being the target; cf. Paul A. Vander Waerdt, “Colotes and the Epicurean Refutation of Skepticism,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 30.2 (1989): 225-267; Brunschwig, “The beginnings,” 238.

<sup>11</sup> See also Burnyeat’s suggestion on the origin of the argument with Democritus, in Myles Burnyeat, “Protagoras and self-refutation in later Greek philosophy,” *Philosophical Review* 85.1 (1976), 47.

<sup>12</sup> Translation from Cyril Bailey, *Lucretius On the Nature of Things* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), modified to convey the image of complete reversal, as suggested by Myles Burnyeat who depicts the portrayal as *περιτροπή* charge, “The upside-down-back-to-front sceptic,” 198-201.

Simple reading of the poetic outline is that it shows how first order negative thesis, in applying to itself<sup>13</sup>, subverts its own advancement. While some would say that the charge itself triggered the question of reflexivity of such a thesis<sup>14</sup>, others would say that ever since Metrodorus of Chios, follower of Democritus, the philosophers who asserted (leaving the sense of the word aside) the phrase ‘nothing can be known’<sup>15</sup>, were quite content to let it turn against itself – i.e. to use the phrasing Metrodorus is reported to have used in his book *On Nature*<sup>16</sup>:

None of us knows anything not even whether we know or do not know this very thing (sc. that we do not know anything).

Regardless of whether or not Metrodorus himself recognized the supposed contradictory character of a metadogmatic<sup>17</sup> claim to *know* this thesis<sup>18</sup>, reports on both Arcesilaus<sup>19</sup> and Carneades<sup>20</sup> suggest that they opted for such a reflexive reading of it. A question that presents itself in an effort of delineation is whether the second order statement, openness to *περιτροπή*, should be understood as an affirmation of *ἀκαταληψία*. It is easily understood why this question needs to be of special interest in the efforts at delineation of skepticism properly so called. Namely, a genuine ‘inquirer’, by Sextus’ description, doesn’t end the inquiry with a determination, in his approach the inquiry is not closed off. To understand such an approach is to understand not solely the titles he avails himself of, but also to appreciate what is signaled in expressions of the kind attributed to Aenesidemus (Phot. *Bibl.* 170a 11-14, trans. LS 71C):

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<sup>13</sup> A move common to ancient self-refutation arguments, cf. Myles Burnyeat, “Antipater and self-refutation: elusive arguments in Cicero’s *Academica*,” in *Assent and Argument*, ed. Brad Inwood and Jaap Mansfeld (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 285.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. David Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 87; Sedley argues that both Metrodorus’ and Socrates’ statements were reinterpreted as reflexive and non-reflexive (respectively) upon the charge, but resolving this issue has no bearing on what follows.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Cic. *Acad.* II 73, Euseb. *Praep. evang.* XIV, 19 8, *DL IX*, 58, *M VII* 88;

<sup>16</sup> Trans. from Brunschwig, “The beginnings,” 237 (n. 24 for explication of such a choice).

<sup>17</sup> Namely, the affirmation of a claim denying or attesting a cognitive status of a proposition would be characterized as ‘metadogmatic.’ Following Barnes, in what follows I refrain from distinguishing between negative metadogmatism and negative dogmatism as, much like in the case of metadogmatism and dogmatism, the former would be “a special case” of the latter; cf. Jonathan Barnes, “Diogenes Laertius IX 61-116: The Philosophy of Pyrrhonism,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol.2, 36.6, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992): 4254, n. 72.

<sup>18</sup> Personal claims to ignorance, as (subsequently?) attributed to Socrates, are not liable to the same charge, cf. Burnyeat, “Antipater,” 295-299; for a possibility that Antipater offered a Ryle like solution allowing for non-reflexive treatment, namely of “exempting the universal generalization from applying to itself”, cf. *ibid.*, 286ff.

<sup>19</sup> Cic. *Acad.* I.45

<sup>20</sup> Cic. *Acad.* I.46 (indirectly, as he is said to have continued the practices of Arcesilaus), (directly in) II.28,109.

For the Pyrrhonist determines absolutely nothing (*καθόλου γὰρ οὐδὲν ὁ Πυρρῶνιος ὀρίζει*), not even this very claim that nothing is determined (*οὐδὲν διορίζεται*). (We put it this way, he says, for lack of a way to express the thought.)

Sextus' formulation reaches us in a more refined form, as he notes of the skeptics (*PH I 14-15*):

(14) Not even in uttering the Skeptical phrases (*φωνάς*) about unclear matters – for example ‘In no way more (*οὐδὲν μᾶλλον*)’ or ‘I determine nothing (*οὐδὲν ὀρίζω*)’ (...) do they hold beliefs (*δογματίζει*). For if you hold beliefs, then you posit as real (*ὑπάρχον τιθεταί*) the things you are said to hold beliefs about; but the Skeptics posit these phrases not as necessarily being real. For they suppose that, just as the phrase ‘Everything is false’ says that it too, along with everything else, is false (and similarly for ‘Nothing is true’), so also ‘In no way more’ says that it too, along with everything else, is no more so than not so, and hence it cancels itself along with (*συμπεριγράφει*) everything else. And we say the same of the other Skeptical phrases. (15) Thus, if people who hold beliefs posit as real the things they hold beliefs about, while Skeptics utter their own phrases in such a way that they are implicitly cancelled (*περιγράφονται*) by themselves, they cannot be said to hold beliefs in uttering them. But the main point is this: in uttering these phrases they say what is apparent to themselves and report their own feelings (*πάθος*) without holding opinions, affirming nothing about external objects.

Such efforts to express absence of determinations, absence of dogmatizing, appear congenial to the Academics' second order statement of ignorance, yet closer examination is needed. If this apparent congeniality in the allowance for the statement to apply to itself can allow for an understanding of how negative dogmatism charge of Pyrrhonist making came to be applied to their own stance as well, it can also serve to unveil a particular trait to authentic skeptics' close of the inquiry. To see this, it seems best to track the trait backwards, from the extant Sextus' outline to what has been reported on Academics' approach.

Sextus likens the self-referring nature of the phrases uttered by skeptics to that of phrases ‘everything is false’ and ‘nothing is true’. There are two argumentative traps for those who assert that ‘everything is false and nothing is true’: first, due to the self-referring nature of ‘everything is false’, those who assert it “are turned-about” (*περιτρεπομένου*, *M VIII 55*), namely self-application of ‘everything is false’ (itself being a part of ‘everything’), yields the truth of its opposite ‘not everything is false’<sup>21</sup>; and furthermore they are (*M VII 399*) “brought around” (*περίχρησαν*) to the opposite position by the very act of saying ‘everything is false and nothing is true’, as in *saying* this they are *affirming* (determining, *ὀρίζειν*) a *truth* (of their

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<sup>21</sup> Burnyeat calls this simply ‘a single premise reversal’, McPherran titles it ‘absolute self-refutation’; cf. Myles Burnyeat, “Protagoras and self-refutation,” 49-50; Mark McPherran, “Skeptical Homeopathy and Self –Refutation,” *Phronesis* 32.3 (1987), 293.

assertion). Though self-applicability is what Sextus notes as a common trait these phrases share with skeptical utterances, thus making the former trap, based on it, of more interest here, it also serves well to note that the outline of skeptical *φωναί* fends off the second argumentative trap through what seems to be a very cautious choice of wording. Their utterances, merely report, describe (*ἀπαγγέλλει*) their *πάθος*,<sup>22</sup> and thus in uttering them, the skeptic is “not dogmatically making a confident assertion” (*PH I 197*). In fact, Sextus uses the same distinction in the preliminary notice to the *Outlines* (*PH I 4*):

By way of preface let us say that on none of the matters to be discussed do we affirm that things certainly are just as we say they are: rather we report descriptively on each item according to how it appears to us at that time.

Prior to investigating the function this distinction between an assertion and skeptics’ descriptive report has, it should be noted that the first charge that skeptic might be exposed to in likening his phrases to ones bound to self-refutation also seems to be fended off by a careful choice of concepts in depicting their own stance. Namely, Sextus does not use ‘*περιτρέπεσθαι*’ to describe the self-cancellation of their utterances, the verb he does use in describing the fate of the phrases chosen in comparison, but the more nuanced description ‘*ὑφ’ ἑαυτῶν περιγράφεσθαι*’ and the compound ‘*συμπεριγράφειν*’<sup>23</sup>. As far as I can tell, Sextus does not use the reflexive ‘(by) self- *περιγράφεσθαι*’ elsewhere in his opus, but the compound ‘(along) with-*περιγράφειν*’, which does appear in other contexts, may serve to reveal the intention leading the choice of the concepts used.

The passages in which ‘*συμπεριγράφειν*’ appears<sup>24</sup> are best understood as instances of economical argumentative practice Pyrrhonists pride themselves in. Sextus elsewhere uses precisely this aspect of Pyrrhonists approach in contrast with Academics. Namely, they “do not delay long on particular points” (*M IX 1*) as Academics did “for by plunging into alien subject matter and framing their arguments on the basis of assent to dogmatic assumptions not their own they [the Academics] have unduly prolonged their counter statements” (*loc.cit.*). Pyrrhonists cleverly accomplish more in less time, they simply shake the “most important

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Barnes compares it to Wittgenstein’s ‘avowals of feelings’, which are not to be considered ‘statements’, cf. Jonathan Barnes, “The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist,” in *The Original Sceptics*, ed. Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 65-67.

<sup>23</sup> The following outline can be viewed as an alternative reading to the one offered by Castagnoli, though he is to be credited for noting the choice of wording here as important in understanding the Pyrrhonists’ approach, cf. Luca Castagnoli, “Self-bracketing Pyrrhonism,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 18, ed. David Sedley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 267.

<sup>24</sup> In addition to the passages in which it refers to Pyrrhonists’ utterances (*PH I 14*, 206) the compound appears in *PH II 47*, 84, 188, *III 1*, 97, 130; *M VII 12*, *VIII 164*, 339, 480.



(*κυριώτατα*), most comprehensive (*συνεκτικιώτατα*)” dogmatic assumptions, leaving the rest to tumble down with them. The analogy Sextus uses here is well known, once the foundations of a structure are undermined, the walls and the towers are shattered. The same analogy is used in a ‘*συμπεριγράφειν*’ context to much the same effect (*PH* II 84). The economical nature of the passages of ‘*συμπεριγράφειν*’ kind, the nets that Pyrrhonists use there in order to catch more prey at once (cf. *M* IX 3), are for most part notices that in subverting the *encompassing*, the *encompassed* is subverted, in subverting *πρός τι* (*πῶς ἔχοντα*)<sup>25</sup> their complement some-things are subverted<sup>26</sup>.

What does this practice of economically co-canceling thus ‘related’ to the ‘canceled’ reveal of Sextus’ treatment of skeptical phrases as ‘(along) with- canceled’? Sextus’ elusive treatment of arguments against proof is an illustrative example, as here too one finds allowance for these, much like the one made for skeptical utterances, to self-apply and thus be canceled along with all others (*PH* II 188, *M* VIII 480). Noting the nature of the contexts in which these allowances appear is an important ingredient to understanding them. Namely, both instances appear as Sextus addresses counter-arguments which dogmatists might posit, and in both Sextus seeks to reverse these counter-arguments so that they turn to be a burden-for or the failure-of the dogmatists themselves. The self-co-cancellation appears as *one* of the argumentative moves, as Sextus tries to avoid precisely what the dogmatists seek of skeptics, a commitment in form of an answer. For the gist of dogmatists’ argument is that whether skeptics assert that argument against proof *is* probative or that it *is not* probative, the argument against proof is in both instances turned to the opposite of what was argued for. Sextus in reply argues to the effect that if the dogmatist himself was made to choose either of the assertions, he would be the one left with a determination opposite to the one he was seeking to establish, while the skeptics are in any case in a favorable position (*M*VIII 476-7)<sup>27</sup>:

(...) since they [the Skeptics] engage in a bare positing of the arguments against proof, without assenting to them, they are so far from being damaged by those who

<sup>25</sup> relatives, ‘the things (which are in a certain state) in relation to something’; the above description is supposed to mimic Sextus’ use, namely Sextus seems to use *πρός τι* (relative) and *πρός τι πῶς ἔχοντα* (relatively disposed), distinguished by the Stoics (cf. Simplicius, *Cat.* 166, 15-29; LS 29 C) interchangeably (for Sextus, in relation to the passages discussed here, cf. *M* VIII 161, 164). Though not enough space can be dedicated here to this conflation, given the dialectical aim of the arguments casted, perhaps it should be observed as an instance of exploitation of a Stoic category to the opposite effect (i.e. along the lines of reported use by Carneades, cf. *M* VII 166-175).

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the argumentative approach is analogous to one in *συμπεριτρέπειν* passages (cf. *PH* II 193, III 103, 109, 130, 259).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *PH* II 192.

construct the opposite case that, rather, they are helped. For if the arguments produced against proof have remained unrefuted, and the arguments taken up in favor of there being proof are also strong, let us attach ourselves neither to one set nor to the other, but agree to suspend judgment.

If the dogmatists claim the argument against proof expels itself (in being probative itself)<sup>28</sup>, the skeptics would counter such a claim in two distinct argumentative steps (*M VIII 479-80*):

[1] To [this] it should be said that it does not definitely toss itself out. For many things are said to allow for an exception, and just as we say that Zeus is the father of gods and humans, allowing for the exception of himself (for of course he is not his own father), so too, when we say there is no proof, we say this allowing for the exception of the argument showing that there is no proof; for this alone is a proof. [2] And even if it does toss itself out, that there is a proof is not thereby ratified. For there are many things that put themselves in the same condition as they put other things. For example, just as fire after consuming the wood destroys itself as well, and just as purgatives after driving the fluids out of bodies eliminate themselves as well, so too the argument against proof, can cancel itself as well (*ἑαυτὸν συμπεριγράφειν*).

With these two steps observed through the prism of the outlined ‘favorable position’, skeptics can be understood as working toward the same goal in both; the first step can be understood as skeptic’s defense of the claim (i.e. the counter-claim to dogmatic claim) skeptic is arguing-for, the second as signaling that skeptics are un-attached to this argument they casted, which, if understood as canceling the others (i.e. probative), can cancel itself. In fact, as another well known analogy suggests, skeptics, after having reached the position aimed for, discard this step-ladder which served as a mean of reaching it (*M VIII 481*). For the purpose of unveiling how such an approach is to be imported into the treatment of skeptical phrases, it serves well to note *how* Sextus uses the congenial ‘(along) with-cancelation’ of ‘Nothing is true’ in the passages on argument against proof. Namely, in describing the in-canceling-self-canceling of the argument against proof as outlined above, Sextus uses the analogously behaving phrase to show (presumably to those who mean to contest it) that the suggested (for the argument at hand) is not incongruous – that the noted phrase *in* denying everything else *is* itself ‘turned about’ (*PH II 188*) is something the dogmatists accept, having argued toward it as well. Again, such self-cancelation of the argument is not to be observed in isolation, but within the context of juxtaposing the two counter-theses. As such, it does not amount to an admission of defeat in a dialectical context, yet signals the un-attachment to the argued-for. The cautious choice of wording to describe the self-cancellation in question can thus be taken as an effort to not be misunderstood, with ‘περιτρέπεσθαι’ burdened by being marked as the losing

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Aristocles *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* XIV 18 13, 20-21.

movement in the dialectical interplay. Yet the allowance for self-cancelation depicted by *συμπεριγράφειν* has the same mechanics, as the argued-for, though not to be taken as loser *simpliciter*, is not taken by the skeptics as a winner either. They, as noted, attach themselves to neither of the sides in the dispute.

If the findings from other *συμπεριγράφειν* passages are imported into Sextus' like treatment of the skeptical phrases, then one finds there a likewise qualified openness to *περιτροπή*. Thus, when skeptic utters 'in no way more (*οὐδὲν μᾶλλον*)' or 'no more (*οὐ μᾶλλον*)', the elliptical phrase(s) that stands for 'no more this than that (up than down)' (*PH I 188*), it is in alike manner (allowed to be) self-referring<sup>29</sup> and self-canceling-along. In this context Sextus suggests that *since* the skeptics make this allowance they are not to be understood as positing the phrases as necessarily real (*πάντως ὑπαρχούσας*, *PH I 14* quoted above)<sup>30</sup>. To understand the mechanics of *ἑαυτὸν συμπεριγράφειν* here and hence the un-attachment noted through it, the example of proof can again be used, as, by Sextus' report, some dogmatists posit it, some do away with it, while skeptics use their 'no more' phrase (cf. *M VIII 328*). 'No more' in such a use juxtaposes opposing dogmas posited as answers<sup>31</sup>, and if this phrase stood as an instance of dogmatizing, if it was to represent an answer which ends the inquiry, an alternative to the answers it suggests as equally established or (in other words) equally inadequate to serve (in their own right) as an answer to the puzzle at hand, it eliminates itself along with those answers. Much like the notion that the argument against proof eliminates itself as well, here again the suggestion of how such an answer can be found self-canceling comes from dogmatists. In Aristotle's words (*Metaphysics*, K 5 1062a35 - 1062 b11)<sup>32</sup> to those who advocated dogmas that violate the principle of non-contradiction<sup>33</sup>:

<sup>29</sup> Castagnoli, in trying to apply this to the utterance, finds it "mysterious" how self-application could be self-refutation; cf. Castagnoli, "Self-bracketing Pyrrhonism," 280.

<sup>30</sup> As Aenesidemus is reported to have suggested Academics say, cf. Photius, *Bibl.* 170 a30 (*κοινῶς <μὴ> ὑπάρχειν καταληπτά*).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *M VII 328*, *M VIII 201*, *M IX 50*, 228-9, *M X 45*, *M XI 147*; on instances of use of *οὐ μᾶλλον* in Sextus' opus and by those that preceded him, see Phillip DeLacy, "οὐ μᾶλλον and the Antecedents of Ancient Scepticism" *Phronesis* 3.1. (1958), 59-71 (for instances in Sextus' work specifically, 68-9).

<sup>32</sup> Translation used in this study, unless otherwise noted, is by W. D. Ross, in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol.2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). A good source for potential alternative dogmatists' solutions is Burnyeat's interpretation of Plato's argument against Protagoras, cf. Myles Burnyeat, "Protagoras and self-refutation in Plato's Theaetetus" *The Philosophical Review* 85.2. (1976): 172-195.

<sup>33</sup> See also *Met.* Γ 4 1008a6-7; It serves well to notice that Heraclitus' (*Met.* K 5 1062a32) and Protagoras' views (by being alike, *Met.* K 6 1062b13), or an interpretation of them (*Met.* Γ 3 1005b23-5) which Aristotle addresses in the context of the quoted passage, and Democritus' (cf. *Met.* Γ 5 1009b11-12) are views that Pyrrhonists need to differentiate themselves from (*PH I 210-12*, 213-14, 216-9) and are even today found to be associated with (e.g. debate on the meaning of Sextus' phrase "Aenesidemus in accordance to Heraclitus", *M VIII 8*, *IX 337*, *X 216*).

But in any case if what is said by him is true, not even this itself is true – viz. that the same thing can at one and the same time both be and not be<sup>34</sup>. For as, when the statements are separated, the affirmation is no more true than the negation, in the same way – the complex statement being like one affirmation – the whole taken as an affirmation will be no more true than its negation. Further, if it is not possible to affirm anything truly, this itself will be false – the assertion that there is no true affirmation. But if a true affirmation exists, this appears to refute what is said by those who raise such objections and utterly destroy rational discourse.

By allowing for such self-cancellation, as noted, Pyrrhonists display un-attachment to the phrase taken as an answer; they allow for the absence-of-answers not to be an answer. This is, after all, closely connected to the un-attachment to reasons, proofs and arguments casted, as outlined above. If the skeptic remained attached to these, he would have an answer in place of a question he puts forth. Thus, though the phrase “exhibits the distinctive character of assent or denial” (*PH I* 191), it is better understood as a question (cf. *M I* 315). In other words, in unveiling the tension between the posited answers<sup>35</sup>, and not professing to be an alternative, ‘no more’ signals that for the ‘skeptics’ properly so called, the question is continued. This was not the only instance of use of dogmatists’ tools (by skeptics) to unveil the absence of determinations<sup>36</sup> at the close of inquiries. As the dogmatists charge those who posit the indeterminate (*τὸ ἀόριστον*)<sup>37</sup> with saying nothing, as such a person “says neither ‘yes’ or ‘no’, but both ‘yes’ and ‘no’; and again denies both of these and says ‘neither yes nor no’; for otherwise there *would* already *be something determinate* (*ὠρισμένον*)” (*Met.* Γ 4 1008a 32-33, emphasis added)<sup>38</sup>, the skeptics say “why ‘yes’ and why ‘no’ and why the very ‘why’ itself”<sup>39</sup>, and voice their absence of answers by claiming speechlessness, absence of assertions<sup>40</sup>; reversing thus the imagery of a tongue-tied dogmatist impaired for what he posits, into a description of a state (*πάθος*) skeptic finds himself in with regard to the investigated (*PH I*

<sup>34</sup> I.e. posits as real the juxtaposed in Sextus’ ‘no more’.

<sup>35</sup> As DeLacy notes, it was not uncommon to use the phrase “to indicate that a philosopher has failed to make his case as opposed to some alternative view”, cf. DeLacy, “*οὐ μᾶλλον* and the Antecedents,” 63, n. 1

<sup>36</sup> At *DL IX* 76 Timon is portrayed as taking ‘no more’ to stand for “absence of all determination and withholding of assent”

<sup>37</sup> Cf Aristotle, *Met.* Γ 4 1007b 27; further on congeniality of Aristotle’s charge and skeptics’ approach to *ἀφασία* in DeLacy, “*οὐ μᾶλλον* and the Antecedents,” 64, and in A.A. Long, “Aristotle and the history of Greek skepticism,” in *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, ed. A. A. Long (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 54 (reprinted from *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. D.J. O’Meara (Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 79-106).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Aristocles *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* XIV 18 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> On Timon, Aristocles *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* XIV 18 7.

<sup>40</sup> On Timon, Aristocles *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* XIV 18 4.

193), a state which admits of neither positing nor rejecting<sup>41</sup> (at that point in time)<sup>42</sup>. The formula *οὐ μᾶλλον*, as Sextus notes, is used as a question, and also stands for “I do not know which of these things I should assent to and which not assent to” (*PH I* 191). The absence of answers voiced as personally experienced further serves to guard the skeptics from being understood as asserting something, and the same guard is, much like along-with-self-cancellation, to be observed in all their utterances (which admittedly gives them the form of misuse, imprecise use of language)<sup>43</sup>. In this manner the treatment of their utterances as a mere vocal announcing of their *πάθος* complements the along-with-self-cancellation in revealing that the question posed is not to be taken as an answer in its own right.

To notice that the questions skeptics expose easily mask themselves as answers, it is illuminating to observe some of the interpretative difficulties<sup>44</sup> regarding stances of older skeptics. In Photius’ report on Aenesidemus, differentiation between Pyrrhonists and dogmatic Academy proceeds in the following manner (Photius, *Bibl.* 212.169 b36-170a11):

He says that the Academics are dogmatic: they posit some things with confidence and deny others without ambiguity, while the Pyrrhonists are aporetic and free from all dogma: (1) not one of them has said either that all things are apprehensible or that they are non-apprehensible, (2) but that they are no more of one kind than the other, or that they are sometimes of this kind and sometimes not, or that for one person they are of this kind, but not for another person, and for yet another not even existent at all. (1\*) Nor do they say that all things in general, or some things, are accessible to us, or not accessible to us, but (2\*) that they are no more accessible than not, or that they are sometimes accessible to us and sometimes not, or that they are accessible to one person but not to another. (1\*\*) Nor indeed do they say that there is true or false, convincing or unconvincing, existent or non-existent. (2\*\*) But the same thing is, as it might be said, no more true than false, convincing than unconvincing, existent than non-existent; or sometimes the one, and sometimes the other; or of such a kind for one person, but not for another.

In disavowal of claims (1) the absence of answers is apparent. Once in ‘answer-like’ terms (2), the question is elusive, and one seeking to interpret the claims is left to ponder whether or not commitment to these claims was implied. If commitment is implied, the line separating skepticism from dogmatism is dimmed; if it is not implied the phrases are meant to express the dialectical tension detected (i.e. unveiling of *ἀπορία*). It seems more charitable to suppose

<sup>41</sup> Sextus makes sure to outline that Pyrrhonists’ non-assertion (*ἀφασία*), is “refraining from assertion in general sense” (*PH I* 192); cf. Photius, *Bibl.* 169 b30, yet Photius couples this with what seems to be an ascription of metadogmatic view to Aenesidemus (see above).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *PH I* 198-9 on indeterminacy as ‘*πάθος διανοίας*’.

<sup>43</sup> On indifferent (*ἀδιαφόρως*) and imprecise (*καταχρηστικῶς*) use of phrases, cf. Burnyeat, “The sceptic in his place and time,” 104-5, n. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Presumably this might be a source of Photius’ confusion at *Bibl.* 169 b21-30, namely, the conflation of metadogmatism with the ‘no more’ phrase.

the latter, as in continuation the passage reads that Pyrrhonists determine absolutely nothing, not even this very claim (Photius, *Bibl.* 212. 170a11-14, quoted above). It seems more charitable, yet the answer-like interpretation lies readily at hand. Presumably, this was the impetus for skeptics to go at great lengths in outlining how their utterances should be taken<sup>45</sup>.

In light of Pyrrhonists' treatment of their answerless and therefore continued inquiry, it remains to be seen what light it sheds on Academics' reflexive treatment of ἀκαταληψία phrase. Second order statement, if taken as openness to self-application congenial to Pyrrhonists' later treatment of skeptical phrases, is far removed from being the affirmation of the thesis that Sextus accused them of. More importantly, Sextus' outline and observance of evasiveness in Aenesidemus' approach reveal that utterances of 'skeptics', observed absent the context, easily turn from the form of question into an assertion (affirmation and negation alike). In debates Arcesilaus countered doctrines regarding apprehension and knowledge of Stoic making<sup>46</sup>, and Carneades followed, presumably arguing at a broader front, as Sextus (for one) suggests he countered "everyone before him" (*M VII 159*)<sup>47</sup>. Though their approach, much like that of the Pyrrhonist, has been likened to the approach of those who *denied* all knowledge and posited indeterminacy<sup>48</sup>, the way that their debates are presented to have progressed allows a somewhat different reading<sup>49</sup>. Both Arcesilaus<sup>50</sup> and Carneades<sup>51</sup> are portrayed to have argued toward both (opposing) sides in debates, and "when equally weighty reasons were found" (*Acad. I 45*), they cured against the rashness of assent from either side<sup>52</sup>. Thus, though bringing about confusion<sup>53</sup>, one could hardly claim (with certainty) that they

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<sup>45</sup> As this is not the place to further analyze the difficulty pertaining to interpretation of Aenesidemus' stance, or relativism implied, Woodruff, "Aporetic Pyrrhonism," 158ff offers an account of him as relativist; Malcolm Schofield, "Aenesidemus: Pyrrhonist and 'Heraclitean'," in *Pyrrhonists, Patricians, Platonizers*, ed. Anna Maria Iappolo and David Sedley (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2007), 269-339, offers an account of Aenesidemus as Pyrrhonian in Sextus' manner (additional references are available in section three of Part I in this study, below).

<sup>46</sup> On Arcesilaus as engaging in a dialectical battle against Zeno cf. *Acad. I 44, II 16*; Sextus also gives a portrayal of Arcesilaus as simply countering the Stoics in *M VII 153*.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Acad. I 46, DL IV 62*, on Carneades being acquainted with a every area of philosophy.

<sup>48</sup> *Acad. I 44, II 73-74*.

<sup>49</sup> For Academics complaining against the dogma that 'everything is uncertain' being ascribed to them, cf. *Acad. II 32*.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Cic. *De Fin.* V 10, *De Or.* III 80; Num. *apud Eus., Praep. Evang.* XIV 6 1; *DL IV 28*; presumably Chrysippus remarks were also on Arcesilaus, as reported in Plutarch, *De Stoic.* 1035 F-1037B.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Cic. *De Or.*, III 80; Num. *apud Eus., Praep. Evang.* XIV 8 1, 7; Lactantius, *Divine institutes* V.14.3-5, *Epitome* 50.8 (LS 68 M).

<sup>52</sup> *Acad. I 45* (Arcesilaus), II 108 (Carneades).

<sup>53</sup> Plutarch, *De Comm.* 1077C (reporting Stoics' charge).

sought to assert a belief which would tip the scales, as after all, it was admittedly not their practice to “give revelations” (*Acad.* II 60).

Furthermore, as we (later) find Sextus claiming that skeptic’s arguments are like a ladder to overturn after climbing it, we find reports that Academics welcomed self-cancellation in which their own arguments would devour themselves. In upsetting “his argument in many more ways that he had constructed it”<sup>54</sup>, Arcesilaus was portrayed as a hydra cutting himself, and Carneades in his argumentation is reported to have picturesquely described dialectics as destroying itself, “like Penelope unweaving her web” (*Acad.* II 95), or “polypus eating its tentacles” (Plutarch, *De Comm.* 1059e). If anything, the treatment of the arguments by Academics can serve to further stress how Pyrrhonists’ unveiling of being-perplexed is far from having no effect on that which underwent the investigation. The self-cancellation is in their piecemeal approach, even more transparently unraveled as a consequence and an issue of the dogmatists’ framework<sup>55</sup>. They argued in Socratic manner<sup>56</sup>, and thus needed not commit themselves to any views on the topic discussed, as pointing out that their Stoic opponents were unable to resolve a contradiction that they involve themselves in by putting forth a thesis, did not even require them to endorse the rules of logic applied in the arguments, nor the conclusion deriving from them. All that was needed was acceptance of the premises, and the form of arguments, by their Stoic opponent. The (self-applying) conclusion would then also be the burden for the opponents (advancing the opposite) to bear. Moreover, the very self-application of the thesis frequently appears in form of a counterclaim, when their opponents claimed otherwise (*Acad.* II 28, 109). Thus, if there is a difference at the close of arguments which can be located in reports on these two traditions, at least as far as Arcesilaus and Carneades are concerned, it seems not to be the difference between ‘openness to the question’ and the ‘assent to the negative thesis’.

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Numenius *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* XIV 6 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> In Cic. *Acad.* II 92-98 through a reply to objection that *sorites* is erroneous, and an outline of *Liar* paradox, dialectics is portrayed as Penelope unweaving her web, and the question posed was “is your school to blame for that or ours” (Cic. *Acad.* II 95); in Cic. *Acad.* II 98 this is stressed again as Carneades is reported to have said “If my conclusion is correct, I keep to it, if it is faulty Diogenes will have to pay me back a mina”; in Plutarch, *De Comm.* 1059 d-e, Chrysippus’ logic is to blame for such self-destruction, its “foundations (...) are shaken with so many doubts and troubles”, leaving the superstructure equally unsteady.

<sup>56</sup> On Arcesilaus reviving the method of Socrates, cf. Cic. *De Fin.* II 2; For Socratic method of Academics, cf. Couissin, “The Stoicism of the New Academy,” 39; Michael Frede, “Stoics and Skeptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 87; *contra* Anna Maria Ioppolo, *Opinione e Scienza*, Elenchos, vol. 12 (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1986), 36; R.J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics* (London: Routledge, 1995), 76.

Such congeniality in not settling for an answer easily explains how the titles Pyrrhonists tried to reserve for their own approach came to be used to refer to Academics as well. The evasiveness of questions exposed in such a manner makes clear why Sextus failed to convince all that Pyrrhonists' phrase 'πάντα ἐστὶν ἀκατάληπτα'<sup>57</sup> is different than negative dogmatism he ascribed to Academy, and how Aenesidemus in claiming more consistency for Pyrrhonist's ἀπορία could come to be understood as dogmatic as well. If authentic skepticism is distinguished by revealing an open question, a persisting 'state of puzzlement', doubt, continued inquiry, it seems that this open question easily masks itself into an answer and cannot be properly observed absent the context of inquiry conducted. Both traditions in arguing toward a negative thesis, discarded the *affirmation* of it as being as rash and disgraceful as an affirmation of its opposite. As context proves to be crucial for understanding the questions posed, it remains to be seen how the 'phantom' affirmation of the thesis 'nothing can be known' can come to be ascribed and understood as the conclusion of skeptical arguments. The task of delineation therefore needs to proceed with a more detailed examination of the context of investigations conducted by the traditions which regarded themselves as answerless.

### *Samples of Academics' inquiries*

The elusiveness of the open question in authentic inquiries, as noted, requires for the doubt professed by both traditions to be further investigated in an effort of delineation of 'skepticism' properly so called. At this point with an eye toward what precedes it, namely, the content of the steps leading to absence of assertions (suspension of judgment). Academic skeptics' practice, as noted, was to argue from the premises accepted by their opponents and to unveil the irresolvable inconsistencies and contradictories implicit in theses advocated. Thus to understand their treatment of ἀκαταληψία one needs to understand Stoic treatment of κατάληψις, as even Sextus suggests when not in a hostile mode of delienation between the two traditions (*M* VII 150, 153). The summary of Arcesilaus' arguments against Zeno's conception of κατάληψις<sup>58</sup> that we find outlined by Sextus could hardly be understood as other

<sup>57</sup> *PH* I 200 – Sextus' explanation in this passage will be further elaborated shortly, following the brief outline of skeptical arguments.

<sup>58</sup> Literally 'grasp' (Cicero conveys this literal meaning by '*comprehensio*', cf. *Acad.* II 17) translated as 'apprehension' and 'cognition' (Cicero also renders it as '*cognitio*' or, again grasp-conveying '*perceptio*', *ibid.*). In what follows I will for most part use the first rendering (as it conveys the 'grasp' more transparently); and *καταληπτική φαντασία*, assent to which is 'apprehension' will be rendered by 'apprehensive' or 'cognitive' *impression* (Cicero's *visum*, *Acad.* I 41). Commonly it is translated as 'apprehensive appearance', 'apprehensive presentation', 'cognitive impression', 'cataleptic



than a *reductio* of Stoic position<sup>59</sup> (M VII 150-157). It will prove useful to observe the passage in full up to the claim regarding *ἀκαταληψία* (M VII 150-155)<sup>60</sup>:

(150) Arcesilaus and his circle did not, as their main goal, define any criterion; those of them who are thought to have defined one delivered this by way of hostile response against the Stoics. (151) For the Stoics say that there are three interconnected things: knowledge, opinion, and the one positioned between these, apprehension. Of these knowledge is apprehension that is unshaken and firm and immutable by reason, opinion is weak and false assent, and apprehension is the one between these, namely assent to an apprehensive impression. (152) And according to them, an apprehensive impression is one that is true and such as could not be false. Of these, knowledge subsist only in the wise, opinion only in the inferior, and apprehension is common to both; and this is the criterion of truth. (153) That is what the Stoics say, and Arcesilaus rebutted them by showing that apprehension is no criterion between knowledge and opinion. For what they call apprehension, and assent to an apprehensive impression, takes place either in a wise person or an inferior person. But if it takes place in a wise person it is knowledge, and if in an inferior person it is opinion, and beyond these nothing has been substituted other than a mere name. (154) And if apprehension is assent to an apprehensive impression, it is unreal, first because assent takes place not toward impression but toward speech (for assents are to propositions), and second because no true impression is found to be such as could not be false, as is witnessed by many diverse cases. (155) But if there is no apprehensive impression, apprehension will not take place either; for it was assent to apprehensive impression. But if there is no apprehension, everything will be inapprehensible. And if everything is inapprehensible it will follow even according to the Stoics that the wise person suspends judgment.

Arcesilaus' first argument (153), as reported, suggests that Zeno's outline of *κατάληψις* as set between knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) and opinion (*δόξα*), robs itself (151,152) of content, and is revealed as peculiarly empty, a "mere word". If on Stoic terms the appropriate grasp of the wise is knowledge, and the lacking grasp of the inferior is opinion, Arcesilaus puts to question

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impression'; yet the latter translations seems to convey the passivity of Stoic *φαντασία* (in contrast with active assent) more clearly, and circumvent the interpretation which would limit 'cognition' exclusively to 'perceptual cognition'; cf. Michael Frede, "Stoic epistemology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 298ff, who uses 'cognitive impressions' rendering.

<sup>59</sup> This seems to be granted even by some who counter the understanding of Academics as arguing purely in Socratic manner (cf. Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 75,79). Ioppolo treats *one* of the premises as accepted by Arcesilaus himself – that the wise man will not opine (*Opinione e Scienza*, 133) – to ascribe assertion of suspension of judgment to Academics; Maconi (in criticizing Ioppolo that as such it can still not be taken as an argument casted *in propria persona* seeks to show that *ἀκαταληψία* too can be interpreted as something Arcesilaus would himself subscribe to) suggests that "although in form the argument is a *reductio* (...) none the less in content the argument is not *ad hominem*", cf. Henry Maconi, "Nova Non Philosophandi Philosophia," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* vol. VI, ed. Julia Annas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 247.

<sup>60</sup> Translation modified (as announced) from Richard Bett, ed. and trans. *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Unless otherwise noted, this translation is used for the noted work, throughout the study.

apprehension as intermediate, the void especially clear if observed from the end of the wise person; the sting on that end being that the (appropriate) grasp of the wise, on Stoic terms, already constitutes knowledge<sup>61</sup> (while, on the other end, for the inferior, knowledge is unattainable). The second argument (154) equally does away with apprehension, in juxtaposing it taken as ‘assent to apprehensive, cognitive impression (*καταληπτικῆς φαντασίας συγκατάθεσις*)’, to the notion that ‘assent takes place toward speech, not toward impression’. Though the preceding passages do not list the latter notion as something Zeno subscribed to, *ad hominem* character of the outline, coupled with an insight that later Stoics seem to have advanced that this was the province of affirmation and negation, assent or denial (*DL VII 65*, on Chrysippus), arguably allows for such an assumption<sup>62</sup>. If so, the argument again unveils an inconsistency in the doctrines of Stoics. The third argument (154) contests the notion of cognitive impression as ‘one that is true and such as could not be false’ (152) as something that can be found, and here the condensed description of the opposite being “witnessed by many diverse cases” stands for the counterexamples almost taunting the Stoics to produce one example which cannot be similarly put to question. The counter-cases are the ‘indiscernibilities’ (*ἀπαράλλαξιαις*) by which Academics, as Stoics would say, ‘confuse everything’<sup>63</sup>.

Thus it might serve well for the next sample of Academic inquiries to be the one outlining the diverse counter-cases which put to question the criterion of *καταληπτικῆ φαντασία*, clear and distinct impressions as the basis for attaining knowledge. First, a brief outline of the Stoic account will do. On Stoic account, cognitive impression<sup>64</sup> (D1) arises from what is (*ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος*)<sup>65</sup>, (D2) is imprinted and stamped<sup>66</sup> exactly in accordance with what is, and (D3) is such that would not arise from what is not<sup>67</sup>. Cognitive impressions are thus always true (cf. *M VII 152* above), and by assenting solely to these impressions, one

<sup>61</sup> Zeno’s answer would presumably be that “knowledge proper is holistic”, cf. Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 74.

<sup>62</sup> Alternatively/additionally, one could supply evidence to the effect that it was a notion advanced by others at the time, cf. Couissin, “The Stoicism of the New Academy,” 33, n. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Plutarch, *De Comm.* 1077C, also noted above.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *PH II 4*; *M VII 248, 252, 258*; *DL VII 54, 46*.

<sup>65</sup> Some interpreters tend to treat this as though it refers to a real object, some as a ‘fact’, i.e. impression that ‘S is P’ is cataleptic if it has origin in the fact S is P. For the latter evidence can be found in Cic. *Acad.* II 112, *M VII 402ff*, VIII 85-6; for the former in *M VII 249-52*. As it is not crucial to resolve ambiguities of Stoics’ account here, see Michael Frede, “Stoic epistemology,” 302ff, or Frede, “Stoics and Sceptics,” 79ff.

<sup>66</sup> For a more detailed account of the Stoic notion of impressions as passive affections of the mind, contrasted with active assent, see e.g. Frede, “Stoic epistemology,” 301ff.

<sup>67</sup> This last condition was added in response to Arcesilaus’ arguments (Cic. *Acad.* II 77, *M VII 252*), though it should be noted that it was already implied by the first two conditions.

apprehends what is, the way it is<sup>68</sup>. Incognitive impressions may be true as well<sup>69</sup>, but they just as well may not be, that is why, on Stoic account, one should withhold assent when these are in question. As for the clear<sup>70</sup> cognitive impression, “mind cannot refrain from giving approval” (Cic. *Acad.* II 38) to such an impression; it (D4) “draws us to assent, needing nothing else to strike us in this way or suggest its difference from the others” (*M VII* 257). Argument against cognitive impressions from Academics, as Cicero reports (*Acad.* II 83)<sup>71</sup> is fourfold, starting with three premises that Stoics accept, namely that:

- (1) There are false impressions<sup>72</sup>.
- (2) False impressions cannot be perceived [i.e. are not cognitive].
- (3) Of impressions between which there is no difference it is impossible for some to be perceived and others not [i.e. for some to be cognitive and others not].

In addition to these premises, granted by the Stoics, they add premise they argued for, that:

- (4) There is no true impression (originating from sensation) with which there is not ranged another impression that precisely corresponds to it [or, at least, which cannot be distinguished apart]<sup>73</sup> and that cannot be perceived [i.e. is not cognitive]<sup>74</sup>.

The four premises thus bring about the conclusion which does away with Stoics’ criterion:

- (5) Therefore, there is no impression that can be perceived [i.e. is cognitive].

Though Stoics would solely disagree with the fourth premise, Academics provided cases which would corroborate the first premise as well<sup>75</sup>. We can find references to the sets of examples (counter-cases to the opposite claims) provided by Academics for both the first and

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<sup>68</sup> This is the trait of a 'wise man', and it should be noted that none of the Stoics claimed it for themselves.

<sup>69</sup> I.e. non-apprehensive impression (*DL VII* 46, Zeno) is defined as “that which does not proceed from any real object, or, if it does, fails to agree with the reality itself, not being clear or distinct”, and those fitting the latter description may be accidentally true.

<sup>70</sup> See below for the proviso of later Stoics, added to cognitive impression as a criterion.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Cic. *Acad.* II 40-41.

<sup>72</sup> At *Acad.* II 41 it is suggested that Academics ‘defended’ this first premise at length as well; if so, it was defended from Epicureans, not Stoics; as noted later (*Acad.* II 83) Epicurus disputed this, but Stoics accept it.

<sup>73</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 40, 85.

<sup>74</sup> This is argued for in Cic. *Acad.* II 40, 41, 42, 44, 84, 90; also Sextus in *M VII* 154, 164, 252, 402 415, 438.

<sup>75</sup> The sorites-like slide from ‘some impressions are false’ (in Cic. *Acad.* II 48) makes it clear why they would seek to support the first premise, but there is an additional reason – by placing sense perception credibility under question, they can argue toward the claim that “no impression exists without an obstacle” (cf. *M VII* 425, Cic. *Acad.* II 81) to counter suggestion made by later Stoics that cognitive impression “is not a criterion universally, but when no obstacle is present” (cf. *M VII* 253, 424). ‘No obstacle’ stands for the five things that should all be present, the object of the sense, the organ, the place, the manner and the intellect (cf. *M VII* 424).

the fourth premise in preceding and succeeding philosophical accounts alike, thus one can safely say that the life span of the arguments greatly surpasses Hellenistic period<sup>76</sup>.

The cases in which senses fool one due to unfavorable conditions of perception, like light, distances or position<sup>77</sup> seem to have been quite common in debates preceding Academics<sup>78</sup>, and the Academics use these to expose the fallibility of the senses<sup>79</sup>. The Stoics, as noted, granted that there are false impressions, so to appreciate such an exposition of the argument by Academics is to take notice of Stoics' outline of their criterion in full awareness of these difficulties, to the effect that perception should not be set aside as a source to knowledge (cf. *M VII 260*), providing that the criteria of cognitive impressions are met. The fourth premise argued for by the Academics, or more precisely the examples Academics provide in support of it, put to question the distinguishability and distinctness of cognitive impressions, as Stoics understood them.

Thus these examples can be observed as countering the Stoic definition of cognitive impressions as outlined above, as questions regarding their unmistakable mark (*Cic. Acad. II 71*), mode of distinction or recognition (*Cic. Acad. II 85-6*). With this in mind, the sting of counter-argumentation building on examples of hardly distinguishable impressions of eggs, twins, seals, statues, bees, and the like<sup>80</sup>, is easily observable. If one mistakes such an object (person) for another, say a twin for a twin, the impression the person has comes from what is (D1 in Stoic definition), and is imprinted and stamped exactly in accordance to what is (D2), yet it is false. In such instances the false (incognitive) impression has the same character as the true (cognitive) one (*Cic. Acad. II 84*). Simply put (*Sextus, M VII 409*):

In the case of things that are alike in shape, but that differ in terms of what is underlying, it is impossible to distinguish the cognitive impression from the false and incognitive one.

The counterexamples thus presented cannot be invalidated by pointing out that no two objects or persons are the same in all respects (*Cic. Acad. II 85*):

For it makes no difference to the point at issue whether an object completely within sight does not differ at all from another or cannot be distinguished from it even if it does differ.

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<sup>76</sup> For the purpose of this study, it is convenient to point out those that Descartes gave new vigor to.

<sup>77</sup> E.g. *Cic. Acad. II 19, 36, 79, 80, 81, 82*; cf. *M VII 411-14*.

<sup>78</sup> E.g. Plato *Rep.* 602CD, Aristotle *Met.* Γ 5 1010b 4-6.

<sup>79</sup> I.e. putting to question the truthfulness of a witness which seems to be "for reasons of his own giving false evidence" (*Cic. Acad. II 81-2*).

<sup>80</sup> *Cic. Acad. II 54-58, 84-86, M VII 409-10*.

Nor are the counterexamples invalidated if the Stoics argue that the false impression in such instances could be corrected. Namely, the point is that false impression, such that has the character of the true cognitive one, invalidates the criterion as conceived by the Stoics, in sharing its distinguishing mark. The set of examples of “mind’s self-originated motion” (Cic. *Acad.* II 48) like hallucinations<sup>81</sup> or dreams<sup>82</sup>, which also appeared in debates before<sup>83</sup>, and impressions sent by deities<sup>84</sup>, are used to point out that these are indistinguishable to the mind of the perceiver from the true impressions<sup>85</sup>, (again) at the time when they are perceived, as no difference is to be found in respect of mind’s assent (they attract to assent equally, cf. *M VII* 403-7), further evidenced as they equally bring about corresponding actions (*ibid.*). Examples of this kind thus further put to question the distinctness, the distinguishability of cognitive impressions as defined by the Stoics, in outlining the false impressions of the cognitive impression character. Once again the recollection of those who underwent such a state, the subsequent review of it, does not fend off the undesired consequence of the criterion being put to question; as the “moment the experience has taken place” (Cic. *Acad.* II 90) is the point in which indistinguishability of incognitive impression from the cognitive one is revealed.

To understand the complexities of the counterexamples Academics presented to the Stoic criterion is to further appreciate the logical form these tend to appear in<sup>86</sup>, or paradoxes these make use of<sup>87</sup>. While early Stoics encouraged the study of dialectics, as they deemed it capable of solving sophisms<sup>88</sup>, Academics pointed to further support for indistinguishability in this Stoic “distinguisher between truth and falsehood” (Cic. *Acad.* II 91)<sup>89</sup>. It is not surprising that *sorites* was a common weapon of choice of Academics, as it works from

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<sup>81</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 48, 88, 89 (madness); cf. *M VII* 254-6, 405-7.

<sup>82</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 48, 52, 88.

<sup>83</sup> Plato, *Theaet.* 157 E 158 B-C (dreams), 158 D (illness and madness); Aristotle, *Met.* Γ 4 1010b 8-11, Γ 6 1011a7; in *PH I* 218-219 and *M VII* 61-64 Sextus attributes the use of these examples to Protagoras.

<sup>84</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 47, 48.

<sup>85</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 47, 90.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Cic. *Acad.* II 49 (deity-sent dreams in form of *sorites*).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *M VII* 410 (veiled argument associated with the example of twins); *M VII* 415 (*sorites* which some assume might have been used by Arcesilaus, cf. Jonathan Barnes, “Medicine, experience and logic,” in *Science and Speculation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Jacques Brunschwig, Myles Burnyeat and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), n. 54.

<sup>88</sup> Plutarch, *De Stoic.* 1034 E (on Zeno).

<sup>89</sup> Sedley suggests that arguments precede Chrysippus, cf. “Diodorus Chronus and Hellenistic Philosophy” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 23 (1977), 91ff, n. 100, 101; Barnes also provides arguments for the possibility that Arcesilaus’ use of *sorites* served as additional impetus for Chrysippus’ extensive dealings with paradoxes, cf. Jonathan Barnes, “Medicine, experience and logic,” 43ff.

indistinguishability, or, in other words, in *sorites* “the last cognitive impression lies next to the first incognitive one, and is just about impossible to distinguish from it” (Sextus, *M VII* 416). *Sorites* is still well known for its ensuing bit by bit procedure<sup>90</sup>, in which, through small additions or withdrawals, one is brought to a counterintuitive conclusion. Its form may be portrayed as follows<sup>91</sup>:

$$\begin{array}{l} Fa_1 \\ Fa_1 \rightarrow Fa_2 \\ Fa_2 \rightarrow Fa_3 \\ \vdots \\ Fa_{n-1} \rightarrow Fa_n \\ \hline \therefore Fa_n \end{array}$$

where  $\langle a_1, a_2, a_3, \dots, a_n \rangle$  is an ordered group of subjects, and  $F$  such a predicate that it is apparently true of  $a_1$ , apparently false of  $a_n$ , while every  $a_i$  is, with respect to  $F$ , apparently indistinguishable from the adjoining  $a_{i-1}$  and  $a_{i+1}$ . Although *sorites*, as well as other paradoxes dealt with by Stoics<sup>92</sup>, and used by Academics, seem to have been passed on from Eubulides to both traditions alike through the same source, Diodorus Chronus<sup>93</sup>, it seems at least likely that the part paradoxes played in the exchanges between these traditions inspired the extensive efforts toward their resolution in later Stoa<sup>94</sup>.

The reports on the exchange in instances in which Academics put dialectics’ powers to the test, in line with the very context of debate (and common at that time), suggest that argument was presented in its interrogative form. This would put Stoic into a position of

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<sup>90</sup> The name originates from Greek word *σωρός* meaning ‘heap’, reflecting the content of the argument in its original form (grains of wheat/heap puzzle):

- (i) one grain of wheat does not make a heap
- (ii) if one grain of wheat does not make a heap than two grains of wheat do not
- (iii) if two grains of wheat do not make a heap than three grains of wheat do not

...

(n) if 9999 grains of wheat do not make a heap than 10 000 grains of wheat do not

(c) 10,000 grains of wheat do not make a heap

The argument can be formulated in reverse as well, with minute ‘little-by-little’ withdrawals (cf. Cic. Acad. II 49).

<sup>91</sup> For the form, see Barnes “Medicine, experience and logic,” 30; what follows fits his description of the class of *soritical* predicates (op.cit., 31); Burnyeat’s suggestion is narrower – that a quantitative notion is implied (he further suggests that Chrysippus understood it as such); cf. Myles Burnyeat, “Gods and heaps,” in *Language and Logos*, ed. Malcolm Schofield and Martha Craven Nussbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 322ff, 338.

<sup>92</sup> Sedley further suggests that it shaped their doctrines, cf. David Sedley, “Diodorus Chronus,” 93ff.

<sup>93</sup> At *DL II* 108 attributed to logician Eubulides of Miletus one finds the following list of paradoxes: The Liar, The Disguised, Electra, The Veiled Figure, The Sorites, The Horned One, and The Bald Head. The Bold Man, the last puzzle on the list, as it employs the same procedure, is also titled *sorites* argument; for the role of Diodorus, cf. David Sedley, “Diodorus Chronus,” 78ff.

<sup>94</sup> Apparent in the titles of the works of Chrysippus, head of Stoa c. 232-206 BCE, listed at *DL VII* 192,197-8

being asked whether two is few or many<sup>95</sup>, and the slippery slope argument would begin. Namely, due to acceptance of the principle of bivalence, and rules of inference applied, Stoics seem to have been bound to accept the argument form as valid; after all, reports suggest that they themselves used little-by-little argument form in other contexts<sup>96</sup>. Stoics' (only) way out of the *sorites* conundrum, if they wanted to preserve their principles and rules, thus seems to have been to accept at least one of the premises in the series to be false. Their strategy in *sorites* questioning was *ἡσυχάζειν*<sup>97</sup>, to keep quiet and refuse to answer at one point in the progression of questioning “in order not to fall into absurdity” (*PH* II 253). As this seems to amount to suspension of assent, either in instances where the difference between the cognitive impression and the incognitive one is small (as suggested in *M* VII 416)<sup>98</sup> or “a little bit before one reaches many” (as suggested in *Cic. Acad.* II 93), Academics treated Stoics' strategy of *ἡσυχάζειν* as an admission of defeat, i.e. an admission of indistinguishability (*ibid.*):

So far as I am concerned, says Carneades, you may not only rest but even snore; but what's the good of that? For next comes somebody bent on rousing you from slumber and carrying on the cross-examination. If I add one to the number at which you became silent, will that make it many? You will go forward again as far as you think fit. Why say more? For you admit my point, that you cannot specify in your answers either the place where 'a few' stops or that where 'many' begins; and this class of error spreads so widely that I don't see where it may not get to.

For a more charitable understanding of Stoic strategy, one can look to the reports on Stoic treatment of *sorites* which suggest a weak Philonian reading of the conditional propositions<sup>99</sup>, and not a strong Stoic *συνάρτησις*<sup>100</sup> reading (*DL* VII 82):

<sup>95</sup> E.g. *Cic. Acad.* II 93; on yet another Carneades' use of *sorites* to question Stoic conception of Gods cf. *M* IX 182-190, *ND* III 43-52.

<sup>96</sup> A sample is available in *ND* II 164-166.

<sup>97</sup> Chrysippus is reported to have advocated it, cf. *Cic. Acad.* II 94, *PH* II 253, *M* VII 416.

<sup>98</sup> Sextus there suggests that the strategy was described for 'the wise man,' it seems more charitable though to take it as advice for the Stoics engaged in the debate (as will be suggested in the above text). Probably, Stoics would have held that the 'wise man' is able, 'through practice', to withhold assent precisely when it should be withheld, just as they propose he could distinguish in perceptual examples Academics supplied (cf. *Cic. Acad.* II 20, 56-8, 86).

<sup>99</sup> In *PH* II 110, *M* VIII 113, truth function definition provided by Philo, pupil of Diodorus Chronus, in which a conditional is true *iff* it is not the case that antecedent is true, and consequent is false (i.e. modern material implication).

<sup>100</sup> 'Connectedness,' cf. *PH* II 111 – usually associated with Chrysippus (cf. *DL* VII 73, *Cic. Fat.* VI 12). On this reading the conditional proposition is true *iff* the opposite of the consequent conflicts (*μάχεται*) with the antecedent. Mates takes it to be a forerunner to C.I. Lewis' strict implication, Barnes suggests it as anticipating relevance logic; cf. Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 47-51; Jonathan Barnes, "Proof Destroyed" in *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, ed. Malcolm Schofield, Myles Burnyeat and Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 169-173.

It is not the case that two are few and three are not also, it is not the case that these are and four are not also, and so up to ten: but two are few: therefore ten are also.

The stronger reading of the conditional would suggest that  $a_{i+1}$  is  $F$ , because  $a_i$  is  $F$ <sup>101</sup>, and it has been suggested recently that the choice of reading “records a decision to fight the battle on the field of epistemology rather than as an issue of logic and the philosophy of language”. Thus the strategy of keeping quiet, presumably until one takes an amount to be unmistakably many, could serve the Stoics to point out that somewhere along the line cut-off point exists where the predicate ceases to be applicable, i.e. to put to question the principle ‘if  $F a_i$  then  $F a_{i+1}$ ’ which fuels the argument. It could be noted here that Stoic insistence on abrupt cut-off points and not gradual transitions in other areas of their thought also tends to be interpreted as inspired by *sorites*<sup>102</sup>.

Of course, the Academics would continue to question (see above) where the cut-off point in *sorites* was, i.e. how one is to know when to stop the questioning, and from the proximity of the last cognitive and first incognitive impression in the *sorites*, when the Stoics fall silent, and from all incognitive impressions being alike, in being false and incognitive, argue toward suspension of assent from indistinguishability<sup>103</sup>. Furthermore, the art of dialectics, they would suggest, does not help the Stoics in determining the last (or the first) false case. If the plain of inquiries has shifted in Stoic approach, Academics still would point out that dialectics is lacking, as it gives rise to the arguments, which it cannot constrain, and even further, fails to meet the promise to judge more than just itself (Cic. *Acad.* II 91)<sup>104</sup>. The use of paradoxes by Academics in targeting dialectics is in reports commonly complemented with a notice that the arguments proceed on rules and definitions accepted by the Stoics, much like other arguments employ premises, doctrines and definitions of Stoic making. In other words, it is conception of *κατάληψις* that yields *ἀκατάληψία*; it is from within voluntarist theory of assent that the withholding of assent is brought about. As previously noted, it is through their piecemeal approach of outlining the premises that their opponent accepted that their indifference to the self-destruction of arguments and dialectics is better understood. It further seems that their piecemeal approach to countered argumentation is how one ought to understand reports on their argumentation for opposing sides of the debate. The examined

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. Burnyeat, “Gods and heaps,” 323, the following claim is his (ibid., 324), as is the explication of what might have been the Stoic strategy (334ff); similar strategy was already suggested in Sedley, “Diodorus Chronus,” 91ff; for alternative suggestions, cf. Barnes, “Medicine, experience and logic,” 55ff.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Sedley, “Diodorus Chronus,” 93-4.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Cic. *Acad.* II 94; *M VII* 417-421.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Epictetus, *Discourses* I 1.4.



samples of inquiry suggest they countered the answers posited, and not revealed them; in claiming otherwise one would be ascribing to skilled dialecticians the opponent's theory in reverse. Their skills in dialectics were part of further argumentation for *ἰσοσθένεια* of opposed propositions, a recurrent theme in Pyrrhonists' argumentation, of which a sample follows.

### *Samples of Pyrrhonists' inquiries*

It was previously noted that the Pyrrhonists prided themselves in catching more prey with one argumentative net, taking this approach to display skillfulness, namely “to bring one's counterargument against all in common rather than develop it against particular tenets” (*M IX 3*). Thus when Sextus outlines of Pyrrhonists' arguments reach us in a systematized form, in sets of argumentative schemata leading to suspension of judgment, these are easily understood as (again) being kinds of encompassing nets they speak of. Though it would be illustrative to examine specific application of ways of introducing suspension of judgment<sup>105</sup> as well, for the samples from Pyrrhonist inquiries it seems better to choose from patterns they singled out as representative in description of their stance. Prior to outlining argumentative schemata used, Sextus provides a general description of the manner in which suspension of judgment comes about (*PH I 31*):

It comes about – to put it rather generally – through the opposition in things (*διὰ τῆς ἀντιθέσεως τῶν πραγμάτων*). We oppose what appears to what appears, or what is thought of to what is thought of, or crosswise.

He adds that they “sometimes oppose present things to present things (...) and sometimes present to past or future things” (*PH I 33*), the instances of such opposition being arguments propounded or to be propounded in the future, in opposition to the ones suggested and not yet countered (cf. *PH I 34*). Argumentative schemata he outlines, Sextus suggests (*PH I 35*), leave one with a more accurate impression of these oppositions.

*Ten tropes*. Ten tropes<sup>106</sup>, as Sextus reports, passed on by older skeptics<sup>107</sup>, point out the (1) variations among animals, (2) differences among humans, (3) differences in senses,

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<sup>105</sup> In the above text I interchangeably use two meanings of *τρόποι*, ‘argument pattern’, and simply ‘way’; elaboration available in Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, *Ten Modes of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 21.

<sup>106</sup> *PH I 36-163*; for the claim that the list of ten is not necessarily exhaustive see Annas and Barnes, *Modes of Scepticism*, 25; additional controversies regarding their number are outlined in Gisela Striker, “The Ten Tropes of Aenesidemus,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 96-7.

<sup>107</sup> cf. *PH I 36*; Sextus attributes these specifically to Aenesidemus at *M VII 345*; for an account that it is perhaps him who systematized existing arguments see Striker, “The Ten Tropes,” 95, Annas and Barnes, *Ten Modes*, 26; still, such an assignment of authorship might be problematic. For further

and (4) circumstances, differences depending on (5) positions intervals and places, (6) mixtures, (7) quantities, deriving from (8) relativity, (9) frequency of encounter, and (10) customs, lifestyles, and persuasions in general. Sextus groups the ten under three superordinate modes (at *PH I* 38-9), first deriving from the subject judging (1, 2, 3, 4), second deriving from the object judged (7, 10), and third from both subject and object combined (5, 6, 8, 9), which in turn all are to be subsumed under relativity, as the most general mode<sup>108</sup>.

All ten tropes work from variations in how things appear (*per* superordinate three, and subordinate ten tropes), and *ἰσοσθένεια* of appearances, “equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing (*τὴν κατὰ πίστιν καὶ ἀπιστίαν ἰσότητα*)” (*PH I* 10)<sup>109</sup>, leads to *ἐποχή* on how things *are*. Schematically portrayed<sup>110</sup> the tropes work in the following manner:

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references and discussion, see Filip Grgić, *Sekst Empirik: Obrisi pironizma* (Zagreb: Kruzak, 2008), 441.

<sup>108</sup> This division tends to be regarded as ‘artificial and puzzling’, cf. Annas and Barnes, *The Modes*, 25, Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 156; A somewhat different taxonomy is implied in *PH I* 136, cf. Annas and Barnes, *The Modes*, 142.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *PH I* 190, 196, 198, 202.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Annas and Barnes, *The Modes*, 25; Annas and Barnes suggest that the conclusion should read ‘we can neither affirm nor deny that *x* is really *F* or really *F\**’. I replace their suggestion with a notice Sextus uses throughout, for the reasons to be explicated. Hankinson (*The Sceptics*, 156) offers the following schema:

- (1) *x* appears *F* relative to *a*;
- (2) *x* appears *F\** relative to *b*;
- (3) at most one of the appearances of (1) and (2) can be true;
- (4) no decision procedure tells decisively either for (1) or (2);

so

- (5) we should suspend judgement as to what *x* is like in its real nature.

In his account, presumably, (3) the principle of non-contrariety is supposed to convey the opposition of accounts. Namely, Sextus notes in outlining the opposition (*PH I* 202), that Pyrrhonists take ‘opposed’ (*ἀντίκειται*) in the sense of ‘conflicting’ (*μάχεται*) (see also *PH I* 10, 190, 198). In Stoic terms “*σ* and *σ’* conflict if and only if, assuming that *σ’* holds, *σ* fails to hold because *σ’* holds” (Barnes, “Proof Destroyed,” 171, emphasis added), and Hankinson, by adding (3) seems to conflate the ‘conflict’ noted by Pyrrhonists to such a technical notion of conflict, which is not needed nor for most part implied in the workings of the ten modes, and is not something the Pyrrhonists would seem committed to. Namely, Sextus explicitly outlines in elaboration of the difference of ‘*οὐ μᾶλλον*’ expression as used by Democriteans and Sceptics, that while Democriteans use the expression to propound that neither *is* the case (e.g. honey is neither sweet nor bitter), ‘*οὐ μᾶλλον*’ is used by Sceptics to convey that they do not know whether something is *both* or *neither* (*PH I* 213, see above). If that is taken into account, what arguments seem to point out is that no decision procedure tells decisively whether (1) or (2) or both or neither is true (see above). In any case, it seems to be the rashness of dogmatists that presupposes (3) (making *PH I* 88 thus one of the *ad hominem* premises putting to question ‘is both’ as the nature of *x*), yet the modes primarily work from relativity. I take the schema offered by Annas and Barnes, to better convey the sting of the argument, as the focus is on undecidability and it doesn’t include the principle of non-contrariety, which is obsolete, if (III) holds.

- (I)  $x$  appears  $F$  in  $S$
- (II)  $x$  appears  $F^*$  in  $S^*$
- (III) we cannot prefer  $S$  to  $S^*$  and *vice versa*
- (IV) we are forced to suspend judgment as to whether  $x$  is really  $F$  or really  $F^*$

To understand how premises (I to III) lead to (IV) suspension of judgment with regard to the nature of  $x$  under debate, schematic portrayal should be complimented with a notice that ‘equality with regard to convincingness’ (III), which some would say is not always established in the specific tropes, seems to be a way for Pyrrhonists to voice that neither what appears in (I), nor what appears in (II), has been established as an (exclusive) answer without begging the question, yet both ‘pull’ to assent ‘equally’. A Pyrrhonist could just as well voice the conclusion by using the *οὐ μᾶλλον* formula, i.e. the conclusion could read ‘ $x$  is no more  $F$  than  $F^*$ ’, on the grammar of *οὐ μᾶλλον* as explicated above (i.e. as ‘no more’ itself). In other words, the conclusion is absence of conclusion, a Pyrrhonist “puzzles over (*ἀποροεῖν*)”; he ends up in the state of *ἐποσχῆ* (cf. *PH I* 7, 196).

The propositions chosen to portray the conflict in appearances are of *ad hominem* character. Namely, a Pyrrhonist need not hold the belief that we can conclude about the senses of animals in the first trope, it is solely important that dogmatists would agree with the premises in question, and for most part these propositions are taken from dogmatists’ accounts; where they are not explicitly such they seem to reflect the commonly held opinions (thus accepted by the dogmatists as well)<sup>111</sup>. In some instances the examples used are strikingly similar or exactly those reported as being used by Academics in the aforementioned arguments, e.g. in mode regarding differences in circumstances (4) there is a reference to difference between appearances in healthy states and unnatural states, and sleeping and waking experience, in mode regarding places and positions (5) bended oars, color of doves’ necks, appearance regarding motion of boats are reused<sup>112</sup>.

The differences in application of these examples are apparent from the manner in which the tropes work. In using the example of sleep and hallucinations we find Academics arguing for the purpose of pointing out that at the moment this experience is taking place, the mind of the person dreaming or hallucinating does not distinguish between these impressions and true ones, i.e. at the moment the incognitive impression exerts the same pull to assent as the cognitive does. Sextus takes it a step further, so to speak, as he points out, in grouping the

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<sup>111</sup>For a more elaborate account see Annas and Barnes, *The Modes*, 45 ff.

<sup>112</sup>For a similar note on the examples third mode dealing with differences in senses, see Annas and Barnes *The Modes*, 72 ff.

example with anomalies depending on circumstances of the perceiver (*PH I 104*), that one cannot prefer one circumstance to the other (being awake to dreaming, premise III)<sup>113</sup> in judgment<sup>114</sup>. Analogously, of positions, intervals and places which produce variations in appearances, in Pyrrhonists' argumentation none can be preferred to another (*PH I 121*). Academics' use of these examples in argumentation was twofold, to point out the fallibility of the senses, and to argue against obstacle-free impressions. Sextus' notice in the outline of the fifth trope is similar to the latter, namely, that "all apparent things are observed in some place and from some interval and in some position" (*ibid.*). If in Academics' use, as noted, these served to counter Stoic version of representative theory of perception, Sextus in concluding the fifth trope by bringing in the 'infinite regress' problem (*cf. PH I 121-123*) to those who seek to give proof for preference of one of the opposing impressions, sought to silence, it seems, a broader range of opposing philosophical accounts.

In fact, Sextus uses similar approach in conclusion of a number of the ten modes proposed by the older skeptics, by underlining how each attempt to give proof for one of the conflicting impression fails, leading into infinite regress or fallacy of circular reasoning<sup>115</sup>. For example, for the differences in circumstances, in arguing for undecidability (III) he first notes that one is always in some circumstance (condition) or another, which makes him part of the dispute (*PH I 112*), and, furthermore, "he will not be an unbiased judge of external existing objects because he will be contaminated by the conditions he is in" (*PH I 113*), in being inclined to assent to what is present and affects him as present<sup>116</sup>, and then further complements these notices by outlining how argumentation for one of the circumstances can lead to a vicious cycle (*PH I 117*). These complements Sextus adds seem not to have been a part of the original ten tropes<sup>117</sup>, and while this might be read to the effect that he himself feels some of the arguments used in the ten tropes might not seem compelling enough for suspension of judgment, the effort actually further discloses where the potency of the ten tropes lies. The importance of the outlined conflict in appearances (I, II in the scheme), is visible in the numerous examples Sextus lays out as part of the argumentation, and in the importance of the mode from relativity as explicitly noted by Sextus, as it is, in addition to

<sup>113</sup> Presumption is that we can tell the two experiences apart, yet cannot prefer one of them in judgment, with arguments for this (III) given at *PH I 112-117*.

<sup>114</sup> It should be noted here that Plato's reference in *Theaetetus* covers the same use as Academics', while Aristotle's in *Metaphysics* is in line with what Sextus outlines (namely, the use by Sextus is not new). On these as two steps in doubt see a comment on Galen in Annas and Barnes, *The Modes*, 86.

<sup>115</sup> *cf. PH I 60-61, 114-117, 121-123.*

<sup>116</sup> Annas and Barnes object to this line of argument, *cf. Annas and Barnes The Modes*, 87.

<sup>117</sup> For these and additional complements by Sextus, as well as the potential argumentation in place of these in the original account, see Striker, "The Ten Tropes," 100 ff.

being one of the modes, treated as the most general one. Yet this variability in appearances might very well be accepted by the dogmatists, after all, the examples, as noted, come either in form of something outlined by dogmatists themselves, or in form of something commonly accepted. It is the relativity coupled with undecidability that makes for the potency of the modes. This would seem to be the reason why, whether it was needed or not, Sextus felt the urge to use the additional argumentative tools available to him from the later skeptics to further ‘strengthen’ the sting of particular modes. Undecidability noted *is* undecidable dissention (ἀνεπίκριτος στάσις)<sup>118</sup> found among those who seek to argue to the effect that one of the appearances is to be preferred, and it triggers the continuation of inquiry. Undecidable disagreement in accounts and relativity are recurrent themes in Pyrrhonists’ tropes-nets. Both appear in the five tropes of later (more recent, *PH* I 164) skeptics, which will be outlined next. It remains to be noted that Sextus’ complement argumentative tools for the ten tropes come from these five, outlined as the tropes for every object of investigation (cf. *PH* I 169).

*Five tropes.* Sextus outlines the system of five tropes<sup>119</sup>, a more recent argumentative net of Pyrrhonists, in the following order (*PH* I 169):

first, the mode deriving from dispute; second, the mode throwing one back ad infinitum; third, the mode deriving from relativity; fourth, the hypothetical mode; fifth, the reciprocal mode.

<sup>118</sup> cf. *PH* I 88, 112, 114, 117 (ten modes); and further in *PH* I 165, 170, 178; While I follow Annas and Barnes translation in using ‘undecidable’ for ἀνεπίκριτος it needs to be stated that it could be translated as both (a) undecidable, unresolvable (incapable of resolution); (b) undecided, unresolved (currently). Hankinson (*The Sceptics*, 183) states that even though commentators prefer the modal reading, consistent skeptic cannot commit himself to claims about the future state of affairs. This interpretation seems in line with what Sextus seeks to convey, as he uses ἄχρι νῦν (up to now) qualification in a number of places (*PH* I 200, III 70, *M* VIII 177, 257, 401, 428), and when elaborating phrase about the opposition in accounts (*PH* I 202-204) he takes it to refer to ‘every account I have scrutinized’, or ‘investigated’. Additional references to the use of μέχρι δεῦρο (up to the present), μέχρι τοῦ νῦν (so far), ἀκμήν (still) are available in Diego E. Machuca, “The Pyrrhonian Argument from Possible Disagreement,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 93.2. (2011): 151, n.8. Yet, one needs to bear in mind, even though the skeptic is, on Sextus account, open to the possibility that matters of dispute might be resolved (and thus is not affirming ‘undecidability’ in this sense, even though it seems that the dogmatists might never agree, cf. *PH* II 37), that the *constitutive principle of skepticism* (*PH* I 12, i.e. to every account an equal account is opposed) serves as a warning for the skeptic not to stop investigating, and yield to the rashness of dogmatists (*PH* I 204-205). Thus, in that respect, the dispute seems continuous (i.e. undecidable), yet this will be discussed further in what follows. Grgić (*Obrisi pironizma*, 449) points to *M* VIII 322-325 as a possible source to the thesis that skeptics thought the dispute to be unresolvable in a finite sense, yet notes (n. 118 in II) that the piece of text too might be read as a dialectical attack on Epicurean thesis.

<sup>119</sup>At *DL* IX 88-89 attributed to Agrippa, and commonly referred to as ‘Modes of Agrippa’, or ‘Agrippa problem’, but as Hankinson (*The Sceptics*, 144) noted, for all we know this is just a “convenient speculation”. Barnes notes that perhaps the complex system of five was Sextus’ own invention; cf. Jonathan Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 114. We find infinite regress problem in *Theaet.* 209 D-210 B, *Met.* Γ 4 1006a 5-9, 6 1011a3-13, infinite regress, hypothetical and reciprocal trope, already in Aristotle, *APo.* I. 3 72b5-18.

The system of five tropes has been described as a curiosity, being complex and possessing “neither aesthetic elegance nor philosophic cohesion”<sup>120</sup>, while the order of the tropes Sextus outlines, although repeated in other sources (*DL IX 88-9*), has been depicted as lacking rationale<sup>121</sup>. Although elsewhere in extant Sextus’ opus the five tropes are never all employed together, it seems more charitable to assume that the general outline (*PH I 164-177*) and the order presented are supposed to reveal something of the nature of the workings of the tropes.

In the five tropes disagreement (*διαφωνία*) is listed as the first item on the list. Sextus’ outline is as follows (*PH I 165*):

According to the mode deriving from dispute, we find that undecidable dissension (*ἀνεπίκριτον στάσιν*) about the matter in question has come about both in ordinary life and among philosophers. Because of this we are not able to choose or to disqualify anything, and we end up with suspension of judgment.

It is easily noticeable that undecidability among the conflicting accounts is again undecidability of the form noted earlier in the outline of the ten tropes. Namely, if it amounts to inability “to choose or to disqualify,” it does so as no proposal in the dispute has been established as an (exclusive) answer, and all are of, so to speak, equal strength. Thus if a schematic portrayal is needed, the trope can be outlined as working in the following manner (providing that *p* and *q* address the same problem, i.e. the same “matter in question”):

- (1) *S*<sub>1</sub> affirms that *p*.
- (2) *S*<sub>2</sub> affirms that *q*.
- (3) The disagreement between *S*<sub>1</sub> and *S*<sub>2</sub> is undecidable.
- (4) No more *p* than *q*.

In the schema the premises (1) and (2) simply spell out the dispute, and the undecidability (3) is what steers toward (4) skeptics’ conclusion (or better, the absence of one) which could alternatively read ‘we suspend judgment’, or more precisely (in Sextus words from the quoted passage) ‘we end up in *ἐποχή*’. As in proposing one of the conflicting accounts (*p*, *q*) as an answer, as being the case, one implies that the other proposed account or accounts are not the

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<sup>120</sup> Barnes, *The Toils*, 114.

<sup>121</sup> cf. Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 182; namely, relativity (*πρός τι*), as it appears as the third mode out of five, has been treated as the ‘mystery of Agrippa’s problem’. Solution to be proposed assumes charitably that the system does not include an obsolete item, and that the order suggested in the outline does reveal the function of each trope. Alternative interpretations will be noted as well.

case<sup>122</sup>; the mode from disagreement is in a specific sense a challenge for the competing sides in dispute to provide dialectically effective reasons for their accounts (as it suggests such are missing). Namely, it does not seem likely that those in the dispute would simply agree with the (unresolved) dialectical tension revealed (in 3).

If one observes the trope from disagreement through the prism of the workings of the ten tropes of the earlier skeptics, disagreement among philosophers and in ordinary life may be taken as brought about by relativity. Once in dispute, Sextus suggests in the context of the ten tropes, at best we can say what appears (to be the case) to each disputant, but suspend judgment as to what *is* (the case). As disputants, being themselves part of the dispute, are easily understood as biased and contaminated (in being in relation, or affected by that in-relation), the challenge of providing the non-question-begging rationale for one of the appearances is readily visible. This is presumably the reason why the trope from relativity (*πρός τι*) mostly tends to be interpreted as the second trigger mode, with disagreement, forcing the dogmatists to provide warrant for their claims<sup>123</sup> in which case it appears conflated with disagreement in portrayals of the working of the modes<sup>124</sup> or treated as obsolete for the overall functioning of the modes<sup>125</sup>. Yet, as relativity appears as the third trope on the list of five, it

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<sup>122</sup> Lammeranta (“The Pyrrhonian Problematic,” 18) offers the following schema:

(L1)  $S_1$  believes that  $p$ .

(L2)  $S_2$  believes that  $\neg p$ .

(L3) At most one of them is right.

(L4) The disagreement between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  is irresolvable.

(L5) We should suspend judgment about  $p$ .

As Lammeranta uses ‘believes’, it needs to be noted that in the above schema ‘affirms’ is not used to point out some narrower form of belief, thus ‘believes’ could have easily been used as well. Similarly, (4) above is to be treated as equivalent to (L5) in Lammeranta’s portrayal. Conflicting answers, *as proposed* by philosophers (and in ordinary life), *are* such that assuming that  $p$  holds,  $q$  fails to hold because  $p$  holds, and inasmuch  $p$  and  $\neg p$  could have been used in (1) and (2) as well. This is apparently the case in the first portrayal of the working of the mode, as Sextus outlines the dispute regarding proposed matter of inquiry (*PH I* 170, emphasis added): “for according to some, *only* objects of perception are true, according to others *only* objects of thought, and according to yet others, *some* objects of perception and *some* objects of thought”. Thus schema he proposes differs from the one offered above in one significant aspect, as he adds (L3), which seems obsolete if one understands the argument to work from dialectical tension (3, L4) revealed among answers which propose to be mutually exclusive in the aforementioned sense.

<sup>123</sup> Perhaps the most common interpretation offered, and modes tend to be divided into (1) material (Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 182) or challenging (Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 116), i.e. disagreement and relativity; and (2) formal (Hankinson, loc.cit.) or dialectical (Fogelin, loc.cit.), i.e. infinite regress, hypothesis and circularity.

<sup>124</sup> As in Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 185, 191.

<sup>125</sup> As in Barnes, *The Toils*, 113. Some suggest relativistic phrases remain listed due to Sextus’ misunderstanding of Aenesidemus’ relativism, cf. Markus Lammeranta, “The Pyrrhonian

seems that it was employed to a further effect; thus, if one charitably assumes that the order is not lacking in rationale, as is assumed here, the interpretation of the mode from relativity needs to address the third position it holds in the general outline of the five as well.

Thus before addressing the issue of relativity, it seems better to start again from the mode from disagreement and revisit its consequences. As noted, the mode from disagreement, as presented, need not necessarily lead to *ἐποχή*<sup>126</sup>. Namely, one might choose to deny (3), i.e. to claim that the dispute can/could be resolved. When dogmatists, unconvinced by the challenge thus presented, try to provide a warrant for their claims in the matter in dispute, they fall prey to a combination of the modes<sup>127</sup>. The next stepping stone toward *ἐποχή* is the infinite regress (*ἄπειρος*) trope, i.e. when the Dogmatists try to provide a warrant for their claims in the matter in dispute they fall into infinite regress having to provide warrant for the warrant offered, and so *ad infinitum* (*PH I* 166). Thus if *p* is what one seeks to affirm while denying that (3) disagreement is undecidable, he might provide a proof (*p*<sub>1</sub>) for his claim, which would again need to be proven (by providing *p*<sub>2</sub>), i.e. one is faced with a conundrum that each proof *p*<sub>*n*</sub> requires a proof *p*<sub>*n*+1</sub>, leading to an infinite series of proofs which would need to be provided. The problem of providing an infinite series of such a kind arises only if one accepts that each of the steps in a demonstration is to be demonstrated as well, as was noted early on<sup>128</sup>.

The skeptics' net thus has to catch next the dogmatists who claim that there need not be a demonstration for everything. As noted, the next trope is the one from relativity (*πρός τι*),

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Problematic," in *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*, ed. John Greco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), n. 22, who ascribes the interpretation to Bett.

<sup>126</sup> As noted above, the trope in itself is not a necessary condition for *ἐποχή*, yet this is not to say that it simply presents a "psychologically useful aid to the skeptic" (cf. Barnes, *The Toils*, 116). As suggested, the unresolvedness of the dispute resides in the fact that conflicting sides do not have dialectically effective reasons to back up their positions (cf. Lammeranta, "The Pyrrhonian Problematic," 16-17). Furthermore, if one treats the existence of oppositions as serving to awaken thought (cf. Plato, *Rep.*, 524d; Aristotle, *Met.*, A 2 982b11-17), one can read skeptical arguments as commencing in the point of origin of dogmatic theories (cf. *PH I* 12). This will be discussed further in the following text.

<sup>127</sup> In accounts which treat relativity as solely appearing with disagreement in the first step of modes' application, the 'net' in which Dogmatists' are caught is Agrippa's Trilemma, i.e. modes of infinite regress, hypothesis and circularity.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* Γ 4 1006a4-10, Γ 5 1011a 13-14; *APo.* 72b 7-11. Recently Klein suggested, in arguing for infinitism, that one can legitimately continue posing questions even if the person questioned (i.e. foundationalist) decides that the reason giving terminates in basic beliefs of some sort, cf. Peter D. Klein, "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons" *Noûs* 33.13. (1999), 299. Yet, if one was to posit infinite regress problem as the sting of the tropes here, one faces a risk of transforming the skeptic into the 'crazy taskmaster'.



its position for most part willingly overlooked by interpreters. For relativity Sextus' outline is, as it stands, less than precise (*PH I* 167):

In the mode deriving from relativity, as we said above, the existing object appears to be such-and-such relative to the subject judging and to the things observed together with it, but we suspend judgment on what it is like in its nature.

Sextus himself doesn't explicitly expose here the trap for dogmatists this trope presents, and this has led some of the interpreters to point out that the conflict is no longer about how things appear<sup>129</sup>. Still, to understand Pyrrhonists' maneuver here, it seems best to observe the dogmatists' argumentative move they are seeking to respond to. As the dogmatists make a claim that the regress of reasons stops as not everything needs a demonstration, one needs to ask about the nature of that which need not be/is not demonstrated/demonstrable. The suggestion is uncontroversial, and is presumably the reason why, in most interpretations of the tropes, the trope from infinite regress tends to be observed as followed by the trope from hypothesis, which reads (*PH I* 168):

We have the mode from hypothesis when the Dogmatists, being thrown back *ad infinitum*, begin from something they do not establish but claim to assume simply and without proof in virtue of concession.

The question regarding the trope from relativity and its position thus turns into a question if there is some work it can be seen as doing prior to the trope from hypothesis which targets the simply assumed "without proof in virtue of concession".

It might serve well to observe the "Aristotelian tradition of hypothesizing"<sup>130</sup>, ὑποθέσεις which tend to be taken as targets of the trope from hypothesis<sup>131</sup>, i.e. (all of) the first, primary principles (ἀρχαί) of sciences. As a sample instantiating such a usage serves a passage from Alexander of Aphrodisias (*APr* 13.7-11)<sup>132</sup>:

Hypotheses are first principles of proofs, because there is no proof of such propositions, i.e. of first principles, but they are posited as evident and known in themselves (αὐτόθεν)..., and what is assumed without proof they call an hypothesis (or even, more generally, a thesis) and say that it is hypothesized.

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<sup>129</sup> E.g. Lammeranta, "The Pyrrhonian Problematic," n. 22.

<sup>130</sup> The title, the suggestion and the outline of hypotheses thus conceived come from Barnes, cf. Barnes, *The Toils*, 93ff; Barnes notes that such "generously" conceived notion doesn't preserve the complexities of Aristotle's own usage of the concept (loc.cit.).

<sup>131</sup> I.e. as opposed to it being a Platonic notion of hypothesis (e.g. in outline of geometric hypothesis *Rep.* 510 b-e), as something merely assumed as a heuristic tool; cf. Barnes, *The Toils*, 92

<sup>132</sup> The translation is from Barnes (op. cit., 94), the part he leaves out is somewhat confusing as it reads "or else as following from propositions of this type"; cf. Jonathan Barnes, et al., trans. *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On Aristotle's Prior Analytics 1.1-7* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), loc.cit.

Such hypotheses, it seems are ‘merely assumed’ as they are not demonstrated, but this in itself does not entail that what is prior in this sense is less known than what is derived and posterior<sup>133</sup>. Grasp of the first principles in which regress of reasons ends is likely to have been assumed by dogmatists<sup>134</sup>, who would be less likely to view these as “mere assertions” (*M III 7*)<sup>135</sup>. These, as the quoted passage suggests, would likely be posited as “evident and known in themselves”. It is in this that a place for the mode from relativity suggests itself. If Sextus’ outline cannot easily serve in support of such a suggestion, this is what one finds explicitly stated as the target of the mode from relativity in Diogenes Laertius’ account of the mode (*DL IX 89*):

The mode derived from relativity declares that a thing can never be apprehended in and by itself, but only in connection with something else.

In Sextus’ opus, support for this suggestion can be traced if one observes the outline of skeptics’ debate on what is taken as ‘evident’ and its place in argumentation (*M VII 24-25*)<sup>136</sup>:

(...) if truth is to be sought in every division of Philosophy, we must, before all else, possess trustworthy principles and procedures (*τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τοὺς τρόπους*) for the discernment of truth. Now the Logical branch is that which includes the theory of criteria and of proofs; so it is with this that we ought to make our beginning. And in order to facilitate our inquiry, in its criticism of the Dogmatists, since it is generally accepted that what is evident (*ἐναργῆ*) is known from itself through some criterion (*διὰ κριτηρίου τινὸς αὐτόθεν γνωρίζεσθαι*), whereas what is non-evident (*ἄδηλα*) has to be tracked down through signs and proofs (*διὰ σημείων καὶ ἀποδείξεων*) through inference from the evident, we shall take them in this order, inquiring first whether there exists a criterion for things that show up for themselves, either perceptually or intellectually, and, in the next place, whether there exists a semiotic or probative procedure concerning things non-evident.

If mediated knowledge is tested by the skeptics through putting to question signs and proofs, the immediate knowledge of the evident is tested by putting to question the criterion (*κριτήριον*)<sup>137</sup>, the canon (faculty, standard)<sup>138</sup> of/for establishing what *is* (the case). These

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *APo.* I 72a25-72b23.

<sup>134</sup> Aristotle provides an outline at *APo.* II 99 b20-100b19.

<sup>135</sup> Hankinson makes the same claim but not in relation to the five modes, as he takes this aspect of dogmatists’ hypotheses to be targeted by the two modes discussed in what follows; cf. Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 190-191.

<sup>136</sup> Translation from Bury, modified in accordance to the translation suggested by Brunschwig, cf. Jacques Brunschwig, “Sextus Empiricus on the *κριτήριον*: the Sceptic as conceptual legatee,” in *The Question of ‘Eclecticism’: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. J.M. Dillon and A.A. Long (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 154.

<sup>137</sup> Sextus argues against different criteria at *PH II 14-79*, *M VII 27-446*.

(logical) criteria Sextus outlines as “spoken of in three senses – that by which (*ὑφ’ οὗ*), that through which (*δι’ οὗ*), and that in virtue of which (*καθ’ οὗ*)” (*PH* II 16), and he provides examples for each (*ibid.*):

For example, that by which – a human; through which – either perception or intellect; in virtue of which – the impact of an appearance in virtue of which humans set themselves to make judgments through one of the means we have mentioned.

In simply referring back to the previous outline of relativity for the trope from relativity (*PH* I 167, quoted above), Sextus points to ‘what *is*’ being put to question by relativity (in its general sense) in the ten tropes of earlier skeptics, and this does appear to be a convenient way to summarize the revealed inadequacy of criteria as outlined here<sup>139</sup>; for in variances noted, skeptics’ question was what/whom is to be preferred. In other words, it seems to be a convenient way to summarize the testing of the ‘evident’<sup>140</sup>. Note that if one wants to suggest that one ‘judge’ is to be preferred to another, the relativity presses for a reason to be given where a dogmatist would say no reason can be given, thus Sextus suggests in a specific sample from the criteria debate that “a man says he is the criterion either by mere assertion or by employing a criterion” (*M* VII 337)<sup>141</sup>. If criteria conceived in such a manner is put to the test, evident turns to seemingly evident (*PH* II 95), or non-evident (*PH* II 15), and hypotheses turn to *mere* assertions, which invites the trope from hypothesis.

The suggested interpretation of the place of relativity can serve to elucidate otherwise perplexing application of the trope (*PH* I 186):

If he takes a stand somewhere then either he will say that the explanation holds *so far as what he has said goes*, and will introduce something relative, rejecting what is by nature, or else he will assume something as a hypothesis and be led to suspend judgment.

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Gisela Striker, “*κριτήριον τῆς ἀληθείας*,” in Gisela Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 71. The complexities of the notion of *κριτήριον* which cannot be fully outlined here are outlined in Striker (*op.cit.*) and Brunschwig (*op.cit.*).

<sup>139</sup> With intellect (*διάνοια*) underrepresented, in *PH* I 99, 128; if intellect was added to the ten tropes by later skeptics (in following Carneades’ line of argumentation, as suggested by Striker, “The Ten Tropes,” 101), perhaps this can be seen as an additional impetus for the addition; examples for the relativity mode employed as part of the five fit the outlined suggestion, cf. *PH* I 175, 177 and 186. While the first two instances are quite clear *PH* I 186 will be elaborated further in what follows.

<sup>140</sup> Additional support for this suggestion for the interpretation of the trope from relativity seems to be available in Aristotle’s dealings with the samples of argumentation skeptics employ in the ten tropes, as he suggests (at *Met.* Γ 6 1011a7-13) that “all such questions have the same meaning. These people demand that a reason shall be given for everything; for they seek a starting-point, and they wish to get this by demonstration (...). But their mistake is what we have stated it to be; they seek a reason for that for which no reason can be given; for the starting point of demonstration is not demonstration.”

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *PH* I 90.

In that passage modes are applied to the notion of a causal explanation, but one could give it a more general reading. If it was not uncommon in the context of debates to dispute the opposing proposition as it stood in contradiction to a criterion one's school outlined<sup>142</sup>, it can be assumed that it was analogously used to support one's own proposition (as in the reading suggested), which renders "so far as what he says goes" into "so far as posited primary principle *p*", or, by extension, "so far as the criterion *c*", and invites the workings of the trope from relativity.

Thus understood the workings of the trope from relativity shed some light on the further role of the trope from hypothesis, which turns into a more adequate argumentative countermove to hypotheses robbed of the 'grasp'<sup>143</sup>. The argumentative maneuver of the skeptics in use of this trope is as follows (*PH* I 173-4):

If to avoid this [infinite regress] our interlocutor claims to assume something by way of concession and without proof in order to prove what comes next, then the hypothetical mode is brought in, and there is no way out. For if he is convincing when he makes his hypothesis, we will keep hypothesizing the opposite and will be no more unconvincing<sup>144</sup>; and if he hypothesizes something true, he makes it suspect by taking it as a hypothesis rather than establishing it; while if it is false, the foundation of what he is trying to establish will be rotten<sup>145</sup>. Again, if hypothesizing something achieves anything toward making it convincing, why not hypothesize the object of investigation itself rather than something else through which he is supposed to establish the object about which he is arguing? If it is absurd to hypothesize the object under investigation, it will also be absurd to hypothesize what is superordinate to it.<sup>146</sup>

The fifth, reciprocal trope, prevents dogmatists from using circular arguments in which warrant receives warranty from the matter in dispute (*PH* I 169). If *p*<sub>1</sub>, serving as a warrant for *p*, is itself warranted by *p*, then in order to understand *p*<sub>1</sub> one needs to previously grasp *p*, i.e. that which is being investigated is taken as prior to that which warrants it, while, in virtue of being supported by it, it is taken as posterior; consequently, in Sextus words, neither is clear (*M* VII 426). The fifth mode is applicable no matter how large the chain of warrants

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. Striker, "κρίτηριον," 64.

<sup>143</sup> I.e. in answering several puzzles noted by Barnes. Namely, with relativity in its place, it is (i) not simply assumed that hypotheses are suspect (cf. Barnes, *The Toils*, 101), or matter of controversy (op.cit., 103), and (ii) what Sextus seeks to suggest by noting "if what you hypothesize is true (...) then you should assume it directly as true" (op.cit., 101), would thus be understood as nudging the dogmatists back into mode from relativity (or to infinite regress of criteria as in *M* VII 337ff).

<sup>144</sup> Cf. *M* VIII 370, *M* III 8.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. *M* VIII 371, *M* III 9-10.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. *M* VIII 374, *M* III 13; a fourth argument is available at *M* VIII 372-3, *M* III 11-12.

is<sup>147</sup>, i.e. if  $p$  is warranted by  $p_1$  which is warranted by  $p_2$ , warranted by  $p_3 \dots p_{n-1}$  warranted by  $p_n$ ; and  $p_n$  is supported  $p$ , regardless of the value of  $n$ , the mode applies.

The five modes working together could then be schematically portrayed in the following manner:

- (1)  $S_1$  affirms that  $p$ .
- (2)  $S_2$  affirms that  $q$ .
- (3) The disagreement between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  is either (3a) decidable or (3b) undecidable.
- (4) If (3b) we can neither affirm nor deny that  $p$  or that  $q$ , i.e. we should suspend judgement.
- (5) If (3a)  $p$  ( $q$ ) will be either (5a) warranted by  $p_1$  ( $q_1$ ), taken as evident (5b) in itself, or (5c) by way of concession.
- (6) If (5b), relativity mode.
- (7) If (5c), hypothetical mode.
- (8) If (5a)  $p_1$  ( $q_1$ ) will be either (8a) warranted by  $p_2$  ( $q_2$ ), (8b) warranted by  $p$  ( $q$ ), taken as evident (8c) by way of concession, or (8d) in itself.
- (9) If (8a), infinite regress.
- (10) If (8b), circularity.
- (11) If (8c), hypothetical mode.
- (12) If (8d), relativity mode.

*Two tropes.* The two tropes, next on the list of argumentative schemata (*PH I* 178-180), and also attributed by Sextus to the more recent skeptics<sup>148</sup>, appear as a compressed version of five; *first* pointing out that due to disagreement one cannot claim that anything is grasped by means of itself (and thus is a compendium of tropes from disagreement, from relativity, and from hypothesis as outlined above), *second* that those who seek to state that something is to be grasped by means of something else fall prey to reciprocity mode or infinite regress mode (or to the fist mode, if they claim that this warrant is self-warranted). Schematic portrayal of the two tropes would then be<sup>149</sup>:

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 187.

<sup>148</sup> Barnes (*The Toils*, 117) seeks to ascribe these to Agrippa (n. 3).

<sup>149</sup> For alternative accounts see Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 191; Barnes, *The Toils*, 118; In addition to these, there are (iv) eight tropes overthrowing accounts offering causal explanations (cf. *PH I* 180-185), which, for the purpose of not overshadowing the portrayal of Academics' inquiries in scope, need not be included in the 'sample' of inquiries.

- (1)  $p$  is either known (1a) by means of itself, or (1b) by means of something else.
- (2) If (1a)  $p$  is either (2a) evident in itself, or (2b) assumed.
- (3) If (2a) relativity/disagreement.
- (4) If (2b) hypothetical mode.
- (5) If (1b),  $p_1$  is either known (5a) by means of itself, or (5b) by means of something else.
- (6) If (5a) (2)-(4) apply.
- (7) If (5b)  $p_1$  is either known (7a) by means of  $p_2$  or (7b) by means of  $p$ .
- (8) If (7a) infinite regress mode.
- (9) If (7b) reciprocity mode.

The importance of noting the recurrence of disagreement and relativity in the tropes leading to suspension of judgment is in appreciation of the tone of the arguments, i.e. the dialectical strategy that Pyrrhonist applied. In pointing to unresolved dialectical tension, Sextus reports that for Pyrrhonists *ἐποχή* follows *ἰσοσθένεια* in “opposed objects and accounts” (PH I 8).

#### *Interim conclusion*

This chapter opens with Pyrrhonists’ efforts to differentiate their approach from other philosophies. In these efforts Academics were portrayed as unworthy of the title ‘skeptics’; their inquiries, Pyrrhonists claimed, brought forth an answer. Yet, in juxtaposing the close of arguments in Pyrrhonist tradition to the close of arguments suggested by Academics, the congeniality in not settling for an answer is revealed. Pyrrhonists’ efforts to express absence of determinations in those phrases which one might easily mistake for an answer and Academics’ second order statement of ignorance can equally be seen as expressions of the answerless, *continued* inquiry. Observing these expressions in unison allows for a further appreciation of distinctive traits of such answerless approach. Namely, in allowing for the answer-like phrases at the close of inquiries to apply to themselves, and to be canceled along with those countered, a peculiar lack of commitment is displayed. The lack of commitment to the answer argued for is not likely to be found in other philosophical approaches. If anything, unveiling such self-application of the thesis put forth in dealings with remaining approaches to philosophy served to signal the inadequacy of this thesis as *the* answer regarding the matter in inquiry. A philosopher proposing this self-applying answer would hardly welcome such a development. In allowing it, in being open to *περιτροπή* in such a manner, in lacking commitment to what was put forth, the answerless approach announces itself as *answerless*, and in doing so, this approach uses precisely the mechanisms of the dogmatists’ making to reveal that in putting to question, an alternative answer was not proposed.

Observation of the *continued* questions in both traditions additionally allows one to recognize how easily these mask themselves into answers, if observed absent the context of inquiry. Namely, the un-attachment to that phrase which might *seem* to be the answer at the close of inquiries is, in close examination, revealed as closely connected to a distinctive un-attachment to reasons, lack of commitment to the arguments cast. In putting to question, in seeking to cure the rashness of assent, the answerless, *authentic* approach of *continued inquiry* can allow for the arguments, once used, to devour themselves, precisely in not being committed to an answer in a manner any other approach would be. After all, commitment to the arguments cast would translate into commitment to that which was argued for, and one would no longer be understood as simply putting to question. Arguments Academics used served as the dialectical counterweight to the opponents' arguments and claims, and Pyrrhonists posed questions through revealing the dialectical tension between opposing accounts. To appreciate the disavowal of the 'tools' used in argumentation and the disavowal of the 'argued-for' in these traditions is to further appreciate the directedness of the argumentation that puts to question. Namely, in this kind of argumentation, the question was posed *to* the countered accounts, on the grounds that the countered accounts would accept. If the argumentative support collapsed, it was the structure bringing forth the answers that *was* devoured; had it been preserved, the counter-thesis the 'skeptics' argued for would have to be granted as equally established. In both cases, there are no conclusive answers, and this turns to be a burden for the countered accounts to bear (in being committed to these 'tools' and seeking to propose *the* answer).

Specifically, with regard to the traditions examined, to appreciate that both traditions are rightly observed as answerless is to note that arguing for *ἀκαταληψία* was directed at the failure of the opposed accounts. Sextus' persistence in charging the Academics for positing it about the nature of things with unbecoming certainty does not find confirmation in the arguments we find attributed to them. Arguments Academics used, much like Pyrrhonists' arguments, could be read as concluding in *ἀκαταληψία* solely if one disregards the dialectical aim; in doing so, one observes the arguments absent the context of inquiry in which these appear, and consequentially, disregards the peculiarly borrowed premises and argument forms indicative of the approach of putting to question, the lack of allegiance to such borrowed argumentative support, and to the counter-thesis stemming from them. To *affirm* that 'everything is inapprehensible', one would need to be bound to acceptance of specific notion of apprehension, and further, to acceptance of *the* method which yields it. These views, which one might add are *answers* in their own right, accompanied with an acknowledgment of

obstacles to the proposed procedure, bring forth *the answer* in form of denial<sup>150</sup>. The directedness in the approach of putting to question, the directedness which Sextus was, on occasion, willing to recognize as aspect of Academics' piecemeal procedure, absolves one of such commitments. Revealing that a proposed (countered) answer fails on the grounds it was proposed on does not bind one to the negation thus revealed; taking the proposed (countered) answer as *the answer* which cannot be established, as *the method* fails, does.

The piecemeal approach Academics used in argumentation can further be used to outline a trait of the negating answer, equally apparent in Sextus' complex grammar of skeptics' phrases. Namely, *the answer* in form of a denial, if one leaves the preconceptions and the accustomedness to observing these together aside, is not in itself congenial to *ἐποχή*. An intermediate step is needed from *the answer* toward suspension; hence Sextus goes to great lengths to outline skeptical phrases as non-answers. The intermediate step is readily visible in continuation of arguments for *ἀκαταληψία* attributed to Arcesilaus (*M VII* 150-155, quoted above). Upon the notice that "if everything is inapprehensible it will follow even according to the Stoics that the wise man suspends judgment," the continuation reads (*M VII* 156-157):

Let us consider it like this: since everything is inapprehensible on account of the unreality of the Stoic criterion, if the wise person assents, the wise person will opine. For since nothing is apprehensible, if he assents to anything, he will assent to the inapprehensible, but assent to inapprehensible is opinion. So that if the wise person is among those who assent, the wise person will be among those who opine. But the wise person is *not* among those who opine (for according to them this goes with folly and is a cause of errors); therefore the wise person is not among those who assent. But if this is so, he will have to decline assent about everything. But declining assent is none other than suspending judgment; therefore the wise person will suspend judgment about everything.

The path from the denial toward suspension, much like the path toward the denial, here takes place through that which was put to question, the conception of *κατάληψις* and corresponding notions, as parts of Stoic theory. Inapprehension argued for invites non-assent *as* assent to inapprehensible would be, contrary to the assent in apprehension, assent of the kind to be avoided (or not attributed to the wise man). If one disregards, for present purposes, the directedness apparent in this sample of Academic inquiries, the intermediate step needed for

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<sup>150</sup> Unfortunately, this set of phantom commitments has been dubbed 'doctrinal skepticism,' as part of 'the standard model of skeptical stance,' cf. Michael Williams, "Descartes' transformation of the skeptical tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 291-2. The remaining two components of Williams' 'standard model' are 'prescriptive skepticism' and 'suspensive skepticism.'



the negating *answer* to be coupled with suspension of judgment can be observed as re-affirmation of the argumentative structures bringing it forth, which further takes the form of a prescription for action<sup>151</sup> arising from the reaffirmed, in light of *the* answer revealed. The connection between the denial, taken as *the* answer, and suspension of judgment, in short, implies further commitments of inauthentic kind.

This path one would need to traverse from the negating answer to suspension additionally suggests how the inquiry into the corruption of the title ‘skeptics’ should proceed. Namely, one could note here that the prescription thus needed to traverse from denial to suspension, can equally assume the role of impetus to the affirmation of the negating thesis; the suggestion would then be that the views one might hold about the right actions inspire this commitment to the negation argued for. In such an approach the aim of establishing the negating answer would take second place to the dogmatic commitment in the prescription form, as this approach would be primarily “ethically directed”<sup>152</sup>, yet in contrast to the authentic aim of putting to question, it would seem to be equally robbed of openness. In terms of the argument from the Academy outlined above, if *ἐποχή* is suspension of judgment, voiced through Stoic theory of assent, then advocating it as *the* right course of action would equally bind them to the theory through which the advocated is voiced and brought about. In place of the *continued* question, in that case one would find answers that might mask themselves as questions for the purpose of furthering an alternative goal.

As Sextus suggests that even Arcesilaus, whom he treats most benevolently of all Academics, *affirmed* “that suspension of judgment is a good thing and assent a bad thing” (*PH* I 233), the inquiry into corruption of the title, the task of delineation, needs to revisit that which was the object of Sextus’ additional charges against the Academics, complementary to the ones of upholding the negating thesis, namely, the *dogmatic* approach he portrays them as having “in judgments of good and bad” (*PH* I 226), and, more generally, the criteria he suggests they *dogmatically* make use of in their lives (cf. *PH* I 231)<sup>153</sup>. In both traditions such ‘criteria’ seem to address the *ἀπραξία* objection<sup>154</sup>, namely the charge that the approach which

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<sup>151</sup> Thus in the ‘standard model’ proposed by Michael Williams (op.cit.), what is noticed above takes the shape of ‘prescriptive skepticism’ which is yielded by ‘doctrinal skepticism’ and yields ‘suspensive skepticism’.

<sup>152</sup> This seems to be what M. Williams suggests as the interpretation of the approach of the Academy (op.cit., 300).

<sup>153</sup> For additional references, see pg. 21, n. 6 above.

<sup>154</sup> There appear to be two versions of the argument, one against those affirming *ἀκαταληψία* thesis, suggesting them incapable of decision on what to do; and another against *ἐποχή*, suggesting that suspension prevents action altogether; cf. Striker, “Sceptical Strategies,” 63. As the two are

renders beliefs and knowledge questionable paralyzes one in taking any action whatsoever, thus the search for the origin of the 'phantom' proceeds from the *seeming* answers Academics and Pyrrhonists offered to such challenges. If specific type of commitment to a *right* way of life can distort the aim of putting to question, the task is then to see whether, and in which manner, authenticity noted in the arguments cast in these traditions was challenged or preserved on these grounds.

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interconnected, the following does not follow closely the distinction. For a detailed account of the first version, see Striker, *op.cit.* 64ff.

### I. 3. The ἀπραξία objection and the ‘phantom’ form of skepticism

The oldest version of ἀπραξία objection<sup>1</sup> seems to be the one cast by Aristotle (*Met.* Γ 4 1008b 13-19) who compares a person who supposedly makes no judgment (i.e. chooses not between the opposites) to a vegetable, pointing out that:

(...) it is in the highest degree evident that neither any one of those who maintain this view nor anyone else is really in this position. For why does a man walk to Megara and not stay at home thinking he ought to walk? Why does he not walk early some morning into a well or over a precipice, if one happens to be in his way? Why do we observe him guarding against this, evidently not thinking that falling in is alike good and not good?

As the gist of this argument is that the actions of those people betray what their supposed stance is, the description of Pyrrho which Diogenes Laertius ascribes to Antigonus of Carystus is in a specific sense reversed, a (mocking) portrayal of a life of one adhering consistently to such a practice (*DL IX 62*):

He led a life consistent with this doctrine, going out of his way for nothing, taking no precaution, but facing all risks as they came, whether carts, precipices, dogs or what not, and, generally, leaving nothing to the arbitrament of the senses; but he was kept out of harm’s way by his friends who (...) used to follow close after him.

In short, since suspension of judgment would render one completely inactive, those maintaining that they do practice ἐποχή have been either proclaimed deceitful or portrayed as being ridiculous, as such a life would be impossible without assistance for each, even the simplest, action. The ἀπραξία charge was used by both Epicureans<sup>2</sup> and Stoics<sup>3</sup>, and both of the skeptical traditions sought to answer them. If the responses to these charges led to the creation of the phantom, the investigation here needs to be twofold, as the plausibility of the objection should be investigated, i.e. beliefs and or knowledge rendered doubtful by skeptical arguments need to be specified more clearly, and replies to the objection from both traditions should be at least briefly examined if the source of ‘phantom’ reading is to be uncovered. More precisely, what needs to be specified more clearly is whether the extent of ἐποχή practiced requires skeptics to devise a positive theses by which life is enabled, and what these positive theses in form of a criterion for conduct of life, if ventured, amounted to.

Observed through the prism of dialectical nature of skeptical arguments, it seem curious that the question about the extent of ἐποχή practiced was, for most part, dealt with as a

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gisela Striker, “Academics versus Pyrrhonists, reconsidered,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*, ed. Richard Bett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 197.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1107d, 1120c.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1122ab; Cic. *Acad.* II 39.

question on classical skeptics' beliefs<sup>4</sup>; for if these skeptics were arguing *ad hominem*, one is left with an impression that suspension of judgment is something that the dogmatic opponent should be left with. Furthermore, if skeptic seeks to cure, by argument, conceit and rashness of dogmatists (cf. *PH* III 280), then the impression is that the scope of *ἐποχή* should vary with the 'condition' being cured, i.e. expand and contract depending on the scope of dogmatic theory one is addressing<sup>5</sup>.

Arguments used by Academics were versed in terms of the countered theory, and commonly cited Arcesilaus' syllogism, pointing out how 'suspension' comes about, is no exception (Cic. *Acad.* II 67)<sup>6</sup>:

If the wise man ever assents to anything, he will sometimes also form an opinion; but he never will form an opinion; therefore he will not assent to anything.

The argument doesn't seem to imply any bounds on the skeptic; it is the Stoic 'wise man' that, on Stoic account, never will hold an opinion, and thus never will assent to anything (as a consequence of Academics' arguments which bring to question the criterion of *καταληπτική φαντασία*); and to decline assent<sup>7</sup> is to suspend judgment. Academics' *ἐποχή*, thus presented, is to be read as the 'withholding of assent' in terms of Stoic theory<sup>8</sup>, and in order to see it as something Arcesilaus advocated as desirable, or with a normative undertone, would require additional allowances on Academics' part, i.e. acceptance of the (whole or part of) theory in terms of which it was voiced. To see suspension as a desirable goal of or norm for Academics' practice Arcesilaus would have to hold a view that 'wise man' should assent solely to cognitive impressions, and generally speaking, accept such a theory of assent; the only thing he would be denying on this account would be that a cognitive impression can be distinguished from an incognitive one. Arguing in Socratic manner might leave an impression that one displays allegiance to the premises utilized, but solely if one observes the arguments cast absent the context of putting to question. The arguments Academics utilized, sampled in this study, display the directedness of putting to question; and it was already noted that the type of allowances one would need to ascribe to Arcesilaus would prove to be quite an

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<sup>4</sup> A good introduction into controversies regarding this question is available in Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede, *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> As suggested in Jonathan Barnes' "The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist," in *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*, ed. M. Burnyeat and M. Frede (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 91.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *M* VII 157, quoted above. For a longer explication of the passages, see Couissin, "The Stoicism of the New Academy," 33 ff.

<sup>7</sup> As Sextus notes in *M* VII 157 - τὸ δὲ ἀσυγκαταθετεῖν οὐδὲν ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἢ τὸ ἐπέχειν.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Couissin, "The Stoicism of the New Academy," 34-35.

uncharitable attribution to a skilled dialectician and a reported advocate of the Socratic method. Since there are reports in which he is portrayed as advocating *ἐποχή* as a goal<sup>9</sup>, in line with the authentic (dialectical) understanding of his approach, it seems appropriate to treat the reported as part of his overall strategy in argumentation, i.e. as part of the dialectical play at hand<sup>10</sup>. And the same can be said for his successor Carneades, if one is to believe that he remained true to Arcesilaus' practices, which seems to be the case in the arguments he put forth.

If there is continuity in pursuing a dialectical aim, then the diverging readings of Carneades' arguments by his successors could be viewed as support for the claim that he was even more skilled in the dialectical to-and-fro. The accusation that he was less consistent in *ἐποχή* than Arcesilaus (*Acad.* II 59) could also be used in corroboration of the reading that Academy did not treat 'suspension' as a goal. This 'lesser' consistency comes about in Carneades' challenging treatment of infallibility of the 'wise man', for he seems to have argued that the 'wise man' either opines or suspends judgment. As an anti-Stoic strategy, this would seem to expand the minor premise of Arcesilaus' syllogism in stating that this paradigmatic character if infallible never opines, i.e. in conclusion, he is either fallible or suspends. Both options counter Stoic image of *ὁ σοφός* which, having only infallible beliefs, has access to wisdom. Challenge to infallibility can also be analyzed as arising from the Stoic framework, namely from the insistence that action presupposes assent, i.e. belief of some kind<sup>11</sup>. Both Arcesilaus and Carneades had to address this aspect of the Stoic stance, if their position was to present a formidable challenge, i.e. an untenable alternative would have hardly been taken as an alternative at all in the ongoing debate. In other words, on the dialectical reading, the 'practical criterion' needed to be devised not as a thesis by which a skeptic would lead his life, but as a dialectical counterweight to the thesis<sup>12</sup> that a life, or more precisely any voluntary action, was (logically) impossible without assent<sup>13</sup>. And if the '*ad hominem*' strategy' reading is correct, and Academics had not professed doctrines of their

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *PH* I 233; Cic. *Acad.* I 45, II 59, 77; Numenius *apud* Euseb. *Praep. evang.* XIV 4 15, 7 14.

<sup>10</sup> Couissin (op.cit. n.12) in agreement with Goedeckemeyer (1905) goes as far to state that advocating *ἐποχή* as good could only have been "in the spirit of mockery". In addition to the argumentation outlined by Couissin (op.cit. 32-42), additional support is found in Striker, "Sceptical Strategies," 59-60; Sedley, "The Motivation of Greek Scepticism," 13; Frede "The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent," 129.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Couissin, op.cit., 45ff; Striker, "On the difference between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics," in Gisela Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 143ff.

<sup>12</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 24-25, 107ff.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Striker, "Sceptical Strategies, 67ff.

own, the point that life of the ‘wise man’ is livable if one takes the side they argued for, also needed to be made from within the Stoic framework, further unveiling the incoherence of clinging to the positive thesis countered.

Both Arcesilaus’ *ἔυλογον*<sup>14</sup> and Carneades’ *πιθανόν*,<sup>15</sup> as criteria for action, can be found as parts of the Stoic reasoning; *ἔυλογον* was used by the Stoics to depict a proposition and an impression “with more chances of being true than not” (*DL VII 76*)<sup>16</sup>, and *πιθανόν* was used by them to depict a proposition or an impression “which induces to assent but is not necessarily true” (*DL VII 75*). Different approaches to the ‘practical criterion’ were to be expected given the different approaches in leading the ‘wise man’ to *ἐποχή*, as Carneades seems to have left for Stoics the option of admitting the fallibility of the ‘wise man’; if the ‘wise man’ follows *ἔυλογον* assent is in no way implied<sup>17</sup>, while following the *πιθανόν* might be interpreted as implying a specific type of qualified assent. One can immediately see why Arcesilaus’ *ἔυλογον* didn’t raise as much controversy as Carneades’ *πιθανόν* did<sup>18</sup>. The ambiguity of *πιθανόν* resulted in two distinct interpretations even among Carneades’ immediate followers, with one side claiming that he argued, much in line with Arcesilaus’ strategy, for ‘qualified non-assent’ (‘wise man’ on this reading would act by following convincing impressions, yet even in saying yes and no, he wouldn’t be actually assenting that something *is* the case)<sup>19</sup>; and the other side claiming that he argued for ‘qualified assent’ (‘wise man’ on this reading would be *assenting* to the *πιθανόν* impressions, all the while aware that this assent amounts to an

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. *M VII 158*; commonly translated as ‘reasonable’; see the following note for Cicero’s translation of it as ‘*probabile*’ (*De Fin. III 58*)

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *M VII 166-189*; translated as ‘convincing’ or ‘persuasive’; In Stoics’ account persuasive (convincing) impression (*πιθανή φαντασία*), just like the unpersuasive one, may be true, true and false, and neither true nor false (*M VII 243-4*); and judgment that is *πιθανόν* is portrayed as one that induces to assent but is not necessarily true (*DL VII 176*); In *Academica* Cicero translates it as ‘*probabile*,’ and perhaps this is the reason for it being translated as ‘probable’ in some of translations to English language, e.g. *DL VII 75* in R. D. Hicks, trans. *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1925). I side with Burnyeat (“Antipater and self-refutation,” 301) that in dealing with Greek *πιθανόν* one should translate it as ‘probable’ only with “scare-quotes”, as it ambiguous, and might lead to faulty interpretations. Cicero presumably translates *ἔυλογον* (*De Fin. III 58*) and *πιθανόν* in *Academica* as ‘*probabile*’ to link them to ‘*probare*’ i.e. ‘approve’, “adopt as the basis for action”, replicating the etymological connection between *πιθανόν* and *πειθεσθαι* (cf. Burnyeat, loc.cit.; Frede, “The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent,” 142).

<sup>16</sup> For an application of the notion to depict ‘*φαντασία*’ see *DL VII 177*; an account of this passage is available in Couissin, “The Stoicism of the New Academy,” n. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Col. 1122b-d, De Stoic. 1057 a-b*.

<sup>18</sup> Even Sextus in his efforts to distance Pyrrhonism from the Academy outlines Arcesilaus’ ‘reasonable’ as a positive thesis solely in *M VII 158* noted above; *πιθανόν* on the other hand is discussed as part of the delienation at *PH I 226-229*.

<sup>19</sup> Clitomachus’ understanding of the practical criterion as presented in Cic. *Acad. II 104*; Cicero himself preferred this interpretation (*Acad. II 67, 78, 108*); I borrow the notion of ‘qualified non-assent’ to depict this stance from Burnyeat, “Antipater and self-refutation,” 304.

uncertain opinion)<sup>20</sup>. If one understands Carneades as arguing with a dialectical aim, it would seem that he very well might have been arguing for both suspension and qualified assent as part of the dialectical play, thus the conflict in accounts of his successors might not seem of great importance. The reason it remains an important issue for discussion is in the consequences of the latter reading for the developments in the Academy after Carneades, namely, it is in the notion of *πιθανόν* that one finds a paradigm case of how easily genuine skepticism can collapse into dogmatism in its own right.

If one takes Carneades as (i) affirming (and not solely arguing) that ‘wise man’ can hold opinions, i.e. assent, as well as (ii) affirming that impressions that fit the notion of *πιθανόν* are the ones that the ‘wise man’ should assent to, and, most importantly, (iii) takes the ‘wise man’ to represent not solely the Stoic figure, but a model for Academics to follow, one is left with a positive, even if limited, epistemological doctrine. This is how Sextus’ reports on Carneades’ ‘persuasive’ impression are versed<sup>21</sup>, as there it appears as a criterion of truth (*M VII 171*), albeit of a qualified kind, as it is ‘apparently true’ “to the person having the impression” (*M VII 169*)<sup>22</sup>, even though it may be either true or false with regards to the nature of thing that appears (*M VII 174*). This criterion would then work in the following way<sup>23</sup>: in random matters one assents to ‘persuasive impression’, in more important matters the ‘persuasive impression’ at hand must cohere to other ‘persuasive impression’ appearing with it<sup>24</sup>, and the most trustworthy one, to be used in judgment (*M VII 181*), reserved for matters that contribute to happiness (*M VII 184*), is the one which, in addition to mentioned ‘coherence’, has also been examined in detail<sup>25</sup>. If one takes the ‘persuasive impression’ and the distinctions made, as outlined, to elaborate why the ‘wise man’ withholding assent can still lead a normal active life, i.e. as something he is guided by in action without assenting<sup>26</sup>, it can still be regarded as a counterargument voiced in Stoic terms, and a plausible one at that. If

<sup>20</sup> Philo and Metrodorus advocated this interpretation; in *Academica* the view is presented by Catulus at II 148. The problem with this passage is that we find Catulus *vehemently assenting* to the thesis that ‘nothing can be perceived’. The ‘collapse’ into dogmatism from this reading is discussed in the following text.

<sup>21</sup> The following outline is from *M VII 166-89*.

<sup>22</sup> *φαινομένη ἀληθής* – distinction between the apparently true ‘persuasive appearance’ and apparently false ‘unpersuasive’ one “in relation to the person having the appearance” (i.e. not in relation to the thing appearing, i.e. by nature)

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *M VII 184, PH I 229*.

<sup>24</sup> I.e. be ‘not turned away’ (*ἀπερίσπαστον*) “if nothing presents itself contrary to that ‘probability’” (Cic. *Acad.* II 99).

<sup>25</sup> I.e. ‘gone over in detail’, *διεξωδευμένην* in *M VII 166*; in *PH I 229* *περιωδευμένην φαντασίαν*.

<sup>26</sup> As in Cic. *Acad.* II 33.

it turns into a criterion for ‘apparently true’ or truth-like<sup>27</sup> of the Academics this would imply acceptance of a number of distinctions made by Stoics in the outline of their doctrine, i.e. acceptance of the framework argued in. The dialectical structure collapses immediately, the inquiry must be seen (i) as a search for a criterion (to be regarded as the aim), and (ii) as holding in structure (not collapsing in itself) in order to support the conclusion arrived at. Namely, (iii) ἀκαταληψία phrases in conclusion would need to be taken at face value, i.e. affirmed, since renouncing with certainty the possibility of apprehension represents the basis for the criterion of πιθανόν<sup>28</sup>. Only through acceptance of a positive doctrine and a shift in aim of inquiry, do the skeptical phrases emerge solidified into affirmed *theses*. Thus, oddly enough, the mitigated skepticism of the later Academy is the stance that actually requires *affirmation* of the radical stance toward possibility of apprehension, i.e. takes on the ‘phantom’, essentially non-skeptical form.

This peril behind ‘practical criterion’ was noticed and used by Pyrrhonists in their efforts to distance themselves from the Academic stance; and it seems plausible to assume that both their treatment of ἐποχή, and of the ‘practical criterion’ would reflect this, i.e. particularly address the ‘inadequacy’ of Academic account. Inasmuch it is revealing to find that, in contrast with Academics’ treatment of ἐποχή as ‘suspension of assent’, in the Pyrrhonists’ account, it is presented as a state (πάθος)<sup>29</sup> of ‘neither assenting nor denying’, a “standstill of the intellect”<sup>30</sup> brought about by ἰσοσθένεια revealed in “opposed objects and accounts” (PH I 8). For Sextus the very concept ἐποχή is derived “from the fact that intellect is suspended (ἐπέχεσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν) neither to posit nor reject anything” (PH I 196). Thus in Pyrrhonists’ account, as Sextus outlines it, an additional emphasis is placed on rejection of

<sup>27</sup> In *Academica* a number of passages deal with truth-like, *veri simile*, in *Acad.* II 7 (‘may be either true or the nearest possible approximation to truth’), 32 (*veri simile* as a canon of judgment in philosophical investigation and practice alike), 66 (rejoicing upon discovering something that is truth-like), 99 (not assenting to but possessing *simila veri* if it’s not turned away), 107 (*veri similitudinem non impeditam*).

<sup>28</sup> Frede (“The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent,” 144ff), also using Carneades’ practical criterion as a starting point, also lists three steps leading to dogmatic skepticism, parallel to the ones outlined here: (i) first being an assumption that skeptical argumentation is also to be considered the quest for truth (and not a critical method), (ii) the acceptance of the dogmatist framework (including the notion of certainty connected to knowledge), and as a consequence of that acceptance (iii) disillusion with the possibility of that quest being completed (i.e. embracement of the impossibility of apprehension).

<sup>29</sup> In PH I 7 Sextus states that the skeptical persuasion is called ἐφεκτική, suspensive or ephectic, from the πάθος (Annas and Barnes render as ‘feeling’, Bury, whom I follow here, as ‘a state of mind’) that comes about in the inquirer after his investigation.

<sup>30</sup> In PH I 10: ἐποχή δὲ ἐστὶ στάσις διανοίας δι’ ἣν οὔτε αἰρομέν τι οὔτε τίθεμεν. Couissin (“The Stoicism of the New Academy,” 35) suggests that it is called ἐποχή only through an abuse of language; for Sextus’ explanation see the following text.



denial, for which we can safely assume is in place to delineate ‘non-assent’ from ‘denial’ more clearly. More importantly, there is the emphasis placed on *passivity*<sup>31</sup> in Pyrrhonists’ suspension, as from Sextus’ outline of it, one could not claim that the skeptic, upon investigation, chooses to withhold assent; he simply finds himself in such a state. This eliminates the possible attachment of an ‘intellectual ought’ to the state of suspension<sup>32</sup>, i.e. seems to further the notion that *ἐποχή* is not to be regarded as normatively prescribed. As previously noted, this would seem to be implied in both Academic and Pyrrhonist traditions in the very approach *in* the arguments cast (in the directedness these display), and *toward* the arguments cast (in unconcernedness with their preservation), thus we might interpret Sextus’ treatment of *ἐποχή* as *πάθος* to further stress the point at hand.

If there is a skeptical phrase that might be taken as ‘advice’ a Pyrrhonist is given in his practices, it precedes the state of suspension, as one is reminded not to fall prey to the rashness characteristic of dogmatist accounts (*PH I 205*) by the phrase “*παντὶ λόγῳ λόγον ἴσον ἀντικεισθῆναι*” (“there is to be opposed to every account an equal account,” *PH I 204*), and this too is not versed in a form of imperative<sup>33</sup>. The phrase “*ἐπέχω*” (*PH I 196*) is used as equivalent to “I cannot say which of the things proposed I should find convincing (*πιστεῦσαι*) and which I should not find convincing (*ἀπιστῆσαι*),” i.e. as a report that *intellect is suspended* due to things appearing<sup>34</sup> as equally convincing or unconvincing. This approach is applied in all skeptical phrases<sup>35</sup>, including the notorious ‘*πάντα ἐστὶν ἀκατάληπτα*’, which should be taken as “all of the unclear matters investigated in dogmatic fashion which I have inspected *appear to me* (*φαίνεται μοι*) inapprehensible” (*PH I 200*, emphasis added). Sextus thus seeks to preserve the ‘openness’ pertaining to the approach of an ‘inquirer’, as skeptic is portrayed as solely reporting what appears<sup>36</sup> to him, main point being that he does this *ἀδοξάστως* (*PH I*

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Burnyeat, “Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism,” 42, n. 38; Filip Grgić, “Sextus Empiricus on the Goal of Skepticism” *Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2006), 142.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Barnes, “The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist,” 58-9.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. noted *PH I 204* in which Sextus points out that in the phrase infinitive *ἀντικεισθῆναι* is used, and not imperative *ἀντιτιθῶμεν*; yet it tends to be used (by some) to caution (against rashness) in further practices (cf. *PH I 205*).

<sup>34</sup> Sextus explicitly states in the noted *PH I 196* “Whether they are equal, we do not affirm: we say what appears to us about them, when they make an impression on us.”

<sup>35</sup> I.e. all are outlined as reports of skeptic’s *πάθος*; this is something Sextus explicitly announces as the practice followed by the skeptic (in an elaboration how to understand what a skeptic says) at *PH I 4*, 15, 197, 200, 203.

<sup>36</sup> This strategy is apparent in the ten tropes (cf. *PH I 87*). As expected, the reading one applies to *φαίνεται* sentences in Sextus determines how ‘radical’ a scope one assigns to his skeptical stance. Different approaches are available in Barnes, “The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist,” 63ff; Burnyeat, “Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism,” 32ff, 43; and in Michael Frede, “The Sceptic’s Beliefs,” in *The Original*

15). This would seem like a deliberate divergence from ‘opining’ associated with Carneades’ stance, stressed not only in utterances skeptic makes, but in the conduct of life overall (*PH I 23*)<sup>37</sup>:

Thus, attending to what is apparent, we live in accordance with everyday observances, without holding opinion (*ἀδοξάστως*) – for we are not able to be utterly inactive. These everyday observances (*ἡ βιωτικὴ τήρησις*) seem to be fourfold, and to consist in guidance by nature<sup>38</sup>, necessitation by feelings<sup>39</sup>, handing down of laws and customs<sup>40</sup>, and teaching of kinds of expertise<sup>41</sup>.

Practical criteria remain, similarly to the Academics’ account, *φαινόμενα*, i.e. *φαντασίαι*<sup>42</sup>, yet Sextus cautiously insists on passivity. Presumably, the slippery slope of assent is precisely the subject matter of the caution Sextus ascribes to Pyrrhonists in adhering to appearances, the caution he thinks Carneades’ stance and that of his followers is lacking (*PH I 229*):

Even if both Academics and Sceptics say that they go along with (*πείθεσθαι*) certain things, the difference even here between the two philosophies is clear.

The ‘clear difference’ being that ‘*πείθεσθαι*’, as used by Pyrrhonists, is supposed to be understood as “not resisting but simply following without strong inclination or adherence” (*PH I 230*); thus when *φαινόμενα*, i.e. *φαντασίαι* are said to be the practical criteria it is because thus understood appearance (impression) “lies in feeling and involuntary *πάθος*” (*PH I 22*)<sup>43</sup>.

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*Sceptics: A Controversy*, ed. M. Burnyeat and M. Frede (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 9ff.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *PH I 226, 237*.

<sup>38</sup> Sextus elaborates this as natural capability for perception and thought in *PH I 24*; in *M VIII 203* phenomenal character of the experience comes to us “without being taught”, i.e. “from nature” (ibid. “one does not learn to taste sweet”).

<sup>39</sup> τὸ δὲ ἐν ἀνάγκῃ παθεῖν; cf. *PH I 24* – “hunger conducts us to food, and thirst to drink”.

<sup>40</sup> In *PH I 24* instantiated as: “accepting from everyday point of view that piety is good and impiety bad”. Sextus’ claim that a skeptic can, in following the everyday observances *without holding an opinion* lead a religious life is not uncontroversial. With regard to the question of how much a Pyrrhonist, in doing so, differs from ordinary people (which bears on the question whether or not he is an advocate of ‘everyday life’ to be discussed in the following text), opposing views have been advocated recently. Bailey feels that the difference in motivation points to significant divergence from ‘regular’ everyday practices, cf. Alan Bailey, *Sextus Empiricus and Pyrrhonian Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 188ff. Annas points to the similarities of this stance and the practices of ordinary man and philosophers in Sextus’ time (and those preceding Sextus), cf. Julia Annas, “Ancient scepticism and ancient religion,” in *Episteme, etc.: Essays in Honour of Jonathan Barnes*, ed. Ben Morison and Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75ff.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *PH I 24* – not to be inactive “in those we accept.”

<sup>42</sup> Sextus in *PH I 21-2* in outlining *φαινόμενον* as *κριτήριον* of action states that implicitly by this they mean *φαντασίαι* (impressions) “for they depend on passive and unwilled feelings and are not objects of investigation”. This will be discussed further in what follows. As Burnyeat repeatedly notes (“Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism,” 33-37; “The Sceptic in His Place and Time,” 97), in Hellenistic epistemology one should not take ‘impression’ or ‘appearance’ as restricted to the sensory.

<sup>43</sup> Trans. Bury; for Academics’ passivity cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1122 c.

Still, for all of Sextus' subtle distinctions between Pyrrhonists' passivity and the inclination and adherence leading the choice to assent he thinks *πιθανόν* implies, the approach he took in argumentation similarly invoked opposing interpretations.

As was noted previously in the outline of Academic stance, how one understands the practical criteria has a considerable bearing on the interpretation of the 'skeptical' approach; thus, what one takes 'τοις φαινόμενοις προσέχοντες' to refer to bears a great deal on how one interprets 'skepticism' at hand, as does the sense assigned to 'ἀδοξάστως βιοῦμεν'. Specifically, an interpretation of the Pyrrhonists' outline that they live 'attending to what is apparent,' and an interpretation of the report 'we live without holding opinion,' both have important implications for how one construes the interrelated issues of skeptic's attitude toward *φαινόμενα* (*φαντασίαι*), the meaning behind *φαίνεται* sentences he utters, and consequentially the scope of his suspension. In fewer words, reading of these reports has significance for the interpretation of a specific form of skepticism as either radical in its scope, commonly referred to as 'rustic'<sup>44</sup>, or limited, targeting solely philosophico-scientific doctrines as attempts to uncover the reality, by contrast referred to as 'urbane'<sup>45</sup>. While the latter reading proved luring enough to spurt the revival of Pyrrhonism in the late 20th century<sup>46</sup>, and would at least *seem* to concur with the 'openness' observed in the examination of Pyrrhonists' arguments, it should be noted that there are passages in Sextus' account which do not speak in support of such a restricted reading of *σκέψις*. The 'rustic' interpretation is equally faced with challenges in form of Sextus' writings which run counter to the notion that Pyrrhonists' *ἐποχή* is of a radical scope. It seems that the most charitable approach would be to say that, in a specific sense, both interpretations are applicable, i.e. neither is applicable exclusively<sup>47</sup>, at least as far as Sextus is concerned<sup>48</sup>, yet this requires further elaboration.

While the burden of arguments cast by Pyrrhonists, as the preceding outline suggests, seems as the burden for their dogmatic opponents to bear, important thing to note here is that

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<sup>44</sup> This is how Barnes ("Ancient Skepticism and Causation," n. 42) renders Galen's title for the most extreme grade of Pyrrhonists (*ἀγροικοπυρρωνεῖσι*).

<sup>45</sup> Barnes (op. cit., 158) refers to this moderate form as 'Sober', and titles it 'urbane' ("The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist," 61); Burnyeat ("The Sceptic in His Place and Time," 99), in honor of Montaigne, titles it 'country gentleman's' form of skepticism.

<sup>46</sup> Fogelin (*Pyrrhonian Reflections*, 3-9) elaborates his allegiance to such an interpretation by Frede (in previously cited "The Sceptic's Beliefs" and "The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent").

<sup>47</sup> One is compelled to assume that, as Barnes ("Ancient Skepticism and Causation," 159) poetically puts it, "there are several Sceptics beneath Sextus' skin."

<sup>48</sup> I.e. this is not to say that we can elaborate all classical Pyrrhonists' approaches in the same manner. It is possible that the ratings Galen applies are accurate when it comes to specific members of the tradition, parallel to the late Academy's advocacy of fallibilism. Perils associated with the 'slide' to dogmatism through the prism of Pyrrhonist stance will be elaborated further in the following text.

stressing the dialectical aim of the arguments ventured by them is not equal to seeing Pyrrhonists as “defenders of common beliefs against criticisms of dogmatic philosophy”<sup>49</sup>, no more than Academics’ *ad hominem* approach is to be taken as such<sup>50</sup>. Sextus does occasionally present Pyrrhonists as not being in conflict with ordinary life, but “struggling on its side” against the dogmatists “who have risen against common preconceptions” (*M VIII* 158) with their “private fictions” (*PH II* 102). Yet this struggle seems selective, as we can find skeptics in Sextus’ account going against common beliefs if these concur with the dogmatic thesis they are to argue against. Such is the case in his outline of arguments for and against motion (*PH III* 65):

Common sense and some of the philosophers suppose that there is such a thing as motion (ὁ μὲν γὰρ βίος καὶ τινες τῶν φιλοσόφων εἶναι κίνησιν ὑπολαμβάνουσιν); (...); and the Skeptics have said that there no more is than is not (μὴ μᾶλλον δὲ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι)

On the grammar of ‘οὐ μᾶλλον’, as previously outlined, skeptic is hardly to be seen here as siding with βίος. It is precisely in seeking to preserve dialectical openness that Sextus is made to argue against that which could be subsumed under the classification ‘common beliefs’, and suspend judgment, even when shamed by experience<sup>51</sup>. In continuation of *PH III* 65 quoted above, Sextus adds:

(...) so far as appearances go (ὅσον μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ τοῖς φαινομένοις), there seems (δοκεῖν) to be motion, so far as philosophical argument goes (ὅσον δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ λόγῳ) it is unreal.

In delineating what seems to be the case – as far as appearances go, he does not have skeptics favor it<sup>52</sup> (as ‘common sense’ does, in supposing that there *is* such a thing). The context *is* that of debate with the dogmatic opponents, still it unveils an important side to both dogmatists’ ‘fictions’ and common beliefs. Namely, neither are the former necessarily equal to private delusions<sup>53</sup>, nor are the latter to be seen as void of/immune to ontological and

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<sup>49</sup> Fogelin, op. cit., 10. It needs to be stated here that it is not at all clear that Frede himself was, especially in his later work, a representative of such a stance.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Gisela Striker, “Historical Reflections on Classical Pyrrhonism and Neo-Pyrrhonism,” in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.

<sup>51</sup> In conclusion of discussion about place, Sextus states (*PH II* 135): “(...) we should infer that the Skeptics are confounded by the arguments and discountenanced by the evident impressions (δυσωπεῖ δὲ καὶ ἡ ἐνάργεια); hence we subscribe to neither side, so far as what is said by the Dogmatists goes (ὅσον ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις ὑπὸ τῶν δογματικῶν), but suspend judgment about place.”

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *PH II* 72ff, *M VII* 354, 357-8, 365-6, 383.

<sup>53</sup> This is something that Fogelin too notes (*Pyrrhonian Reflections*, 88ff) in distinction between revisionist and justificationalist strategies of philosophers (and the combination of the two), while adding that “the point of Pyrrhonian skepticism is to reject all such moves that attempt to transcend – rather than to improve or perfect – our common justificatory procedures.” This description of ‘the

epistemological commitments. Thus, in a specific sense, to side with the latter would seem to impose on Pyrrhonists a specific type of ‘dialectical blindness’, or, perhaps more appropriately, ‘dialectical blind spot’, which is in no way implied by Sextus’ approach. The dialectical blind spot implied looks to be twofold, as it seems to suggest not only that what is referred to by ‘common beliefs’ is a stance *sans* ontological or epistemological commitments or a stance void of conceptions which could slide into becoming the basis for a dogmatic theory, but also that it is monolithic, immune to disagreement.

Passage commonly cited as evidence that everyday beliefs are preserved in Pyrrhonists’ conduct of life is *PH I 13* in which Sextus distinguishes between two senses of *δόγμα*, broader one in which ‘to dogmatize’ is admissible for *σκεπτικοί*, and a narrow meaning in which dogmatizing is prohibited. The latter meaning is that of a philosophico-scientific tenet, or in Sextus words, “assent to some unclear object of investigation in the sciences” (*ibid.*), i.e. the meaning commonly associated with the word at hand<sup>54</sup>. That Pyrrhonists do not dogmatize in that sense is not at all surprising. The broader sense in which the word is used, that is of interest to all seeking to understand Pyrrhonists’ approach in everyday life, is, as Sextus reports, ‘τὸ εὐδοκεῖν τινι πράγματι,’ approval or being content with, “acquiescing in something” (*PH I 13*). In that sense skeptics *assents*<sup>55</sup> to the states forced on him by appearances, still, it would be unfair to Sextus’ efforts not to notice the same passivity he stresses time and again in the choice of wording to describe Pyrrhonists’ *δόγματα*. The *δόγματα* he describes in this passage seem but a shadow of ordinary, everyday, common beliefs<sup>56</sup>. If dogmatically inclined investigation renders even evident into non-evident, clear into unclear, arguments against *φαινόμενα* appear *as* prevention of rashness and conceit (*PH I 20*), and passivity in Pyrrhonists’ attending to ‘τοις φαινομένοις’ as protection from it. To appreciate the noted passivity, in contrast to the questioned *φαινόμενα*, it serves well to revisit Sextus’ own outline in *PH I 22*<sup>57</sup> (emphasis added):

The criterion (*κριτήριο*), then, of the Sceptical persuasion is, we say, the appearance (*φαινόμενον*), implicitly meaning by this the impression (*φαντασίαν*); for since this lies in feeling and involuntary affection (*ἐν πείσει γὰρ καὶ ἀβουλήτῳ πάθει κειμένη*) it is *not*

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point’ of Pyrrhonian skepticism is a consequence of adopting an exclusively ‘urbane’ treatment, discussed further in the following text.

<sup>54</sup>In both writings preceding Sextus and the remainder of his work; cf. Barnes (“The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist,” 67ff) offers a useful analysis of the usage of *δόγμα* preceding Sextus’ writings; and statistics on the usage in his writings (*ibid.*, 73).

<sup>55</sup> In outlining what aforementioned approval or acquiescence means in the cited *PH I 13*, Sextus states that the skeptic assents (*συγκατατίθεται*) to the states forced on him by appearances.

<sup>56</sup> Unlike the portrayal in *DL IX 102-4*.

<sup>57</sup> Partially quoted above, p. 67, trans. Bury (modified).

*open to question* (ἀζήτητος). Consequently, no one, I suppose, disputes that the underlying object has this or that appearance; the point in dispute is whether the object *is* in reality such as it *appears* to be.

That which lies in involuntary πάθος (*PH* I 22), on Sextus' report, is not the matter in inquiry, it is ἀζήτητος. In line with his own suggestion on how one should take 'the reported' in his writings, this would seem to be a notice on what appears to be "the point in dispute" among the disputants, and not a (dogmatic) notice that something *is not* to be the matter in inquiry. The debated concerns the question whether something *is* as it appears, and thus one can understand insistence on passivity in Sextus' account as disclosing that the skeptics, in remaining open, do not avail themselves of any further ontological or epistemological commitments, do not allow that which is received passively to slide into 'actively' *accepted*<sup>58</sup>, as some dogmatists would, much like (some in) the everyday.

It needs to be additionally stressed that the specific type of detachment Pyrrhonists are described as practicing in everyday life, is a detachment pertaining to openness, not to a disavowal of ordinary practices<sup>59</sup>. In a specific sense, they can make use of all the ontological/epistemological ties relating to 'the everyday', without committing to them. There is a way, though not uncontroversial, to point out specifically what the openness amounts to in everyday life<sup>60</sup>, using Sextus' own words. In an ambiguous passage *PH* I 20, used equally by proponents of 'rustic' and 'urbane' interpretations, we are told:

For example, it appears to us that honey sweetens, we concede this inasmuch as we are perceptually sweetened, but whether ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ it is actually sweet is something we investigate (ζητοῦμεν) – and this is not the appearance, but what is said about the appearance.

To try and reconstruct the message Sextus wanted to convey, one needs to decipher the ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ proviso. It goes without saying that the dispute on how to understand the scope of Sextus' skepticism (and hence the question what it is that this passage conveys), is accompanied with a further dispute on how to interpret λόγος in the proviso<sup>61</sup> at hand. It seems

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<sup>58</sup> For a similar report on Academics, cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1122 b-d; it should be noted here is that the 'passivity' of impression is again 'borrowed' from the countered accounts (see section I.2. of this study).

<sup>59</sup> *contra* those advocating an exclusively 'rustic' interpretation one can point to Sextus account of recollective signs which Pyrrhonists judge from, "fire from smoke, wound from scar" (*M* VIII 157).

<sup>60</sup> As what it amounts to with regard to philosophico-scientific theories seems rather clear from the outline of their arguments.

<sup>61</sup> Proviso in this form appears solely in four passages in *PH* – I 20, 227, III 48, 72; cf. Jacques Bruschwig, "The ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ formula in Sextus Empiricus," in *Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), n. 1 (*contra* Janáček). As far as

that a clue to this might be offered by Sextus himself in another passage where a skeptic is portrayed *investigating*; namely in elaboration of the aforementioned skeptical utterance “παντὶ λόγῳ λόγον ἀντικεῖσθαι,” (*PH I* 202) which not only reports, but is also used to advise skeptics to remain open. In elaborating what this utterance stands for Sextus reports that in that phrase λόγος is used in a more general sense, i.e. not solely in a narrow sense of establishing something unclear “by way of assumption and consequence,”<sup>62</sup> but as to incorporate any way of establishing something “in dogmatic fashion”. To take these to be the senses in which λόγος is used in contexts portraying skeptical *investigation*, would be to render formula ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ into ‘on *that* account’ or ‘as far as the argument goes’ depending on the nature of the account, i.e. argument, present in the context in which it is applied<sup>63</sup>. When it comes to the passage *PH I* 20, since there is no specific philosophical argument addressed in the passages preceding it, it seems that that the more general sense of λόγος would be applicable. Then the passage could be read as outlining (i) skeptical approval, contentment with φαινόμενα as elaborated above, and (ii) delineating between that type of contentment and the pre-skeptical commitment, if we could call it that, with which accepting the φαινόμενα in a stronger sense might be associated, i.e. as noting that ‘following’ appearances should not be understood as stating that skeptic follows these in a sense of *an account* establishing how things *actually* are<sup>64</sup>. This is what he *investigates*, and this is “not the appearance, but what is said about the appearance”, as skeptic does not deny being “perceptually sweetened” (*PH I* 20)<sup>65</sup>. This *is* what is said about the appearance by some of the dogmatists skeptics are arguing against<sup>66</sup>, yet it would also seem to be one of the ontological/ epistemological presuppositions one is innocently committed to in pre-skeptical, pre-philosophical stance associated with the average ‘everyday,’ much like the one that ‘there *is* motion.

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translations used in this study go – Bury mostly renders λόγος as ‘reason’ except in the *PH I* 20 where he translates ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ proviso as ‘in its essence,’ Annas and Barnes in translation render it as ‘argument’ making the proviso ‘as far as the argument goes’. Differing interpretations are available by Frede, “The Sceptic’s Beliefs,” 11; Burnyeat, “Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism,” 47, n. 49; and Brunschwig, *op. cit.*, 252 ff.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *PH I* 135, the Stoic definition of ‘argument’.

<sup>63</sup> Brunschwig (“The ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ formula”) reaches the same conclusion as above, albeit through a different path, analyzing the very passages in which the formula occurs. Thus it seems revealing that the path he takes leads up to what Sextus is saying in *PH I* 202, even though Brunschwig, as far as I can tell, at no point refers to that passage.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *M VIII* 401, where Sextus reports that “appearance too should be kept in suspension of judgment and so should demonstration which depends on it.”

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *PH I* 13.

<sup>66</sup> E.g. *PH I* 70ff, *M VII* 370ff.

The dialectical openness requires of skeptics not to display allegiance to any framework, the openness Sextus portrays as missing in approach of the Academy. It is from that stance of openness that the skeptics cannot approach the everyday as though it is monolithic either. Hence we find dissent in ordinary life mentioned alongside conflicts among philosophers in the first trope of Agrippa, and elsewhere in Sextus' writings<sup>67</sup>. His concern may not be to cure the conceit of those in 'the ordinary', nor to abolish the type of commitment parallel to those of dogmatists among those in 'the ordinary', yet if we take his claims seriously, where there is dissent, and dissent is irresolvable without begging the question, Pyrrhonist suspends. Skepticism itself is explicitly defined as 'an ability', as *δύναμις ἀντιθετική φαινομένων τε καὶ νοουμένων καθ' οἶονδῆποτε τρόπον* (*PH I 8*)<sup>68</sup>, and to see Sextus' arguments as 'rustic' in some passages while 'urbane' in others, is presumably to see different modes of application of such an ability. To close off 'the ordinary' from its application, would mean to leave one framework unquestioned<sup>69</sup>. In the context Sextus is operating in this would be a type of a mistake he assigns to Carneades, the slide from the outline which serves to counter the notion of inactivity supposedly brought about by skeptics' perpetuated inquiry into dogmatism which, as outlined above, apparently has been the dogmatic slip of some of Carneades' followers<sup>70</sup>.

In arguing against appearances Pyrrhonist's motif, as previously explicated, is to uncover the rashness of dogmatists<sup>71</sup>, as "reasoning is such a deceiver that it all but snatches even what is apparent from under our very eyes"<sup>72</sup>, in denying himself the commitment to the presuppositions 'everyday' tends to be immersed in<sup>73</sup>, skeptic's life differs from 'ordinary

<sup>67</sup> E.g. *M VIII* 355, 362.

<sup>68</sup> A similar report on Aenesidemus' practice is available in *DL IX* 78-9.

<sup>69</sup> This is what leads Fogelin to the conclusion that specific instances of epistemological doctrines in our day and age are instances of skepticism, the conclusion that seems to violate the openness pertaining to 'authentic skepticism' (see the following text and part II of this study).

<sup>70</sup> Specifically, Sextus avoids a 'Philo-cum-Metrodorus' type of mistake.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1122 c.

<sup>72</sup> Continuation of *PH I 20*; the translation is from Annas and Barnes, who translate *λόγος* in the second occurrence in the passage as "reasoning".

<sup>73</sup> One only needs to take as example Moore's outline of some of the beliefs of 'common sense': "But, now, besides material objects, we believe also that there are in the Universe certain phenomena very different from material objects. In short we believe that we men, besides having bodies, also have minds; and one of the chief the chief things which we mean, by saying we have minds is, I think, this: namely that we perform mental acts or acts of consciousness. (...) these acts of consciousness are certainly not themselves material objects"; cf. George Edward Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 4. This 'common sense' belief, observed through prism of philosophy, amounts to dualism. Pace Moore (op.cit., 153), it is hardly something "we cannot help believing". To return to Sextus, the point of skeptics' detachment from 'the everyday' is precisely in the alike concurrence of 'the everyday' with philosophies.



life'. This corresponds to how his utterances are to be taken as well, as skeptic's phrases display detachment<sup>74</sup>, and one could hardly say that utterances in 'ordinary life' are similarly lacking in commitment to what *is*. The detachment thus practiced would seem to be both arising from and reinforcing *δύναμις ἀντιθετική*, skepticism as Sextus defines it. If one seeks a title for this state of detachment in Sextus' writings it would seem to be the notion of 'skeptical disposition (*διάθεσις*)'. The skeptical disposition, Sextus reports, is manifested in skeptical utterances (*PH I* 187), and is the disposition Pyrrhonist maintains while investigating and thinking (*PH II* 10). It cannot be stressed enough that the detachment is a state of openness, *not* the state of rebuttal of presuppositions that 'the ordinary' resides on, or an affirmation of a negative thesis, or a "detachment from oneself"<sup>75</sup>. This openness hardly amounts to state of total lethargy, in which "all discourse, all action would immediately cease"<sup>76</sup>. To make use of the aforementioned example, a skeptic might eat the honey, approve that it *is* (appears) sweet, talk and think about it and its sweetness. What he reports to be detached from are the dubious presuppositions in reasoning and attending to things inherent to *the everyday* as well, what he argues against are dealings with these, through reinforcement or rebuttal, in the sphere of philosophy.

These relations between skepticism, the 'everyday', and philosophy, seem to be further corroborated through what Sextus is signaling in attachment of '*ἀδοξάστως*' to portrayal of skeptics as leading an ordinary life<sup>77</sup>, thus, specifically in dealings with the conduct of life, i.e. in relation to the ethical part of philosophy. There Sextus, in outlining the perturbation and anxiety of those who pursue what they believe to be 'good,' and equally strenuously avoid what they take to be 'evil,' further suggests (*M XI* 130-136, part)<sup>78</sup>:

Well then, it is plain from what has been said that a multitude of evils occur as the result of the things believed by some to be goods, and as a result of the evils other evils come about, so that owing to these happiness becomes unattainable. And in the next place, we must show that we cannot gain assistance either by taking the road of the dogmatic philosophy. For if anything good by nature or evil by nature is assumed to exist, he who is consoling the man who is perturbed owing to his strenuous pursuit of the good as good, and his excessive avoidance of the evil as evil, checks the perturbation either by declaring that it is a duty neither to pursue the good nor to avoid the evil, or by showing that the object which the man pursues possesses very little value and that it is not proper to pursue it, whereas this other object has greater

<sup>74</sup> A good example corroborating this is his comparison between Pyrrhonists and Democriteans in *PH I* 213, or insistence for 'is' to be taken as 'appears' (cf. *PH I* 135, 192, 198)

<sup>75</sup> As Burnyeat ("Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism," 37) qualifies it.

<sup>76</sup> Hume, *EHU* 12.23; *SBN* 160

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *PH I* 23, 226, 237, *II* 102, 254, *III* 2, 151, 235; note that *ἀδοξάστως* was a concept used by Stoics to describe the 'wise man' (cf. *DL VII* 162).

<sup>78</sup> Trans. Bury. Cf. *PH I* 27-8.

value and to follow after it is fitting (...); or <by showing> that this object is of little use and entails many annoyances, whereas that object is of great use and entails few annoyances. But to declare that it is not proper either to pursue the good or to avoid the evil strenuously is contrary to the view of the Dogmatists, who are always harping on the selection or rejection of these things and on desires and avoidances (...) so that the philosopher's discourse creates a new disease in place of the old (...). As then, the physician, if he does away with a pleurisy but creates inflammation of the lungs, (...), does not get rid of the danger but shifts it over, so also the philosopher, who introduces one perturbation in place of another, gives no succour to the person perturbed.

Here, the distress is easily seen as the burden of those in the 'everyday' as well, the philosophers are clearly delineated as those who further perpetuate and deepen this distress illusively suggesting to alleviate it, and the skeptics counter their views "on selection and rejection," or, in terms used in this study, put these views to question. The skeptics' report 'we live without holding opinion' ('ἀδοξάστως βιοῦμεν') precisely runs counter to the pursuit and avoidance the dogmatists dwell on, and those in the everyday tend to be trapped in. In Sextus' words (*M XI* 141-144, part):

And of the goods and evils which are said to exist some are introduced by belief, others by necessity. Thus by belief (*κατὰ δόξαν*) are introduced all those which men pursue or avoid of their own judgment (*κατὰ κρίσιν*). (...) But by necessity are brought about all such things as befall us because of an irrational affection of sense (*κατ' ἄλογον αἰσθησεως πάθος*), and all that some natural necessity brings about, "but no one would willingly choose them," or avoid them, – such as pain or pleasure. Hence, since there exists such a difference as this in these things, the fact that it is only the man who suspends judgment about all things who lives to the end an unperturbed life in respect of the goods and evils due to belief we have already established<sup>79</sup> (...) when we showed that it is not possible to be happy if one assumes the existence of anything good and evil by nature.

The portrayal of skeptics as acquiescing to that which lies (by dogmatists' admission) in the unwilling pathos<sup>80</sup>, as "neither affirming nor denying anything rashly, but subjecting all things to criticism" (*M XI* 111), and thus as "freest from care" is *opposed* to the dogmatists' suggestions. It stands as a counter suggestion to the dogmatists' specific cures for those in distress, and serves to counter the charge cast by dogmatists, namely, that the alternative to the answers they propose, remaining with the questions (i.e. living without opinion), binds one to inactivity or inconsistency (*M XI* 161-7), much like the notions utilized by Academics to the same effect; yet, it is hardly a portrayal congenial to ordinary life (cf. *PH I* 30), or to a suggestion that the commitments of 'the everyday' are absolved from being put to question.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *PH I* 25, *M XI* 110ff.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *PH I* 22, quoted above.

Only the commitment-free, involuntary affection, in being *ἀζήτητος*, appears as something untouched by skeptics' arguments (cf. *M XI* 148).

Presumption is, of course, that one does not begin from such detachment, such lack of commitments. On Sextus' report<sup>81</sup> inquiries of skeptics had the same point of origin as those of dogmatist<sup>82</sup>, as these started from "anomaly in things" and the associated puzzlement "as to which of them they should rather assent to" (*PH I* 12), i.e. puzzlement as to "which are true and which are false" among the competing appearances (*PH I* 26). The progression from that point has already been explicated, as encountering *ἰσοσθένῃ διαφωνίαν* brings about *ἐποχή*. The state of detachment, disposition reinforcing *δύναμις ἀντιθετική*, can be seen as 'keeping' of accounts and arguments in suspension<sup>83</sup>, or remaining in a state of suspension<sup>84</sup> over them, in virtue of which Pyrrhonist is titled *ὁ ἐφεκτικός*. The additional argumentative twist to the story of the origin of skeptical thought, as outlined by Sextus, is that suspension brought about tranquility, and *δύναμις ἀντιθετική* in general is to be seen as "an ability by which, because of the equipollence in the opposed objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment and afterwards to tranquility" (*ἀταραξία*, *PH I* 8)<sup>85</sup>. To note that *ἐποχή* is accompanied by *ἀταραξία*<sup>86</sup> in such a manner relieves Sextus of some of the difficulties associated with bringing arguments to a halt in 'suspension'<sup>87</sup>. Namely, if *ἀταραξία* is impetus for "men of talent"<sup>88</sup> to start investigating truth and falsehood in things, then approach skeptics take starts and ends in what is sought by philosophers to begin with<sup>89</sup>, i.e. 'quietude' need not be argued for by the skeptics as a goal if it is a goal a dogmatic opponent would subscribe to as well. In a sense, in curing the dogmatists from rashness and conceit, Sextus seems to be saying that what is sought need not include commitment to a doctrine. He further

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<sup>81</sup> *PH I* 12, 26, 29; It needs to be noted though that, just as the skeptics first 'came to investigate what in things is true and what is false' (*PH I* 26) on Pyrrhonists' account, members of Academy claimed that investigation of alternatives was done in order to find the truth (*Acad.* II 60; *ND I* 11).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. (already noted) Plato, *Rep.* 524d; Aristotle, *Met.* A 2 982b11-17.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *M VIII* 177, 258, 328, 401.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *M VIII* 118, 259.

<sup>85</sup> Sextus further elaborates this concept in *PH I* 10: *ἀταραξία δὲ ἐστὶ ψυχῆς ἀοχλησῖα* (freedom from disturbance) *καὶ γαληνότης* (calmness).

<sup>86</sup> *PH I* 29 – 'quietude' follows 'suspension' "as a shadow follows a body"; cf. *DL IX* 107

<sup>87</sup> In addition to the one outlined below see e.g. Grgić (*Obrisi pironizma*, 75) for at least three things Sextus accomplishes through the use of this notion: establishing a link with earlier pyrrhonist tradition, distancing himself from outlooks resembling pyrrhonists' stance (Arcesilaus and Cyrenaics), and lastly, making pyrrhonists' persuasion more appealing.

<sup>88</sup> In *PH I* 12, with *ἀταραξία* portrayed as *ἀρχὴ αἰτιώδης* of skepticism.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Sedley, "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism," 22; Filip Grgić, "Sextus Empiricus on the Goal of Skepticism," *Ancient Philosophy* 26.1. (2006), 147.

seems to be stressing the ‘openness’ of the Pyrrhonist account in claiming that *up to now ἀταραξία* presents itself as a goal<sup>90</sup>.

Presumably, the reason why the exclusively ‘urbane’ treatment of Pyrrhonism has had additional appeal to those seeking to revive skepticism is what might strike one as a difference in the approach of Academics and that of Pyrrhonists. While Academics’ approach in argumentation can easily be interpreted as imposing ‘suspension of assent’ on the paradigmatic ‘wise man’ in Stoic account, in Pyrrhonism it is indubitably the state in which *σκεπτικοί* proclaim to find themselves as well. Moreover, if one takes ‘suspension of intellect’ to be a state of complete paralysis, one would not want it to apply to the stance he is advocating. As I hope preceding outline has shown, nor should *ἐποχή* be taken as a state of paralysis, nor can more durable good<sup>91</sup> result from Pyrrhonism as exclusively limited to philosophical objections. Pyrrhonist primarily did use their *δύναμις ἀντιδραστική* to cure disorders of dogmatists. The openness as elaborated is the openness pertaining to ‘authentic skepticism’, and counters the notion that answers are needed; through imposing limitations on it one invites ‘phantom skepticism’. This seems to be precisely what Pyrrhonists were trying to avoid, in cautious explication of how their practical criterion is to be understood. If absence of revelations in Academics’ account can come to be understood as an answer, a thesis, solely if one ascribes to them acceptance (even in a limited form) of a positive doctrine and the accompanying shift in aim of inquiry, Pyrrhonists’ approach seems to steer clear of such a peril seemingly inherent in a piecemeal approach in skeptical argumentation. Yet the cautiousness of Pyrrhonists does not in itself eliminate the threat of the phantom interpretation. Namely, it might leave an impression that Pyrrhonists, in keeping to it, disregard the limitedness of inquiries conducted, namely, that the questions posed at the close of investigations are *just* the questions on that from which they result<sup>92</sup>. Sextus’ treatment of *ἐποχή* as *πάθος* and *ἄλλοι νῦν* qualification (or its variations) can thus be further observed as efforts for such an impression, which seems to be the ‘phantom’ peril in economically

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<sup>90</sup> *PH I* 25, 215, 232-3.

<sup>91</sup> To paraphrase Hume who suggests that “no durable good can ever result” (EHU 12.23, SBN 159) from excessive skepticism, thus the skeptic “had better keep within his proper sphere and display those philosophical objections” (EHU 12.22, SBN 159).

<sup>92</sup> Barnes suggests that slips in Diogenes Laertius’ work congenial to the peril outlined above, would have been charged by Sextus as a misrepresentation of Pyrrhonists’ stance, cf. Jonathan Barnes, “Diogenes Laertius IX 61-116,” 4253-4254; his comment on DL most likely not representing an accurate account of non-Sextan Pyrrhonism, 4255-6; The impression noted in the above text is a paraphrase of Hegel’s description of the *void* of skepticism (PS §79), cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 51.

inclined argumentative practice, to be turned away. Still, for all these efforts, the openness of their approach in skeptical argumentation seems to have been just as easily misunderstood.

As far as insistence on duality in skeptical thought goes, if one takes on a task to survey the similarities among the traditions the impression imparted would be that Pyrrhonism is very much in line with Academic skepticism, if not even a ‘revived’ form of it<sup>93</sup>, conceived to counter a broader range of theories and dogmatic speculations. Those who seek to portray Pyrrhonism as a wayward son of Academic stance point to the fact that it came to be conveniently after the Academy slipped into dogmatism, giving the practical criterion dogmatic make up of a proposal for a new epistemological theory. This has led some authors to conclude even further that allegiance to Pyrrho, expressed in the title chosen for the tradition, “looks like a political gesture to establish the historical priority (...) over Arcesilaus’ New Academy”<sup>94</sup>. For the purpose of this study, as previously noted, the questions of ‘primary point of origin’ i.e. the puzzles of originality, need not be resolved. What needed to be shown was that insistence on duality in skeptical thought is strained, and congeniality noted in the two traditions in the absence of answers, the approach *in* and *to* arguments casted should have shown that, for all the variations noted, the ‘phantom’ interpretation fits neither of the traditions at hand. The congenial traits arise from the aim of putting to question, and are traits that pertain to inquiry that suits the title of ‘inquirer’, i.e. ‘authentic’ skepticism.

On that note, it can be added that the notion of *ἀταραξία* which is absent from the Academic stance, and is present in accounts portraying Pyrrho<sup>95</sup>, need not represent a significant variation either. Namely, tranquility appears to be the other side to detachment as outlined above, as it is “tranquility in matters of opinion”<sup>96</sup>; and, as noted, one needs to bear in mind the context in which that skepticism developed, as it is a context in which philosophical reflections, generally speaking, were ethically driven. If anything, the notion of ‘tranquility’ can serve to reveal further that skepticism cannot be, or better yet, should not be separated from the context in which it is practiced, as it would seem rather pointless to question the framework no one is seeking to defend<sup>97</sup>. While it should not be observed (or

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<sup>93</sup> cf. Sedley, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism,” 20; Frede, “Stoics and Skeptics,” 93; Frede, “The Sceptic’s Two Kinds of Assent,” 146.

<sup>94</sup> Sedley, “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism,” 19.

<sup>95</sup> cf. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* XIV18.1-4.

<sup>96</sup> *ἐν τοῖς κατὰ δόξαν* – *PH I* 25; cf. *PH I* 26, 30.

<sup>97</sup> With regard to contemporary skepticism this will be further discussed in the following text. What could be objected here is that the sting of Sextus’ arguments is retrospective, as he argues against philosophical schools preceding him. While that may be the case, one needs to bear in mind that his

practiced) separately from the context in which it arises, it should not be viewed as accepting (in a strong sense) the context in question either. As was previously noted, authentic skeptic should be understood as doing exactly what he set out to do, i.e. putting to question the framework in which the philosopher operates, and not as advancing a ‘negative thesis’. The origin of the ‘phantom’ resides, as elaborated, precisely in the assumption that a specific framework was accepted, and negative thesis endorsed. The problem with the ‘phantom’ reading of skepticism was that it proved to be pervasive. The unfortunate fate of the title ‘σκεπτικοί’, as summarized at the beginning of this attempt at delineation, was in ‘phantom’ dogmatic thesis being associated with the term ‘*scepticus*’. Even more unfortunately, it remains associated with it, in specific interpretations, to this day. As it seems that Pyrrhonists’ somewhat strained attempt in differentiation between themselves and Academics invited such a fate, it would seem that similar attempts of Pyrrhonians, or neo-Pyrrhonists to delineate between themselves and the so-called Cartesian skepticism in a form it takes these days, in a specific sense reinforces the idea that phantom skepticism *is* one of the legitimate form of skepticism. The following section should show that Descartes himself had nothing to do with the perpetuation of the ‘phantom’.

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work leaves an impression of representing a collection of skeptical argumentation (e.g. his classification of the modes as being handed down).

#### I. 4. Descartes' authentic use of skepticism

One might accept that the insistence on duality in skeptical thought in respect to classical skepticism is strained, yet still claim that what is called 'Cartesian skepticism' is significantly different in a sense that is required to advance the idea that there *are* two different skeptical characters. Inasmuch, this modern brand of skepticism needs to be paid due attention. Namely, the arguments Descartes outlines in *Meditations on First Philosophy*<sup>1</sup> have come to be understood as 'skepticism about the external world' under the title 'Cartesian skepticism', and one finds this title associated with "the skeptical philosophical *view that we know nothing* about the physical world around us"<sup>2</sup>. If such an understanding is adequately supported by Descartes' writings, it would seem, on the basis of the delineation conducted thus far, that Cartesian skepticism is to be taken as an instance of the 'phantom form' of skepticism. Moreover, as the 'phantom' emerges from the acceptance of a dogmatic framework, the fact that Descartes, as is well known, was not a skeptic, would seem to further such an interpretation. Still, an important lesson drawn in observance of the arguments of classical skeptics was that, absent the context of inquiry, skeptical arguments are easily misunderstood. Thus, the interpretation of Descartes' use of skepticism should proceed from observance of the context in which the arguments were deployed. The context, specifically, is that of the "First Meditation," and though Descartes explicitly claimed the arguments were not to be treated as novelties<sup>3</sup>, to analyze these against the backdrop of classical skepticism in an effort of delineation of authentic skepticism, is to observe whether the arguments *in this application* display a shift in intent, or the type of dogmatic allegiance required to collapse into a negative dogmatic thesis. Important thing to note at this point is that in outlining the similarities between the classical traditions and Descartes' arguments as presented here, the similarities are not to be taken as necessarily serving as proof that Descartes drew from a specific tradition, extended it, read the text associated with that tradition, or sought to criticize it specifically<sup>4</sup>. The goal of this section is rather modest, yet significant for the understanding

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<sup>1</sup> Translation cited in this study is from Cottingham, John, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Barry Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), viii, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> In replies to second set of objections (AT 7:130/CSM 2:94) he specifically refers to Academics and Sceptics with regards to the issue of novelty in stating that although he "was reluctant to reheat and serve this precooked material" he still could not "avoid dedicating one whole Meditation to it." Again, in reply to Hobbes' objection that he was publishing *ancient material* (AT 7:171-72, CSM 2:121) Descartes writes that he "was not trying to sell them as novelties."

<sup>4</sup> Differing views on these and interrelated issues are available in e.g. M. F. Burnyeat, "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," *The Philosophical Review* 91.1.

of skepticism properly so called; namely, to observe if the arguments exhibit a specific congeniality which would allow one to subsume them under the same heading.

Descartes provides us with the following description of the “First Meditation” (AT 7:12; CSM 2:9):

In the First Meditation reasons are provided which give us possible grounds for doubt about all things, especially material things, so long as we have no foundations for the sciences other than those which we have had up till now.

What he felt was needed, if he were to “establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last” (AT 7:17; CSM 2:12), was to overthrow all of the opinions he has come to hold over the course of his life. And this procedure, Descartes elaborates, need not imply showing that these opinions were false<sup>5</sup>, as it can be carried out by simply withholding assent “from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable just as carefully as (...) from those which are apparently false” (AT 7:18; CSM 2:12)<sup>6</sup>. To render opinions uncertain and dubious, and thus ‘put them aside’, one only needs to find “in each of them some reason for doubt” (ibid.)<sup>7</sup>. Thus, in light of the approach of classical skeptics as outlined above, one could say that what Descartes seeks to begin from is the establishment of the stance classical skeptics left their opponents with. In a specific sense, it could be stated that he wants to prevent himself from exhibiting rashness and conceit the skeptics associated with a dogmatic stance. What he seeks to find by this procedure is something certain and indubitable, a lasting and stable foundation for the sciences, yet this goal need not be perceived as a display of a ‘dogmatic commitment’, as long as he remains ‘open’ in inquiry. After all, as noted, classical skeptics have similarly claimed that their primary goal in argumentation was to ‘find the truth’. To prevent this procedure of rendering opinions uncertain and dubious from turning

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(1982): 3-40 ; Gail Fine, “Descartes and Ancient Skepticism: Reheated Cabbage ?” *The Philosophical Review* 109.2. (2000): 195-234; José Luis Bermúdez, “Cartesian Skepticism; Arguments and Antecedents,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*, ed. John Greco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 53-80.

<sup>5</sup> He qualifies this as something which perhaps could not be done, cf. AT 7:18; CSM 2:12.

<sup>6</sup> Broughton titled this ‘the strong maxim of assent’; cf. Janet Broughton, *Descartes’s Method of Doubt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 44ff.

<sup>7</sup> This seems like an approach closely mimicking Academics’ argumentation (albeit in the first person stance). Yet it needs to be noted here that Descartes in reply to Bourdin makes the following claim: “For everyone knows that a distrustful person, as long as he remains in a state of distrust, and therefore *does not affirm or deny anything*, cannot be led into error even by an evil demon.” (Seventh Set of Objections with Replies, AT 7:476, CSM 2:320, emphasis added) . For the purpose of this study, at this point, it is enough to note that both of the approaches in the classical traditions can be associated with this specific move, that Descartes titles ‘doubt’.



into “an endless task” (AT 7:18; CSM 2:12), Descartes states that it can be done by undermining the foundations i.e. the basic principles on which these reside<sup>8</sup> and adds:

Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses.

This statement sets the stage for doubt, as it identifies the framework Descartes is seeking question, as he explicitly states in the summarized description of the Meditation in question (AT 7:12; CSM 2:9)<sup>9</sup>:

Although the usefulness of such extensive doubt is not apparent at first sight, its greatest benefit lies in freeing us from all our preconceived opinions, and *providing the easiest route by which mind may be led away from the senses*. The eventual result of this doubt is to make it impossible for us to have any further doubts about what we subsequently discover to be true.

That this is the framework Descartes’ doubt is, in a specific sense, limited to, is corroborated by the manner in which he makes use of some of the examples already mentioned in elaboration of the argumentation used by classical skeptics. He starts from the occasions in which senses deceive us, and notes that “it is prudent to never trust completely those who have deceived us even once” (AT 7:18; CSM 2:12). This seems reminiscent of Academics’ argumentation *contra* Stoics in which one finds the claim that if a single case has cheated the senses, “it will have made everything doubtful” (Cic. *Acad.* II 84). Yet Descartes seems to

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<sup>8</sup> In terms used above, he opts for the economically inclined argumentative procedure, and the notice is reminiscent of Pyrrhonists’ claims. In Sextus’ parlance it could be stated that he renders doubtful *the account* on which he held this opinions to be true.

<sup>9</sup> I partially agree with Michael Williams, as I do not think that his doubt should be qualified (I would add exclusively) as ‘arising out of common sense’ due to this restriction of the framework; cf. M. Williams, “Descartes and the Metaphysics of Doubt,” in *Essays on Descartes’ Meditations*, ed. A. Oksenberg Rorty (Oakland: University of California Press, 1986), 117ff; *contra* Harry G. Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers and Madmen: The Defense of Reason in Descartes’s Meditations* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2008/1970), 5-6, pointing to Burman’s report AT 5:146, CSM 3:332. What needs to be noted is that, in line with the ontological/epistemological commitments of common sense and philosophical stances as elaborated above, the ‘reliance on the senses’ is symptomatic of Aristotelian epistemology as well. Even if the meditator in “First Meditation” is supposed to be the person just beginning to philosophize, in a pre-philosophical stance (*Conversations with Burman*, AT 5:146; CSM3:332), it would seem that the stance assigned to him (stance being deconstructed) is a stance bound to a specific philosophical outlook (cf. Broughton, *Descartes’s Method*, 26ff). Descartes does state in *Discourse, Part Four*, (AT: 31CSM 1:126) that he has found “that in practical life it is sometimes necessary to act upon opinions which one finds to be quite uncertain” and that search for truth requires more scrutiny, but this doesn’t exclude the possibility that the deconstruction of such opinions brings to question a philosophical stance as well. Especially since the beliefs he has acquired that are primarily addressed here are presumably those pertaining to the question of *real existence* (*Conversations with Burman*, AT 5:146; CSM3:333; this claim should be, again, taken in accordance with what he states in response to Bourdin, AT 7:523-4; CSM 3:355-6). *Contra* Williams I do not think the argument *depends* on specific metaphysical commitments, as will be argued in the following text.

approach the issue of occasional deception of the senses with less scrutiny and austerity<sup>10</sup>, as he notes that even though we are deceived in unfavorable conditions of perception<sup>11</sup>, this does not render many other beliefs doubtful, his examples being (i) his own position, apparel and action at the moment he was writing down these thoughts, and (ii) the belief that those *are* his hands and his body<sup>12</sup>. The reason why he does not dwell on the instances of occasional deception, as he seeks to quickly forward the attention further, to those instances in which conditions *seem* ‘favorable’, could be characterized as his reluctance to accept these specific concerns Academics and Pyrrhonists as undermining completely the framework of the senses, i.e. to accept the piecemeal approach as fitting to his aspiration to demolish these ‘foundations’ wholly<sup>13</sup>. He seems to disregard the underlying reasoning to arguments classical skeptics used – that if senses are to be treated as “reporting the truth”<sup>14</sup> the credibility of these reports vanishes with each instance in which they fail us, i.e. sense perception as a criterion is rendered questionable<sup>15</sup>. Still, since the distinction between unfavorable and favorable conditions also appears in the context of the ancient debate<sup>16</sup>, perhaps Descartes’ move could be interpreted as a reenactment of a dialectical exchange albeit in an internal dialogue, i.e. it need not be taken as a sign that Descartes’ skeptical procedure yielded to dogmatic commitments that early on in his use of doubt. It rather seems that such commitments, plausible or not, surface solely to be brought to question by further arguments. In the specified sense, thus, these appear not to be *part of* ‘skeptical argumentation’ at hand, but the ‘dogmatic counterweight’ to it.

In the next step Descartes takes, in questioning seemingly certain beliefs that he is in that position and apparel, that those are his hands and body, evoked examples of madness and

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<sup>10</sup> This is perhaps already noted in his qualification “never to trust completely”; for Academics see section I.2.1 above.

<sup>11</sup> In the “First Meditation” he specifically mentions solely size and distance (*loc.cit.*); In the “Sixth Meditation” he uses the same two examples and adds that there are countless such cases in which he found “the judgment of external senses were mistaken” (AT 7: 76; CSM 2:53), and adds that the same applies to internal senses as well (example offered is the pain felt in the amputated limb).

<sup>12</sup> Though this seems to run counter to the internal senses being mistaken (see previous note); for now I leave the issue of the ‘first person stance’ in listing certain beliefs which he later submits to doubt aside. It will be further elaborated in the following text.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Janet Broughton, “Cartesian Skeptics,” in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33ff.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Cic. *Acad.* II 79

<sup>15</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 53; *M* VII 165; for Pyrrhonists’ claim cf. *PH* II 51; *M* VII 346

<sup>16</sup> Cic. *Acad.* II 19; cf. Burnyeat “Idealism and Greek Philosophy,” 34 for a detailed account.

dreams are again familiar. He first dismisses likening himself to the madmen too quickly, and in evoking the dream example paces himself (AT 7:19; CSM 2:13)<sup>17</sup>:

As if I were not a man who sleeps at night, and regularly has all the same experiences' while asleep as madmen do when awake — indeed sometimes even more improbable ones. How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events — that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire — when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! Yet at the moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it is not asleep; as I stretch out and feel my hand I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing. All this would not happen with such distinctness to someone asleep. Indeed! As if I did not remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep. Suppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars — that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such body at all.

In the dream argument, as outlined in the quoted passage, the question is, to use words Plato has Socrates utter in *Theaetetus* (158b), “what proof you could give if anyone should ask us now, at the present moment, whether we are asleep and our thoughts are a dream, or whether we are awake”. Descartes, in answering the question, much like *Theaetetus* (158c) doesn't see what proof can be given, due to likeness of experiences<sup>18</sup>. With regard to the arguments cast by classical skeptics, this application of the dream example is reminiscent of the arguments Academics used to point out the indistinguishability of false from true impressions. Yet, in reusing this specific theme the skeptics “have long been harping on” (AT 8:367; CSM 1:309), his focus remains on the content indistinguishability<sup>19</sup>, i.e. Descartes fails to put the same

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<sup>17</sup>Descartes pacing himself is reminiscent of Lucullus' remark in Cic. *Acad.* II 54 — “who can be satisfied with his own sanity?” It has been suggested by M. Williams (“Descartes' transformation of the skeptical tradition,” 309) that Descartes “distances dreaming from madness”. While this seems in line with madness not being treated as a separate skeptical possibility or a stage in doubt, with which I partially agree (in as much as the example is not itself developed into a skeptical device, and its potency is unveiled solely through the dream example), I do not see any textual support for a claim that dreaming is *distanced* from madness, or that madness is *dismissed*, as suggested by Frankfurt (*Demons, Dreamers and Madmen*, 37ff) and in Bernard Williams', “Descartes's Use of Skepticism,” in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. M. Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 340. If anything, the wording used seems to suggest the mocking tone with regard to his quick dismissal of the madness possibility — “A brilliant piece of reasoning! As if I were not...”

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note here that in the objection that Descartes is publishing ancient material Hobbes specifically refers to Plato, among other ancients, and, as noted, Descartes acknowledges the similarity (AT 7:171-72, CSM 2:121).

<sup>19</sup> It must be noted here that the great majority of the instances in which the dream argument was used by Academics, as reported by Cicero, are focused on the ‘mind's assent’ to an impression ‘formed from an inexistent object’ as was noted above (in *Theaetetus* this is mentioned in 158 d — *our spirit contends*); and, as Williams (“Descartes' transformation of the skeptical tradition,” 308) notes, Cicero

emphasis on mind's assent. He does state that he had been *convinced* by the dreaming experiences, and he does state that he had been *tricked* before, yet his focus remains the resemblance between (false) dream content and content of (veridical) waking experience. What he seeks to point out by placing emphasis on the content of experience at a given time is that if this content would be the same in a counterfactual case, then it contains no evidence, no *sure signs*, to which one could point to in order to exclude the possibility of the counterfactual case. The conundrum, thus outlined, is *not* that "it is possible that any given experience might be false"<sup>20</sup> on the grounds that there are no sure signs of it not being false, nor is it "the quite general thesis that knowing that one is not dreaming is a condition of knowing something about the world around us on the basis of the senses"<sup>21</sup>. The problem posed *is*, to utilize Sextus' way of presenting skeptical puzzlements: if it appears to one, that he is awake<sup>22</sup>, could one, *on that account* (on the basis of his sensory experiences), affirm that he *actually is* awake? Descartes in posing this problem questions the framework of senses, as he announced he would do. The problem posed, as I see it, is not as different from the problem posed by Academics as it sometimes tends to be stressed by the interpreters. As noted in the preceding outline, they argued against the notion of the specific type of presentation which drags us to assent to it, and, in addition to specific characteristics it displays, *is* such that it could not have arisen from a non-existent object. Their use of the dream counterexample was to the effect that false impressions have the same pull on us, i.e. at the time one is having a false presentation (be it a hallucination, or a dream), one cannot distinguish it from the true one. In

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doesn't seem to report on examples of dreams fully replicating waking experience; yet specific passages seem to imply that content indistinguishability was used as well – cf. *Acad.* II 52, 90; *M* VII 403ff. It strikes me as a rather rash move in interpretation to claim that Academics had developed a 'weak argument' from dreaming in order to defend their 'thesis of plausible impressions', as Williams suggests (op.cit. 307ff).

<sup>20</sup> Bermúdez, "The Originality of Cartesian Skepticism" *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 17.4. (2000), 335; Bermúdez (loc.cit.) states that the epistemological principle (he calls it Zeno's principle, *ibid.*, 336) driving the argument is the following: *if, for any perceptual experience, it is possible that there should be phenomenally indistinguishable experience that is non-veridical, then the first perceptual experience cannot be trusted to be veridical*; As Academic-Stoic exchange was dealt with in the preceding text of this study, it is enough to point out here that this principle could not possibly be applied to either side in that debate. Academics sought to point out the inconsistency of Stoic account of cognitive impressions. If one was to try and reconstruct a 'principle' to fit the argument discussed here than it should read 'if, for any perceptual experience, it is possible that there should be phenomenally indistinguishable experience that is non-veridical, perceptual experience as a criterion of truth is rendered questionable.'

<sup>21</sup> Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*, 20; I disagree with Stroud's claim, at least as far as Descartes' argument goes, that the possibility of dreaming is presented as a challenge or an obstacle to our knowledge of the external world. Rather, it seems to represent an obstacle or a challenge for sensory experience to represent the grounds for our knowledge of the external world.

<sup>22</sup> One could add – in that position and apparel, and that those are his hands and his body...

fewer words, false impressions may arise which are phenomenally indistinguishable from true ones<sup>23</sup>. This does not seem to require for the false presentation to replicate *exactly* the true presentation one has had before, and perhaps Descartes could be said to overstate the point at hand. But in doing so, he does not present us with a more radical challenge to the credibility of sensory experience. As previously noted, even though he could have argued in the similar manner from the unfavorable conditions of perception, he chose beliefs formed in the most favorable conditions, in order to bring about doubt on whether or not, even in such condition we can conclude from the perceptual experience alone to the truth of that experience. If the argument appears reminiscent of the one used by Academics, his procedure in the internal to-and-fro could be qualified as evocative of Pyrrhonists' *δύναμις ἀντιθετική*<sup>24</sup>, as he offers an equipollent opposing account to counter his previous claim to certainty. Having thus brought into question the credibility of perceptual experience, his conclusion is not a negative verdict regarding the truth of his seemingly certain beliefs. Descartes urges us (and himself) to *suppose* that it is not true, as *perhaps* that might not be the case, i.e. on the grounds of sensory-experience based evidence he has, the possibility had not been ruled out. Before proceeding with the outline of beliefs Descartes still finds strike him as certain even after the dream possibility had been brought up, it needs to be noted that up to this point in the

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<sup>23</sup> M. Williams (in "Descartes' transformation of the skeptical tradition") limits this in Academics' account to 'existential error' and contrasts it with 'errors of identification' which he finds, in Academics account, confined to examples of seals, eggs, twins and the like. *Contra* Williams, the point of the Academics' dream argument is not solely that I seem to see what *is not* (there), the point is that at the time of having a hallucination or a dream I cannot *distinguish* it as unreal, just as in the cases of error in distinguishing two twins. On Academics account I could discover which twin I saw, it could be pointed out to me that I was hallucinating, yet the point is that at a given time I cannot distinguish the two cases apart. Descartes' claim, thus, is not 'more extreme', even though it is perhaps voiced in a more troubling way. To state that a person experiencing a hallucination at a given time cannot distinguish it from a real one seems to have a less daunting effect than the question which evidence one can produce in effect that he is not hallucinating at the moment. But it's solely an innocent reversal – true impressions may arise, such that they are phenomenally indistinguishable from false impressions I remember having. Pace Williams (op. cit., 308), retrospective verdict that a specific instance of experience was false is present in both Academic and Descartes' argumentation, and in both accounts it serves to reinforce the realization that, *at the time* it appeared to be true, *on the same basis* the true one appears to be true on. The recollection cannot serve as an implication of a 'weaker argumentative move'. In Cicero's words (Cic. *Acad.* II 90) directed at Stoic counterclaims: "But your school achieve nothing when you refute those false presentations by appealing to the recollection of madman or dreamers; for the question is not what sort of recollection is usually experienced by those who have woken up or have ceased to be mad, but what is the nature of the visual perception of men mad or dreaming at the moment when their experience is taking place."

<sup>24</sup> B. Williams ("Descartes Use of Skepticism," 342) argues that Pyrrhonist 'weapon' of equipollence (*ἰσοδύναμια*) has an application to Cartesian skepticism "only in an indirect and refined way". Namely, Williams feels that the counterarguments which Descartes offers completely remove "effect both from the original argument and from its contraries". As this regards the 'hyperbolic doubt' associated with what is titled *malin génie* hypothesis, it will be further addressed in the following text.

conclusion of the dream argument, he displays ‘openness’ as he does not affirm the negative thesis. Descartes didn’t include the ‘mind’s assent’ as a matter to debate about specifically, yet the choice of the framework he argues against validates this move in the argument. Simply put, if the argument is designed to question a specific account, the fact that other accounts are left out, or not addressed in the argument at hand seems not to be a reason to pronounce the argument illegitimate (example from the original traditions could be the trope from the senses, which is not illegitimate because it examines solely the senses).

In continuation, Descartes once again stops himself from assuming that the skeptical ponderings have weakened all he took to be the case based on foundation of the senses he is seeking to question. Assuming once again the position of his ‘internal’ dialectical counterpart in countering the pervasiveness of ‘dream possibility’, he proceeds by pointing out (AT 7:19-20; CSM 2:13):

Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things — eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole — are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist.

By likening the ‘mind’s self-originated motion’<sup>25</sup> in dreams to creativity of painters he wishes to point out the limit to imagination in producing the images. In a sense, he works off of the argument from indistinguishability in order to outline just how certainty is still to be found in content of sensory experience. Even if it represents an unreliable criterion for specific instances of perceptual beliefs one has about the world, the general notions still appear certain and indubitable in a specific way. He goes on to argue:

For even when painters try to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they cannot give them natures which are new in all respects; they simply jumble up the limbs of different animals. Or if perhaps they manage to think up something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before – something which is therefore completely fictitious and unreal – at least the colours used in the composition must be real.

Namely, what Descartes seeks to point out is that general notions, derived from perceptual experiences (occurring in counterfactual and actual alike), are not rendered questionable solely by questioning the reliability of specific sensory experiences in reporting the truth<sup>26</sup>. If one cannot use the content of perceptual experience to prove that specific experience is true,

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Cic. *Acad.* II 48

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Cic. *Acad.* II 22 for Stoic account of common notions (general ideas); detailed account in Frede, “Stoics and Skeptics,” 82ff.

this alone says nothing of the general notions derived from that content, and conversely, providing structure to that content. In Descartes' words (AT 7:20; CSM 2:14):

These are as it were the real colours from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in our thought.

He includes in this class “corporeal nature in general, and its extension; the shape of extended things; the quantity, or size and number of these things; the place in which they may exist, the time through which they may endure” (AT 7:20; CSM 2:14), and adds that the list is not exhaustive. The conclusion of this line of thought is that certainty is still to be found safe in dealings with most general things, as in arithmetic, geometry and the like subjects. The examples he uses are revealing (ibid.):

For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides. It seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion of being false.

At this point, in continuing the debate with himself, to counter the certainty of general things thus presented, he brings up the omnipotent deity which might be causing all the impressions he has had. Parallel to aforementioned issue of whether or not undermining sensory experience as a criterion calls for the dream-possibility, one could pose a question now whether Descartes' counterclaims to the dream possibility are plausible, i.e. address the interrelated issue whether the omnipotent deity addition “is superfluous”<sup>27</sup>. Leaving that issue aside for now, it needs to be noted here that the question he poses to himself remains similar to the preceding issue addressed (AT 7:21; CSM 2:14, emphasis added):

*How do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no shape, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now? What is more, since I sometimes believe that others go astray in cases where they think they have the most perfect knowledge, may I not similarly go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable?*

The question is not whether there *are* such things, but how can he *know* that there are such things he deemed to be certain (on the basis of sensory experience)<sup>28</sup>. The move from dream-

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<sup>27</sup> *Conversation with Burman* (AT 5:147; CSM 3:333).

<sup>28</sup> Pace Gail Fine who discusses the version of the external world problem in terms of “whether there is anything external to one's mind or to one's states of being appeared to”, Pappas is rightly stating that the problem “certainly (...) is not whether there is an external world”; cf. Gail Fine, “Sextus and External World Skepticism,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 24, ed. David Sedley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 345, George Pappas, “The Problem of the External World,” in *A Companion to Epistemology* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. J. Dancy, E. Sosa and M. Steup (Oxford: Blackwell

related to omnipotent deity-related<sup>29</sup> question is a move from specific cases of phenomenal indistinguishability of sensory experience-based beliefs from their non-veridical counterparts to the case in which the whole set of sensory experience-based beliefs is questioned in a similar manner. The presentations sent by deities were, as noted, used in the classical debates as well. Academics' use of the argument was, again, envisioned to counter Stoic account, and, from reports available it was apparently one of the instances of sorites-like arguments they used, i.e. argument proceeded through a number of small additions from the premises their opponents were willing to accept, to the conclusion that would strike them as unacceptable (Cic. *Acad.* II 47-8):

For they [Academics] say, when your [Stoic] school asserts that some presentations are sent by the deity – dreams for example, and the revelations furnished by oracles (...) (for they assert that the Stoics against whom they are arguing accept these manifestations) – how possibly, they ask, can the deity have the power to render false presentations ‘probable’<sup>30</sup> and not have the power to render ‘probable’ those which approximate absolutely most closely to the truth? or else, if he is able to render ‘probable’ those which are indistinguishable, although only with extreme difficulty, from false presentations? and if these, why not those which do not differ from them at all? Then, (...) it is probable that the mind may also be set in motion in such a manner that not only it cannot distinguish whether the presentations in question are true or false but that there really is no difference at all between them (...)

Much like the original ‘heap’ argument, sorites-like argument starting from the premise that the deity can have the power to render false presentations persuasive<sup>31</sup>, represents a slippery challenge of finding the cut-off point, between sets of impressions differing minutely, i.e. challenge of delineating those that would not fall under the scope of power attributed to such a cause. The conclusion sorites leads up to is that this deity could bring about that there *really is no difference* between true and false presentations. Similarly<sup>32</sup>, Descartes poses a question, with regard to goodness attributed to God, how it could be, if occasional deception occurs, that constant deception is inconsistent with that notion.

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Publishing, 2010), 629. Fine (loc.cit.) criticizes the same entry in the first edition (Blackwell Publishing, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> It perhaps should be noted here that what is referred to here as ‘omnipotent deity-related question’ is what is commonly referred to under title of *malin génie*. This latter title might be considered fallacious (cf. Bermúdez, “Cartesian Skepticism,” 61) as the ‘malicious demon’ is evoked after the ‘globalization’ move has already been put in place. Still, as it does refer to the same argumentative move (Descartes makes the same claim by introducing the malicious demon), the two titles of the problem are used interchangeably in this study.

<sup>30</sup> I.e. persuasive; for a discussion see section I.2.1, above.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *De Stoic.* 1057ab.

<sup>32</sup> This is solely to say that the leverage used to move to the next level of generality exhibits similar ‘slippery-slope’ quality. The controversial question of whether or not Descartes’ move presents a more ‘radical challenge’ will be addressed in the following text.



It has been argued recently that, in order to maneuver from specific cases of phenomenal indistinguishability of sensory experience-based beliefs in relation to their non-veridical counterparts, toward generalized or ‘globalized’ cases, the idea of omnipotent deity which sometimes deceives me needs to be complemented with “reasons to think that the deity is sufficiently powerful to bring about the reality of global error, and reasons to take seriously the possibility that this deity might be responsible for such global error”<sup>33</sup>. This interpretation is at odds with Descartes’ outline of the problem, as he specifically addresses the inadequacy of the possible answer from atheism in stating that the less perfect the cause, the more it is likely that he is deceived all the time (AT 7:21; CSM 2:14)<sup>34</sup>. It (further) seems that the possibility of reversal of the power attributed to the cause in the counterfactual case in which one is ‘globally’ deceived lies precisely in the ‘slippery’ nature of the arguments at hand. In other words, a differing causal history of the false presentation and possible cases of being in error on their own invite<sup>35</sup> that one should be able to state where the cut-off point is, i.e. to point out which set of sensory-experience content and the related perceptual beliefs could not have been caused in such a way, could not be false, *if* these are to serve as an indubitable criterion. In a specific sense, then, the *dream* argument could have been a challenge ‘slippery’ enough to prevent Descartes from positing the certainty he goes on to question through the *omnipotent deity*. On that note, it could be added that the notion of the omnipotent deity, or a malicious demon Descartes introduces as an omnipotent deceiver to remind himself to maintain the “distrustful attitude” (AT 7:22-3; CSM 2:15), does not appear in the outline of ‘doubt’ in *Discourse on Method*, published four years before *Meditations*, even though the ‘global’ element is not missing (AT 6:32, CSM 1:127)<sup>36</sup>:

Thus, because our senses sometimes deceive us, I decided to suppose that nothing was such as they led us to imagine. And since there are men who make mistakes in reasoning committing logical fallacies concerning the simplest questions in geometry,

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<sup>33</sup> Bermúdez (“Cartesian Skepticism,” 67) *contra* Burnyeat’s claim (“Idealism and Greek Philosophy,” 37) that Descartes’ generalization move “lies so readily at hand” in the arguments of classics (though it’s not made on Burnyeat’s account, which will be addressed in the following text). Bermúdez argues that classical skeptics do not have these elements present, thus (presumably) could not have moved to a ‘global’ level of doubt.

<sup>34</sup> Broughton (*Descartes’s Method of Doubt*, 67) goes as far as to treat this as a separate ‘fate or chance’ version of the skeptical argument devised for the atheists; *contra* Broughton, this juxtaposition appears similar to the one of madness and dreaming arguments (noted above). Broughton, it perhaps should be noted, treats these as presenting two separate arguments as well.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. AT 7:349; CSM 2:242: “It is no help in correcting our errors to say that we make mistakes because our mind is in darkness or our nature is weak; this is just like saying that we make mistakes because we are prone to error. It is more helpful to pay attention, as I did, to all circumstances where we may happen to go wrong, to prevent our heedlessly giving assent in such cases.”

<sup>36</sup> For differing accounts regarding the origin of the idea of *malicious demon*, see B. Williams, “Descartes’s Use of Skepticism,” n. 5.

and because I judged that I was as prone to error as anyone else, I rejected as unsound all the arguments I had previously taken as demonstrative proofs. Lastly, considering that the very thoughts we have while awake may also occur while we sleep without any of them being at that time true, I resolved to pretend that all the things that had ever entered my mind were no more than illusions of my dreams.

Upon introducing the general non-veridical, indistinguishable counterpart to all he held was the case on the basis of his sensory experience his conclusion is (AT 7:21-2; CSM 2:14-15):

I have no answer to these arguments, but am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which doubt may not be properly raised; and this is not a flippant or ill-considered conclusion, but is based on powerful and well thought-out reasons. So in the future I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs just as carefully as I would from obvious falsehoods if I want to discover certainty.

After thusly concluding that assent *must* be withheld due to deliberations conducted, the remainder of the dialogue he conducts with himself in the “First Meditation” could be qualified as reminiscent of Academic-Stoic debate<sup>37</sup> on whether the ‘wise man’ should remain completely *ἀδοξάστως* or assent to “highly probable” opinions, as long as he takes them as such, as these appear “still much more reasonable to believe than to deny” (AT 7:22; CSM 2:15). Descartes opts for the former option and at that point evokes the *malicious demon* possibility, so as not to fall prey to his preconceived opinions. For him to withhold assent represents a burden, and a constant struggle, and he makes a notice that *ἀπραξία* charge does not apply to his choice (to take on this burden), he cannot go too far in this practice as “the task (...) in hand does not involve action but merely the acquisition of knowledge”<sup>38</sup>.

But his struggle proved to be deluding, as it can easily lead one to see his efforts in it as conclusions of the skeptical argumentation he applies. In evoking the *malicious demon* Descartes lists all the things the existence of which he is robbed of<sup>39</sup> (i.e. he fails to establish as veridical due to counterfactual case presented), and states that he will take himself as

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<sup>37</sup> Discussed in section on practical criterion (I. 3.) above; In fact, the conclusion of the “First Meditation”, in a way, could be qualified as mimicking the whole practical criterion debate and the argument from inactivity. This is not to say that Descartes draws from the debate in question, cf. Luigi Paganini, “The Quarrel Over Ancient and Modern Scepticism” in *The Legacies of Richard Popkin, International Archives of the History of Ideas* 198, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 187. Paganini (loc.cit.) notes he might have been drawing on the work of Le Vayer.

<sup>38</sup> He makes the same claim in Fifth Set of Replies (AT 7:350-1; CSM 2:243); still he provides himself with a provisional code for action in *Discourse on Method* (AT6:22ff; CSM 1: 122ff), a code similar to Sextus’ elaboration of what it means to live without holding opinion in line with *βιωτική τήρησις*; Burnyeat (“The Sceptic in His Place and Time,” 119) suggests this is proof of him not *inventing* insulation (in a broad sense of immunity of philosophy from ordinary life and vice versa).

<sup>39</sup> AT 7:22-3; CSM 2:15.

“falsely believing” that he has such things; but that would not be the skeptical conclusion, it is the negating part of the inner dialectical struggle, and the conclusion pertaining to the skeptical argument is that one should suspend judgment with regard to the former beliefs’ truth or falsehood. One needs to notice here that the issue at hand is analogous to the issues regarding the difference between ‘arguing for’ and ‘affirmation of’ discussed in relation to the classical skeptics<sup>40</sup>. While the *dream* argument and the *malicious demon* argument both can be viewed as ‘arguments for’ ignorance of this specific kind, their conclusion is not in the ‘affirmation of’ the negative theses. It seems, from the dialectical struggle as presented in the *First Meditation*, that Descartes was well aware of this specific delineation. Skeptical arguments lead one to phantom skepticism solely through acceptance of a specific framework, or perhaps even better put, through an acceptance of a specified framework as a basis for specified beliefs, in a specified sense<sup>41</sup>. The story of such an acceptance is already known, as acceptance of such a kind was already qualified as a dogmatic move, from which the ‘phantom’ approach arises.

It is, as noted, solely through the ‘phantom’ understanding that one assigns to skepticism affirmation of a negative thesis (as there is no such thing as a ‘*skeptical*’ thesis, that appears to simply be a contradiction in terms). Perhaps skeptical arguments would fare better with regard to the phantom threat if one uses the terms carefully and qualifies the negative thesis, ‘argued for’ in skeptical arguments, as ‘counter-thesis’, as it seems to fit the nature of the arguments advancing it. Namely, both in reference to the arguments used by Descartes and those used by the classics, it could be noted that these were not designed to prove something or lead to an affirmation of a thesis, but, so to speak, to point out that something was not proven, i.e. that a thesis is not to be affirmed. In any case, if one would seek to assign the blame to Descartes for ‘Cartesian skepticism’ being in specific

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<sup>40</sup> Section I.2. above.

<sup>41</sup> As Descartes ‘reconstructive’ passages will not be dealt with here, perhaps it should solely be briefly stated, that they could be analyzed through the prism of addressing this aspect of the argument. As far as I can see, those moves cannot be used to falsify his ‘doubt’ in the “First Meditation” (in a sense in which one finds claims that outline of the arguments was constructed in such a way as to enable him to *reconstruct* what has been torn down in that manner). If anything it can serve as a paradigm case of how one can use doubt ‘authentically’ to target inadequacies in a framework, and seek to answer the challenge by either ‘reconstructing’ the framework, changing the framework, or even the question for which the answer is to be sought. Once the ‘reconstruction’ starts, dogmatic commitments emerge, and openness is lost; it is the point in which doubt ceases that falsifies the openness, and, as far as I can see, if doubt was applied authentically, retrospective verdict for the arguments to be viewed as sharing the same trait does not apply. One could perhaps try to argue that the doubt is falsified as it remains focused on one framework, or one aspect of the framework, but it seems that a better way to describe this would be to suggest that the doubt is, in that specific sense, *limited*.

interpretations taken to stand for the ‘phantom’ form, the only thing to point to in the “First Meditation” would be the aforementioned struggle to keep himself in the state of distrust. The treatment of this state of impasse by Descartes is one of the noteworthy differences in the approach to skeptical argumentation in comparison to the classical traditions; and, it goes without saying, it was a difference to be expected. As he was not a skeptic, it was not to be expected from him to treat suspension as an easy and tenable stance. Yet, even if he pushes strongly for the negative counter-thesis to remain present before him, he seems to treat it as precisely that, a counter-thesis<sup>42</sup>, all the way up to the moment he will confront it with a positive thesis that strikes him as certain and immune to the counterfactual case. Thus in the “Second Meditation” he writes in revisiting his doubts from the previous day (AT 7:24; CSM 2:16, emphasis added):

Anything which admits of the slightest doubt *I will set aside* just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and *I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, or, if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty.*

It was repeatedly noted through this attempt at delineation of ‘skepticism’ properly so called, that insistence on a specific type of duality in skeptical tradition is strained as it masks the similarities in approaches taken in different pieces of skeptical argumentation; similarities pertaining to the title of ‘authentic skepticism’. As Descartes is not a skeptic, his work could not be qualified as an instance of ‘authentic skepticism’, still it could be qualified as using skepticism ‘authentically’, as the arguments were cast to question a specific account, through premises accepted on such an account. Arguments, as outlined above, could thus be abstracted as such, and treated as ‘authentically skeptical’ arguments. In other words, commitments Descartes takes on in reconstructing answers to the question he poses in a manner of authentic skeptic are not the commitments of a phantom kind, which would solidify the continuation of inquiry into an answer in its own right.

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<sup>42</sup> It could be noted briefly here that it seems that realization of this particular aspect is what is missing from what has been titled ‘Moore’s shift’. If one treats skeptical argument to take the following form (S being proposition outlining counterfactual case, CS a proposition of a common sense):

1. If S then not-CS
  2. S
  3. not-CS
- then the ‘shift’:
1. If S then not-CS
  2. CS
  3. not-S

solely spells out the deliberation the argument was ‘countering’, i.e. it is not a solution, if anything it is a portrayal of the other side to the impasse (and spells out the argument in full).

*The issues of scope and intent and free-floating authenticity of skepticism*

Two remaining questions that need to be addressed, if ‘authentic skepticism’ as delineated is to be immune from insistence on duality in skeptical traditions, are the questions about differing intent and scope of classical and modern arguments. For an outline of the ‘differing intent’ issue, one can look to the differentiation between ‘philosophical skepticism’ and ‘skepticism about philosophy’ Robert Fogelin sets forth in seeking to revive Pyrrhonism<sup>43</sup>:

When speaking about philosophical skeptic we might have in mind someone who doubts thing – or calls things into question – on philosophical grounds. In this way of speaking, philosophical skepticism is philosophical because philosophy is the source of the skepticism. We could also speak about someone being a philosophical skeptic in order to indicate that he or she is skeptical *about* philosophy, just as we say that someone is a religious skeptic in order to indicate that he or she is skeptical about religion. In this second way of speaking, philosophical skepticism is philosophical because philosophy is its target. To avoid confusion, I will reserve the label ‘philosophical skepticism’ for the first sort of skepticism, namely, skepticism that arises from philosophical reasoning. The second sort of skepticism – where philosophy is the target of skepticism – I will refer to as skepticism *about* philosophy.

Fogelin goes on to portray Pyrrhonists as combining ‘philosophical skepticism’ and ‘skepticism *about* philosophy’, in elaborating the aforementioned self-refuting character of skeptical arguments used by the classics<sup>44</sup>. In doing so, it seems that Fogelin himself might be willing to acknowledge that, at least with respect to the classical skepticism, the differentiation he outlines is unnecessary. The question that an outline of ‘authentic skepticism’ needs to see resolved is whether the distinction is needed, i.e. could it be stated that the two do not appear combined in all instances of skepticism pertaining to philosophy. The differentiation itself, though, appears to be illusive and, in a specific sense, flawed. Descartes *doubts things – or calls things into question – on philosophical grounds*, yet – he is not a ‘philosophical *skeptic*’. His use of doubt is, as it is customarily put, methodological. Furthermore, as this type of reasoning easily strikes one as a common trait of most, even all, philosophers, it would seem that, in a way, all philosophers are ‘skeptics’. While it would seem appropriate to state that all philosophers *are* ‘inquirers’, and that original use of the title *σκεπτικοί* to denote them all was, along those lines, most fitting, this could solely further blur the delineation of the concept at hand, and diminish the efforts of ‘original skeptics’ to distance themselves from positive and negative dogmatists alike. If, on the other hand, one

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<sup>43</sup> Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> See section I.2. above.

tries to apply the notion of ‘philosophical skepticism’ exclusively to Cartesian skepticism, i.e. skeptical arguments Descartes makes use of, abstracted from remainder of his work, one is again faced with difficulties. Cartesian arguments arise as an effort to question a specific framework/account as basis of one’s beliefs, and, even though Descartes states that this specific framework is taken as such in a pre-philosophical stance, the difficulty facing those who would seek to treat Cartesian skepticism as exclusively ‘philosophical’ (and not *about* philosophy) arises from the fact that specific philosophical accounts do take that framework/account to be the basis of our beliefs. Reversely, as was previously noted, Pyrrhonists in arguing against specific philosophical accounts argued against specific beliefs pertaining to a pre-philosophical stance, thus, if one keeps to this differentiation, another difficulty presents itself – as qualification of Pyrrhonism as being *about* philosophy is also put to the test. It seems that in resolving these difficulties the testimony of the authors cannot provide us with conclusive evidence. The irresolvable puzzle is thus whether the framework is questioned or not if the author doesn’t claim to directly put to question a specific framework, but brings it into question nonetheless. Furthermore, to be ‘skeptical *about* philosophy’ again appears as a trait to be found in most, if not all philosophers, in the efforts to distance themselves from specific construal of questions posed, and solutions offered, by their predecessors. The best solution to the difficulties presented, as these *are* none other than the difficulties in outlining and delineating skeptical stance from dogmatism, thus appears to be the solution offered by the ‘original skeptics’. They took their stance to differ from others, and to be distinctively marked, by an openness lost to those adhering to negative and positive thesis alike; the openness here described as a defining trait of ‘authentic skepticism’, and attributed to all arguments investigated thus far. In the specified sense then, the connectedness of skeptical tradition under that title is preserved from the claim for ‘duality’.

The other issue that needs to be addressed to preserve immunity of ‘authentic skepticism’ to the ‘duality charge’ is the aforementioned issue of ‘scope’<sup>45</sup>. Namely, this issue is related to the generalization present in Cartesian arguments, the question being whether it is more radical in scope, in the sense that it brings to question more, than the classical skeptics

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<sup>45</sup> The issue of scope as discussed here is the “*objective set of scope distinctions*” which “*concerns the domain that one’s doubt ranges over*” in Hankinson’s delineation (*The Sceptics*, 18). The other problem of scope he discusses, i.e. “*subjective conditions and attitudes the arguments attempt to eradicate*” (loc.cit.) encompasses the aforementioned issue of *target of skeptical argumentation*. The issue of ‘shifting target’ of skeptical arguments, on the authentic reading, is seen as connected to the ‘paradigm shifts’ through history of philosophy – i.e. if what is sought in philosophy changes, target of skepticism properly so called (due to its dialectical aim) shifts as well.

“had dared suppose”<sup>46</sup>. If one reviews carefully the argument cast by Academics to the effect that a deity might have made that *there really is no difference at all between true and false impressions*, and Cartesian counterfactual case in which an omnipotent deity *has made all the impressions false*, it can safely be stated that Descartes pushes the envelope further than the Academics. The question remains whether Descartes’ innovation represents a vital difference, or else. On the one hand, it could be stated that it does, as it posits before us an irresolvable challenge of establishing the existence of the external world on the basis of the complete set of beliefs of our sensory experience in such a way that our reasoning otherwise providing coherence to the set cannot be utilized to resolve it<sup>47</sup>. On the other hand, once light is shed on the questions posed by both arguments, the difference seemingly loses significance it was proposed to bear. On Academics’ account one wouldn’t be able to *distinguish* between true and false impressions *at all*, and this presented Stoics, who presumably were willing to accept the premises argued from in the sorites, with problems inherent to their notion of ‘cognitive impression’. Descartes sought to provide “the easiest route by which mind may be led away from the senses”<sup>48</sup>, yet the question remains ‘*how could he know*’ if the omnipotent deity was deceiving him, i.e. it is still the question of whether or not he could distinguish between the actual and counterfactual case. Another question one is presented with, in examining the similarities and differences between the original and the modern approach, is the question regarding the examples Descartes uses<sup>49</sup> – namely, if one’s body and one’s own states are novel as instances of things to doubt in skeptical reasoning. The efforts of the interpreters to resolve this latter question is revealing for the topic at hand, and, in a way, provides one with guidelines on how to treat the former one, as well as other questions regarding ‘scope’ which

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<sup>46</sup> Burnyeat, “Idealism and Greek Philosophy,” 37. The following text, in a sense to be specified, is in line with Burnyeat’s appraisal.

<sup>47</sup> The contrast usually made between this challenge and the one that Sextus’ argumentation presents us with is commonly addressed as the distinction between *existential* (or *object*) skepticism and *essential* (or *property*) skepticism (cf. Hankinson, *The Sceptics*, 19ff; Fine, “Descartes and Ancient Skepticism,” 195). With regard to Sextus’ challenge a lot bears on how one take the *φαίνεται* sentences Pyrrhonist utters. More frequently Sextus uses them in the form outlined above, which seems to imply *essential* skepticism – ‘*x* appears *F* (in *S*, to *S*)’, less frequently he uses the form which could be translated as – ‘it appears that *x* is *F*’ (see *PH I 20* quoted in section I.3. above), implying *existential* skepticism. Fine (“Sextus and External World Skepticism,” 359ff) argues (*contra* Hankinson, *op.cit.* and Burnyeat, *op.cit.*) that even the former could imply existential skepticism. While there is more textual support for the reading she argues against, her work in outlining the passages in which Sextus resembles *existential* skepticism proves to be revealing for the ‘solution’ to the difficulty as outlined in the following text.

<sup>48</sup> AT 7:12; CSM 2:9, quoted above.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Burnyeat, “Idealism and Greek Philosophy,” 35.

may arise<sup>50</sup>. The verdict on the passages in Sextus' works into which one may (attempt to) read suspension of judgment about one's body or one's own states<sup>51</sup> depends on how one approaches the historical-philosophical context in which his arguments were outlined. If Sextus argues about problems with apprehension of these specific items<sup>52</sup>, the verdict on whether or not he would extend the conclusion to his own body and states and suspend judgment, is bound to the question whether or not these pieces of argumentation are bound to the same question in the philosophical context of the time. No one would dispute that all of the concepts used are in this sense context-bound, as, again, the theses proposed by the dogmatist philosophers are proposed within the context. The fact that these scope-related questions are under debate unveils not solely the intricacy in reconstructing the philosophical context past, but also a trait pertaining to 'authentic skepticism'. As a dialectical counterweight in a specific context it is bound to conceptual resources of the context at hand, and in as much, one has to accept the verdict that, as far as we can see, the arguments presented by Descartes range across a broader domain of objects. Yet, in being unattached to the context, as exhibited in reluctance to affirm the rules present in the context, 'authentic skepticism' appears in a specific sense to be free-floating, and this invites the interpretations that the verdict about the lesser scope is mistaken. As far as the comparison regarding the scope thus defined goes, I do not think it is. It seems that Descartes' argumentation represents a novelty, yet this novelty does not invite the charge of duality. The novelty is minimal, in a sense that the question posed remains the same, as the scope of the account questioned is pushed further.

If anything, the novel elements unveil a trait to 'authentic skepticism' serving to further stress the connectedness in skeptical tradition, which should not be overlooked. Free-floating character of skeptical arguments is a trait that allows for revitalization of arguments in any given philosophical context, and once 'revitalized', if they are to represent a dialectical counterweight in the context at hand, the content encompassed by them shifts as well. That the scope of skeptical arguments varies with the scope of account/framework/argument which is under debate was noted through the outline of the elusive scope of Pyrrhonists' *ἐποχή*; at this point it needs to be added that it varies with respect to the context in which these items are under debate. Thus 'external world', as any other notion utilized in philosophical debate

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<sup>50</sup> The five objections to the claim that 'external world skepticism' is argued for by Sextus Fine outlines ("Sextus and External World Skepticism," 347ff) could serve as examples of possible questions.

<sup>51</sup> As noted by Fine, "Sextus and External World Skepticism," 362ff.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. *M* VII 288ff.



has *context-bound* content to which it refers to. As there is no absolute way of determining the frame of reference of this or any other philosophical notion, appearances of such notions always have to be measured against the historical-philosophical context in which they are utilized. In as much, it could be stated, that comparison of the concepts utilized in traditional materials with the ‘same’ concepts as they appear in works of modern authors fails as these are not directly commensurable.

If the scope of ‘skeptical counter-thesis’ strikes one as illegitimate, as Cartesian counter-thesis tends to be characterized, there is another side to this sentiment that should not be overlooked, namely, the possibility that it seems illegitimate due to the illegitimately broad framework/account-based positive proposal it is targeting in the context of debate. It doesn’t seem very charitable to suppose that Descartes failed to notice that sense-based foundations of the edifice of knowledge are shaken by specific cases he commences his ‘skeptical exchange’ with. It rather seems that he was seeking to bring the whole edifice down, and then see what would remain after such a deconstructive challenge, as noted in his claim that he is seeking certainty. Descartes thought that in taking on the challenge of skeptics, he managed to overcome them (AT 2:38-39; CSM 3:99). In reversing the metaphor of medical treatment<sup>53</sup>, he posits skepticism as an illness, an illness he sought to and managed to cure. While this is not the place to discuss his answer in terms of adequacy or possible skeptical devices to cure presumable dogmatist conceit implicit in such an account, I feel compelled to notice yet another similarity Descartes shares with some of his predecessors. If one takes his ‘generalization’ of skeptical counter-thesis to represent a novelty, even in just a minimal sense, then, in his eagerness to overcome skepticism he seems to have suffered a Chrysippus-like fate. The comparison is valid from the viewpoint of positive epistemologists who, much like some of the Stoics Cicero mentions in his report, “are in the habit of complaining that, while he carefully sought out all the facts that told against the senses and their clarity and against the whole of common experience (...) when answering himself he got the worst of it, and thus it was he that furnished weapons” to the skeptics (*Acad.* II 88-9). Presumably, from the standpoint of positive dogmatists, that could be qualified as a peril behind ‘authentic’ use of skepticism, graver than the one of being proclaimed a ‘skeptic’, which seems to be a much more common fate of those who tried to use skepticism ‘authentically’. Yet, it seems that the gravest peril is in not treating it ‘authentically’, in conversing with a ‘phantom’, in as much as

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<sup>53</sup> In reply to Hobbes he notes that he could not have omitted the outline of the skeptical arguments, “any more than a medical writer can leave out the description of a disease when he wants to explain how it can be cured” (AT 7:171-72; CSM 2:121).

it might lead to the mistreatment of the problem, to malpractice, so to speak. Thus Descartes, with what strikes me as an understanding of potency behind skeptical arguments, is able to utilize them to ‘change the subject’ under debate. Conversely, if one treats the skeptical challenge as a ‘phantom’ threat, one might lose sight or control over whether or not, how and when the subject has been changed, if it has been changed at all. As noted, the claim that insistence on duality in skeptical thought is strained, argued for here, is not to be understood as an implication that there are *no* differences between the skeptical traditions investigated; it should be taken as a statement regarding the importance pertaining to similarities in these traditions, as these are much more illuminating for the understanding of ‘authentic skepticism’, i.e. skepticism, properly so called. The delineation conducted between ‘phantom’ skepticism, and ‘authentic’ skepticism, on that note, should not be taken as a different *version* of duality, as ‘phantom’ skeptic is not a skeptic at all.

## Part II. 'Authentic' Revision of Contemporary 'Phantom' Forms of Skepticism

Critique of the original forms in which skeptical argumentation appears, as conducted in the first part of this study, served the purpose of delineating 'authentic' skepticism or skepticism properly so called, from 'phantom' forms of skepticism. Designation 'phantom' skepticism is used in this study to refer to types of argumentation which might *appear* skeptical, yet on deeper analysis lack genuine commitment to *σκέψις* demarcating those approaches to which the title is properly applied. This genuine commitment to inquiry, as elaborated in the preceding text, is essential openness-to-the-question. This openness unveils itself in the conclusion of 'authentically' skeptical argumentation, in conspicuous absence of an affirmation or a negation. It is further apparent in what has been denoted as free-floating character of the arguments utilized in 'authentic' manner, namely, absence of positive commitments, such that would not be attributed to the theses/approaches argued against; and strenuous reluctance to remain tied to a context/framework investigated through embracement of self-refutation. The openness-to-the-question invites continuity of the question. In 'phantom' form this continuity is lost in acceptance of the negative thesis, and as the previous argumentation should have shown, such an acceptance *is* derived from embeddedness in the context/framework of argumentation. To understand skepticism as 'phantom' allegiance to the negative thesis is to disregard its dialectical aim. As noted, in authentically skeptical argumentation negative thesis *is* a counter-thesis precedent to openness of the conclusion, and *not* a thesis adhered to. Loss of appreciation for the dialectical aim seems to have made the line between 'arguing for' and 'affirmation of' indistinctive, and the unfortunate fate of skepticism, in its being mistaken for the 'phantom' type of argumentation, has in turn influenced the course of epistemological reasoning. As was noted, the curious treatment of skepticism in epistemology today was one of the impetuses for the development of this study. The following text unveils the 'phantom' behind prominent 'skeptical' arguments of the day<sup>1</sup>, and some of the related consequences.

### Continuity of the Question

Authentically skeptical argumentation is inherently burdened by the difficulty of finding an adequate expression for 'continuity of the question' it invites. Myth of strong

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<sup>1</sup> In the preceding century skeptical arguments have been 'revived' by a number of authors in Anglo-Saxon tradition, and the phantom missteps I refer to here are apparent in these attempts of revival, which can serve as a paradigm case for the point made in this study. It is for this reason that this study is limited to the tradition at hand, i.e. the approach is not to be taken as a verdict on inadequacy of dealings with skepticism *solely* in this tradition.

negative evaluations, i.e. interpretation of skepticism building on supposed allegiance to the negative counter-thesis, seems to be further perpetuated through lack of appreciation or understanding of the difficulty in question. Preceding this continuity, at the end of the argument (and throughout), the distinctive character of skepticism<sup>2</sup> is in the specified lack of commitment. An authentic skeptic “does not prove, he argues”<sup>3</sup>, and, as part of Socratic legacy, he is not the one bound to the premises he argues from. The lack of commitment to an answer at the close of argumentation translates into the lack of commitment to the resources utilized throughout, as the lack of commitment to the resources utilized in argumentation translates into the lack of commitment to an answer at the close<sup>4</sup>. In this lies the difference between skepticism and epistemological theories, as latter, being bound to an answer, require a commitment to the resources utilized, and in which acceptance of the resources and the framework utilized lead up to the commitment of an answer. The commitment of an answer is voiced and understood in/through the framework and its resources. The commitment a skeptic does display, the openness-to-the-question, though also voiced within a framework, can on the other hand only be outlined in description of skeptical approach, or unveiled in practice of the arguments. The continuity of the question can only be properly understood by understanding specificity of the void inherent to skeptical argumentation; the specificity which allows not for skepticism to be understood or described in the terms applicable to philosophical theories.

An attempt in expressing the continuity of the question, found in original skeptics’ practice, was openness to *περιτροπή*, already described as expression of disavowal of allegiance not solely to the first order negative (or positive) claim but to the very framework argued in<sup>5</sup>. The welcoming of *περιτροπή* thus further unveils the two sides to the void at the close of skeptical arguments, one regarding the thesis and the other regarding the framework argued in, which is left to collapse on itself. I will refer to the former as ‘thesis-void’ quality, and the latter as ‘resources-void’ quality, with a proviso that ‘void’ is here to be understood as privative in a qualified sense, as describing a specific type of ‘absence-of’ pertaining to inapplicability of the concepts/criteria commonly used to describe/judge a philosophical approach to skeptical argumentation. It perhaps also needs to be noted that the two sides to the void, the qualities noted, are to be viewed as inextricable, though they are in part dealt with

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *PH I 222*, in Sextus’ delineation of Plato’s philosophy from skepticism, differentiation is between character of skepticism (*τόν σκεπτικόν χαρακτήρα*) and character of dogmatism.

<sup>3</sup> Couissin, “The Stoicism of the New Academy,” 41, on Arcesilaus.

<sup>4</sup> It perhaps should be noted here that one should not read this as a statement on temporal sequences to skeptical reasoning. The claim rather is on inextricability of what will be later termed ‘thesis-void’ and ‘resource-void’ quality of skeptical argumentation.

<sup>5</sup> In the sense specified in section I. 2. above.

separately in what follows. Both qualities should be apparent in the outline of original skeptical arguments in the preceding text, and here they will be outlined through the prism of ‘phantom’ missteps in some recent instances of advocacy of skepticism.

### *Negative Thesis As Opposed To Thesis-Void*

The cause to the perpetuation of the myth of strong negative evaluations, related to the aforementioned difficulty of finding an adequate expression for continuity of the question, is best disclosed in observance of ‘phantom’ missteps in advocacy of<sup>6</sup> skepticism in the preceding century – missteps in the claims to defend a skeptical *thesis*. Claim to that effect is the opening statement to Unger’s “A Defense of Skepticism”<sup>7</sup> published in 1971, as this author states that skepticism he is about to “defend is a negative thesis concerning what we know”<sup>8</sup>, which he refers to as “skeptical thesis”<sup>9</sup>. In Lehrer’s “Why not Skepticism”<sup>10</sup>, also published in 1971, a similar claim is made, as this author announces a wish “to avow (...) a stronger form of skepticism, to wit, that we do not know anything”<sup>11</sup>. It needs to be noted that both authors seemingly allow the phrase to turn on itself. Unger writes: “On this skeptical thesis, no one will know the thesis to be true”<sup>12</sup>, and Lehrer’s formulation mimics the classics’ more closely as he states that “the contention is that no one knows anything, not even that no one knows anything”<sup>13</sup>. Yet, in both accounts, this turning about is again interpreted as an affirmation of (universal or almost universal) ignorance<sup>14</sup>. Curious aspect of this interpretation which seems to be shared by these authors is in appreciation both of them do display for the strength of skeptical arguments as a dialectical counterweight to the thesis of ‘common

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<sup>6</sup> The nature of the arguments to be dealt with in what follows is such that the distinction between ‘advocacy of skepticism’ and ‘skeptical argumentation’ needs to be emphasized. If one claims to be arguing to the effect that skepticism is to be taken seriously, this does not necessarily imply that his argument should be taken as an instance of skeptical argumentation, properly so called.

<sup>7</sup> In *Philosophical Review* 80 (1971), pp. 198-218; The other article to be discussed, which also tends to be associated with skepticism of the supposedly ‘Cartesian’ type is Lehrer’s “Why not skepticism” published in *Philosophical Forum* 2.3 (1971), pp. 283-98; for both see Peter D. Klein, *Certainty: A Refutation of Scepticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 18 and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, ed. *Pyrrhonian Skepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4. Two provisions need to be put in place, as (i) skepticism is not to be understood as an attitude of choice of the philosophers listed, nor (ii) are these articles to be viewed necessarily as instances of skeptical approach (see previous note), as succeeding pages should reveal.

<sup>8</sup> Unger, “A Defense of Skepticism,” 198.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> In *Philosophical Forum* 2.3 (1971), pp. 283-98.

<sup>11</sup> Lehrer, “Why not skepticism,” 283-4.

<sup>12</sup> Unger, “A Defense of Skepticism,” 198.

<sup>13</sup> Lehrer, “Why not skepticism,” 284.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lehrer, “Why not skepticism,” 285; Unger, “A Defense of Skepticism,” 216.

sense', in line with the respective approaches to 'knowledge' taken<sup>15</sup>. Thus they do acknowledge the steps leading to the thesis-void, however fail to note it as implied by *περιτροπή*. My suggestion here<sup>16</sup> is that these missteps are inherent to the very decision to *defend* skepticism. Namely, the specific aspect of skepticism is that it cannot seek or claim justification, vindication or support for itself in itself<sup>17</sup>. An authentic skeptic would not seek or claim it, as his approach or attitude is in determining nothing. One not practicing the attitude but seeking to advocate it could not do it, as the skeptical approach is empty, marked by the 'absence-of', the void. Appeal, persistence and support of authentic skeptical argumentation come from the very framework it puts to question. Skepticism as such is not meaningful and relevant in itself, as it persists as opposition to the conclusively settled<sup>18</sup>. In this, finale of its labor is not in negating *the* conclusively settled, but in pointing to the absence-of conclusive settlement, i.e. the perpetuation of the dispute or, in terms used here, the continuity of the question. In as much, both relevance and meaningfulness of skepticism present themselves in the failure of what is determinate on the grounds on which it is determined, in the unveiling of perplexity in place of an answer, on the rules out of which the answer was brought forth. At the end of authentically skeptical arguments is a thesis-void, a conspicuous absence-of answer in form of an affirmation or a negation. Thesis-void quality to skeptical argumentation, thus, is what one *points to* in an *outline*, or *practice* of skepticism as an approach, an ability. To *defend* it would include the acceptance of a framework, even if in the minimal sense of taking it as *the* framework in which an answer was to be sought<sup>19</sup>. In terms of original skeptics' approach as portrayed in first part of this study, one need solely recall the 'phantom' peril behind practical criterion, and the subsequent emphasis on passivity in Pyrrhonists' *ἐποχή*. In choosing to defend skepticism, both Lehrer and Unger slide past the specificity at hand, in virtue of which skepticism parts company with epistemological doctrines or theories. When these latter *are* defended, one commonly seeks to unveil the plausibility of a thesis and the supposed incontestability, or at least the comparative strength

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Lehrer, "Why not skepticism," 292-4; Unger, "A Defense of Skepticism," 216.

<sup>16</sup> The elaboration of *περιτροπή* in original skeptics' account is available in the preceding section of the paper, and the following text should be taken as a further elucidation of this argumentative move.

<sup>17</sup> See section I.3. above on the 'phantom' peril in not taking 'defense' from *ἀπραξία* charge as a part of dialectical strategy in Academics' account.

<sup>18</sup> Hegel voiced it in a similar manner in *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (transl. Haldane and Simson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & co., 1894), 330), as, in describing the relation of Skepticism to Philosophy he refers to skepticism as 'the dialectic of all that is determinate', 'die Dialektik alles Bestimmten' (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leiden: A.H. Adriani, 1908), 603).

<sup>19</sup> In as much, such defense would not be a defense of skepticism, as will be further elaborated in what follows.

of the structure which brings it about, in face of the supposed weakness of opposing theories or critique ventured against it. As this seems to be the form of the defensive moves by both Lehrer and Unger, the misstep they slide into through their efforts at defense, reveals itself as the misstep of treating skepticism as an epistemological theory. Once one chooses, even benevolently, to approach ‘skepticism’ as one would approach an epistemological doctrine, the ‘phantom’ misstep or an oversight has thus already been made. It is by extension that the ‘thesis-void’ of skepticism is mistaken for a dogmatic ‘thesis’. As skepticism is not a theory, ‘thesis-void’ cannot be understood nor stated in same terms and manner as a ‘thesis’ pertaining to an epistemological doctrine. A (continuation of) question is not voiced in the same manner as an answer (proposed).

‘Thesis-void’, as noted, is properly understood through the prism of skeptic’s argumentative practice and its specified dialectical aim. Sceptics’ argumentation proceeded in Socratic manner from premises supplied/affirmed/accepted by their dogmatic opponents. As the outline of original skeptical arguments reveals, skepticism itself came to be perceived as a specific ability, as *δύναμις ἀντιθετική*, an ability to challenge, to put-to-question what was perceived as answered. The continuity of the question which ensues is opposed to the answer challenged, yet it is not its outright negation. Negation ‘argued-for’ represents a stepping stone, itself in opposition to the continuity of the question. It is this latter opposition that is to be understood as implied by *περιτροπή*. To be, in Sextus’ words, *εἰλικρινῶς σκεπτικός* (PH I 222), a ‘genuine Skeptic,’ meant not to commit oneself to assertions, nor to give preference “in point of convincingness”. To allow a claim of ignorance to cancel itself is to disavow it, i.e. to continue the question, the state of puzzlement, the puzzle. ‘Thesis-void’, if voiced in terms in which ‘an answer’ would be outlined, eludes easily, and masks itself into a dogmatic-like assertion, even if the *voicer* is not committed to it, in a sense in which one is committed to the answer he provides. Appreciating ‘thesis-void’ unveils that the authentic skeptic does not profess to resolve the perplexity but points to it, not taking even the absence-of-an-answer to be an answer. In the approach of Academics the perplexity was the burden to the account offered by Stoics. Pyrrhonists took it upon themselves to further emphasize the openness-to-the-question inherent to the approach of skeptics, in pointing out that *σκεπτικός* does not answer, but inquires; does not answer, but suspends; does not answer, but puzzles over, being at a loss with regard to assent and denial in question. It is in virtue of this that skeptical persuasion was to be called *ζητητική, ἐφεκτική, ἀπορητική* (PH I 7). Thesis void, as absence-of-

an-answer, is *in* (revealing of/continuation of) *ἀπορία*<sup>20</sup>, which invites and presents itself as continuity of the question. ‘Bringers of *ἀπορία*’ propose no answer<sup>21</sup>.

Semantic richness<sup>22</sup> of ‘*ἀπορία*’ is exposed in that it stands for<sup>23</sup> a difficulty, puzzle, a question to be discussed, but also a state of being at a loss, a state of perplexity<sup>24</sup>, doubt, distress, and disturbance, as the verb ‘*ἀπορέω*’ means *to be* in doubt, *to be* puzzled, at a loss, but also *to* start a question, *to* raise a difficulty. This semantic richness brings to light intricacies of ‘continuity of the question,’ as part of a skeptical stance and philosophical deliberations in general. Preceding *ἀπορία* are oppositions and inconsistencies noted<sup>25</sup>. Socrates, as we find him portrayed in Plato’s early dialogues, in facing his interlocutors with difficulties hard to deal with<sup>26</sup>, was bringing them to be at a loss<sup>27</sup>; reducing them to perplexity and speechlessness<sup>28</sup> where they thought they had knowledge. In ‘bringing forth *ἀπορία*’, conceit of knowledge was (and *is*) lost<sup>29</sup>. Such ‘purifying’<sup>30</sup> procedure is largely interpreted as a negative enterprise<sup>31</sup>, and, through focus on negation in the refuting side to this argumentative practice, it seems that, much like skepticism, *ἀπορία* as the end result has been mistreated. If annulment of answer, i.e. continuity-of-the-question is experienced as

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<sup>20</sup> In dealing with original skeptics’ arguments *ἀπορία* and what it means to be *ἀπορητικόν* was dealt with briefly, and what follows can be read as a supplement.

<sup>21</sup> In this sense every authentic skeptic is ‘*ἀπορητικόν*’, even though not all argue in aporetic manner (by way of refutation). Pace Woodruff (“Aporetic Pyrrhonism,” 141 ff), I do not think that Bury’s translation of title of skepticism relating to ‘*ἀπορία*’ as ‘Doubters’ should be replaced by ‘Refuters’, as this wouldn’t do justice to the ambiguity of the term. Bett uses ‘bringers of impasse’, yet choice of Annas and Barnes, to use *aporetic* to render the same title, seems to be the best solution.

<sup>22</sup> I agree with Woodruff (op.cit., 141) when he states that a “history of mistranslation clouds the issue”, as semantic richness of this concept evades us in translations of it as ‘confusion’, ‘puzzle’, ‘problem’, ‘doubt’. Still, I find his interpretation of it as “an obstacle, a roadblock, a debilitating poverty” as further obscuring the issue at hand.

<sup>23</sup> For both words cf. Liddell, Scott, Jones (1996) entries.

<sup>24</sup> The phrase ‘to be *ἄπορος*’ from which the word stems is to be discussed later on, and though it might seem strangely reversed to deal with it later, reversal serves in stressing the point to be made in what follows.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Topica*, VI 145b, on why ‘perplexity’ is not a state of “equality between contrary reasonings”, but caused by it: “Likewise also an equality between contrary reasonings would be generally considered to be a cause of *ἀπορία*: for it is when we reflect on both sides of a question and find everything alike to be in keeping with either course that we are *perplexed* which of the two we are to do” (16-20).

<sup>26</sup> *Hippias Minor*, 369 c

<sup>27</sup> *Ion*, 533 c (trans. W.R.M. Lamb)

<sup>28</sup> *Laches*, 194 c, 200e (perplexity); *Ion*, 532 b (speechlessness)

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Myles Burnyeat, “Socratic midwifery, Platonic inspiration” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 24 (1977), 11.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Sophist*, 230a-c; *Apology*, 21 bff. This view of *ἀπορία* as cathartic has been described as ‘traditional view’, cf. Vasilis Politis, “Aporia and Searching in Early Plato” in *Remembering Socrates*, ed. Lindsay Judson and Vassilis Karasmanis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Woodruff “Aporetic Pyrrhonism,” 141.



distressful or disturbing, as one is in a sundered state, then this exposes the commitment one experiencing it has (had) toward an answer<sup>32</sup>, as well as the proverbial comfort or ease of residing with the answer<sup>33</sup>. Yet, to bring from conceit of an answer back to puzzlement, loss, perplexity, is not solely to impoverish (one) of answers, to bring about distress and disturbance, it is also a re-turn to the question, a note that it has not been answered. After all, oppositions and inconsistencies noticed serve to awaken thought<sup>34</sup>, and philosophical ponderings commence from resulting *ἀπορία*<sup>35</sup> in search of their resolution (*εὐπορία*).

To observe both impoverishment and zetetic side to *ἀπορία* is to give attention to the specificity of ‘thesis-void’ inexpressible in dogmatic, answer-like terms. Thesis, taken as an answer, represents a halt to questioning. To bring to thesis-void is to nullify the answer, to make-it-void, to deprive it of force and effectiveness<sup>36</sup>, and it is to re-state the question, give it force anew, to continue it. Phantom myth of (negative) thesis at the close of skeptical argumentation can be dissolved through appreciation of openness behind impoverishment at hand, ambiguity or, so to speak, *ἀπορία* of ‘*ἀπορία*’, which unveils that the point in which skepticism gains relevance and shows itself as meaningful, is the place of relevance and meaningfulness to continued philosophical deliberations<sup>37</sup>. In this, after all, lies the revelation that a *defense* of a thesis-void would *not* be a defense of skepticism, as the relevance and meaningfulness of this approach can solely be *revealed* in an *exposition* of the thesis-void. A *defense* of the thesis-void can, on the other hand, take on two forms, each pertaining to one of its two sides. A *defense of* the thesis-void, could thus be an effort to maintain and justify a specific question-continued<sup>38</sup>, to support this *still* unanswered question as relevant and meaningful, which is implicit in continued philosophical deliberations relevance and structure of which then resides in the reawakened understanding for or realization of the importance to the question at hand. To *defend* the thesis-void could also be in emphasizing the

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<sup>32</sup> Hence commitment-free Pyrrhonists can outline their reaction to thesis-void, i.e. *ἐποχή*, as accompanied by *ἀταραξία* (on what this accomplishes, and how this move can be interpreted with respect to the common goal to reasoning within the framework – see section I.3. above).

<sup>33</sup> Hence Descartes, in authentic use of skeptical argumentation (see section I.4. above), has presented the state pertaining to the thesis-void as a burden, as a state of constant struggle not to fall back into the comfort of an answer.

<sup>34</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 523/4, esp.524e – where pervasive contradiction presenting itself serves to “compel the soul to be at a loss (*ἀπορεῖν*) and inquire (*ζητεῖν*).”

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Met.* B 1 995a24-b1.

<sup>36</sup> The use of the verb ‘to nullify’ here is to signal once again that the thesis-void as such is not a simple negation of the answer, as a simple negation-of-the-thesis would be a negative thesis.

<sup>37</sup> In other words, skeptical argumentation and epistemological deliberations are intertwined in such a way that meaningfulness and relevance of each depend on the existence of the other.

<sup>38</sup> A notable example presents itself in the opening passages of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, 1-3.

irresolvability of the perplexity arising from a framework<sup>39</sup>, the poverty in residing with the question, inherent to philosophical deliberations which seek to reframe the path of reasoning. Both of these defenses imply a commitment to a framework, be it a framework in which the question presents itself as meaningful, or a framework in which it is no longer perceived as *the* question of relevance. In this defenses of unresolvedness part ways, as one is bound to further inquiry and resolution of perplexity defended and the other to its irresolvability and further (if any) inquiry elsewhere. A mere exposition of the thesis-void, on the other hand, does not imply commitment to a framework, and, furthermore, the very unveiling of unresolvedness in itself does not represent a final verdict with regards to future efforts in resolution, nor does it as such determine the path or value of continued inquiry. Authentic skeptics' practice unveils the unresolvedness, and while their continued openness to the question seems to invite both further inquiry and perpetual continuity of the question (and thus futility of efforts in resolution), they would not seek to *affirm* the thesis-void in a finite sense<sup>40</sup>, much like they would not *affirm* a claim to an end that this inquiry is of relevance<sup>41</sup>. In other words, through exposition of the thesis-void, one finds oneself *ἀπορητικός, ἐφεκτικός,* and *ζητητικός*, yet the very act of bringing to light the annulment-of the answers and continuity of the question (i.e. thesis-void), does not amount to advocacy of any of the dispositions, or to a claim about the permanence of the states brought about. Inherent to any further reaching claim with regard to the void is a commitment to more than an exposition, a commitment to a support-structure which brings about the claim at hand<sup>42</sup> (as this is not done by the mere manifestation of the void in itself). On the other hand, remaining at the point of exposition of the continuity-of -the-question, requires no such commitment.

Thesis-void is exposed through the notice of dialectical tension between opposing claims, i.e. *ισοσθένεια* of the opposed propositions argued for and consequent inability to resolve the disagreement without begging the question. Thesis-void as such is in annulment of each of the propositions, as neither can be perceived as an answer without begging the question, and in perpetuity of both proposition (within the framework at hand), as the question

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<sup>39</sup> A notable example presents itself in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, A VII-XII.

<sup>40</sup> See section I.2.2. in the preceding text on interpretation of *ἀνεπίκριτος στάσις*.

<sup>41</sup> I.e. through revelation of the thesis-void, the path of continued inquiry brought about, as there *is* no resolution found, presents itself as relevant and meaningful solely through the failure of the answers (much like skepticism as an attitude, which presents itself as relevant and meaningful in the failure of what is determinate), yet this bares no consequences with regard to the question of whether or not the continued inquiry is meaningful in itself.

<sup>42</sup> In this lies the sting of Academics' arguments against the Stoics, as their commitments apparent in claims about the 'wise man' would bind those to further consequences of the revealed thesis-void.

continued includes both opposing (positive and negative ) propositions<sup>43</sup>. In a specific sense it is the perpetuity of both negative and positive judgments in a dialectical interplay within a specific framework that *is* their annulment, and *is* the continuity of the question. Openness to the question, i.e. commitment to inquiry displayed in authentic skeptical approach is, as noted, precisely in not giving preference to either affirmation or negation. Curious aspect noticed in both aforementioned attempts at advocacy of skepticism was that, in these, one finds a thesis in place of a thesis-void, alongside to an acknowledgement of skeptical arguments posing as a dialectical counterweight. In the preceding text the emergence of a thesis in place of a thesis-void in both Lehrer's and Unger's account was explained through unveiling of a phantom misstep in treatment of skepticism as a theory, i.e. the very attempt at its *defense*. At this point further examination of the theses as juxtaposed to the notices of dialectical tension in their accounts should prove revealing, specifically with regard to perpetuity of the myth of skeptical thesis and further consequences for skeptical argumentation as such.

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<sup>43</sup> This is reminiscent of Gadamer's exposition of an open question (*Truth and Method*, 358), as he writes: "insofar as a question remains open, it always includes both negative and positive judgments."

## II. 2. Thesis-Void Violation and the Dialectical Tension

### *Revisiting Unger's theses*

In Unger's account first-order negative claim takes on the role of a skeptical thesis. In as much, the skeptic of his account resembles the classical phantom skeptic, as portrayed in the first part of this study, taking the counter-thesis, which is in authentic skeptical argumentation precedent to openness of the conclusion, as the thesis to be accepted. For Unger in "A Defense of Skepticism" the skeptical thesis is<sup>1</sup>:

That, in the case of every human being, there is hardly anything, if anything at all, which the person knows to be so.

In arguing for this thesis his treatment of turning about is brief, as he notes that it is *acceptable* and doesn't interfere with what he set out to argue for<sup>2</sup>:

On this skeptical thesis, no one will know the thesis to be true. But this is *alright*. For *I only want to argue that it may be reasonable for us to suppose the thesis to be true*, not that we should ever know it to be true.

Upon outlining his set of arguments, in almost authentic-like manner he states that if the thesis he presents "is not reasonable to accept, then neither is its negation, the thesis of 'common sense'"<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, as he even refers to the thesis as deserving of "if not our acceptance, *at least* the suspension of our judgment"<sup>4</sup>, one might be left with an impression that Unger, in noting the dialectical strain, exposes the thesis-void, especially since he repeats the locution for each of the premises leading up to a thesis. Yet this would include reading into Unger's account much more than he sets forth, and I believe this is further corroborated by the fact that the notion of suspension does not appear in reference to the thesis or the

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<sup>1</sup> "A Defense," 216; here I limit the outline to the cited article, even though Unger takes his argumentation further in *Ignorance: A Case for Skepticism* published four years later, where argumentation from the article is supplemented with "an argument for universal ignorance" in which the thesis (i.e. the "conclusion of universal skepticism") is: "Nobody ever *knows* anything to be so."; cf. Unger, *Ignorance: A Case for Skepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), III §1, §10. On occasion passages from the book are to be utilized for clarification of Unger's views, and changes to the original text of the article will be used to point out which passages or claims Unger himself found redundant or perhaps even incorrect.

<sup>2</sup> "A Defense," 198, emphasis added; in *Ignorance* (p. 48) he adds "I want to move us towards favouring this thesis."

<sup>3</sup> "A Defense," 216; in place of this in *Ignorance* (p. 88) he writes: 'Now that we have seen what lies behind this sceptical thesis, and behind parallel theses concerning what is or is not flat, or a vacuum, etc., we might pause to try to assess what it is that the theses contradict.'

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* emphasis added.

premises in his *Ignorance: A Case for Skepticism*<sup>5</sup> published four years after the article. If one juxtaposes Unger's proclaimed goal in arguing for the thesis, namely to show that "it may be reasonable for us to suppose the thesis to be true"<sup>6</sup> and the notice that the "reasonable course for us now is to suspend judgment,"<sup>7</sup> which appears as part of his argumentation in "A Defense of Skepticism", one might be compelled to claim either that Unger does not fully succeed in meeting his goal<sup>8</sup>, or, corresponding to the aforementioned impression, that his goal was actually different, in the sense that the goal was to posit the thesis as a counter-thesis to the ones for which it may be equally reasonable for us to suppose to be true. First claim would imply that Unger didn't notice that the goal that he set forth was not reached, as the second would imply that he failed to verse his goal accurately. It seems, though, that there is a third, and perhaps more charitable way to understand Unger's claims regarding suspension of judgment, which seems to be implied in his use of the aforementioned locution. His choice of wording in pointing to potential suspension suggests that his treatment of suspension would be better characterized as an observation of lesser allowance on one's behalf<sup>9</sup>, in place of acceptance, if one is reluctant to *assent* to the thesis Unger reverses to over again; and not as an exposition of the thesis-void. This lesser allowance for Unger is still, seemingly, to the advantage of the thesis as it implies that it is not reasonable to accept the opposite claims, i.e. that it might *be reasonable for us to suppose the thesis to be true*. That he wishes to treat suspension in this manner, and not as annulment which would imply that his argument either falls short or overreaches in establishing the thesis, seems to be confirmed by his treatment of *περιτροπή*, as well. Unger in treating the turning about simply as not troubling, thus signals that the position or allegiance toward the claim he argues for is not affected by the turning about, as it is lesser than *knowing it to be true*, i.e. is of a lesser extent than the one annulled. A supplement to this notice regarding *περιτροπή* in *Ignorance* further supports this charitable interpretation as there Unger adds<sup>10</sup>: "I want to move us toward *favouring this thesis*". On this

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<sup>5</sup> The article is incorporated as part II. The claim that the locution does not appear is to be understood as referring to the aforementioned instances (following the premises, and following the conclusion, i.e. the thesis); the instance where it actually does appear in both article and the book will be further discussed later in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the passage quoted on the previous page; "A Defense," 198; *Ignorance*, 48.

<sup>7</sup> In the article, as part of his conclusion on certainty; "A Defense," 213 (excluded in *Ignorance*).

<sup>8</sup> This is the claim in James Cargile's, "In Reply to a Defense of Skepticism" *The Philosophical Review* 81.1. (1972), 234.

<sup>9</sup> I.e. in the sense in which 'at least' serves to reduce the effect a claim made, or the sense in which it signals that a 'smaller' action or allowance is needed 'if nothing else'.

<sup>10</sup> *Ignorance*, 48.

reading then, Unger in *Ignorance* changes the wording<sup>11</sup>, but when stating in “A Defense of Skepticism” that the thesis is deserving of “if not acceptance, at least suspension of judgment”, he is making the same claim he makes four years later; the claim being that argumentation yields *acceptance, at (very) least suspension, and not negation* of the thesis, i.e. moves us toward ‘favoring’ the thesis presented.

As additional evidence in support of this interpretation one can use the notice regarding suspension of judgment which does reappear as part of Unger’s argumentation in *Ignorance*. Before such evidence can be introduced a brief outline of the argumentation is needed. For Unger the thesis of skepticism is an obvious consequence of two propositions he argues for<sup>12</sup>:

That, (i) in the case of every human being, there is hardly anything, if anything at all, of which he is certain.

That (ii) (as a matter of necessity), in the case of every human being, the person knows something to be so only if he is certain of it.

The second proposition is, as Unger states, a ‘traditional view’ of what knowledge requires. Namely, as sting of his argument is in pointing out that the attitude of certainty, required for knowledge on this traditional view<sup>13</sup>, is hardly, if at all, attainable, so Unger feels compelled to argue for it and show that philosophers who have excluded the requirement of certainty in their analysis of knowledge have been led astray by observance of the casual practices in everyday life<sup>14</sup>. Unger suggestion is that, instead of observing these casual practices in which “we tend to let what we say pass as being true”<sup>15</sup>, one should attend to the *actual* meaning of the words of interest by stressing it, emphasizing it, specifically in those sentences where it appears in close relation to the opposed terms, sentences of the type one would allow in everyday practice<sup>16</sup>. If one attends in such a manner to ‘knowing’, Unger argues, one finds it inseparable from certainty<sup>17</sup>:

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<sup>11</sup> Perhaps due to criticism of the like Cargile offers.

<sup>12</sup> The quote is from “A Defense”, 216; in *Ignorance* (p. 87) the first premise is versed slightly differently: ‘In the case of every human being, there is *at most* hardly anything of which he is certain.’; the wording being slightly different, the meaning is equivalent, as by taking into account what the phrase ‘at (the) most’ stands for in English language, *at most hardly anything* can be paraphrased as *hardly anything or less, or no more than hardly anything, if even hardly anything*.

<sup>13</sup> As a prominent common sense advocate of this view he names G.E. Moore (“A Defense”, 213).

<sup>14</sup> This portion of his argumentation will be further discussed later on. At this point the arguments for the first proposition are of interest, being the arguments in which the aforementioned locution appears.

<sup>15</sup> “A Defense”, 214.

<sup>16</sup> In *Ignorance* he coins titles for these procedures are ‘Principle of Emphasis’ and ‘Method of Opposed Terms’ (*Ignorance*, 80ff).

<sup>17</sup> “A Defense”, 216.

Here, while we might feel nothing contradictory at first in saying “He knows that it is raining, but he isn’t certain of it,” we would feel differently about our saying “He really *knows* that it is raining, but he isn’t certain of it.” And, if anything, this feeling of contradiction is only enhanced when we further emphasize, “He really *knows* that it is raining, but he isn’t actually *certain* of it.” Thus it is plausible to suppose that what we said at first is actually inconsistent, and so that knowing does require being certain.

The first proposition is likewise based on linguistic considerations. Specifically, it is a consequence of his account of a class of terms he calls ‘absolute terms’<sup>18</sup>, to which ‘certain’ belongs, and which, at least in some instances, tend to be such that “fairly reasonable suppositions about the world make it somewhat doubtful that the terms properly apply.”<sup>19</sup> The title was chosen as, on Unger’s account, the grammatical modifier ‘absolutely’ fits such terms always, and in such a manner that the use of it is in all instances superfluous<sup>20</sup>. Namely, Unger feels that it would be redundant to say that something is *absolutely* flat, or *absolutely* certain, as ‘flat’, the example he utilizes throughout his argumentation, and ‘certain’, the term of interest, being absolute terms, indicate absolute limit, i.e. “something is flat [certain] if and only if it is absolutely flat [certain]”<sup>21</sup>. Thus, the choice of the title, or explication of it, already signals two characteristics of absolute terms Unger argues for, specifically, that these indicate absence of properties “which are matters of degree”<sup>22</sup> and that, interrelatedly, these are of essentially noncomparative character, even though *basic* absolute terms, i.e. those not defined by other absolute terms<sup>23</sup>, lend themselves to modification by terms which indicate matters of degree and are used in comparative locutions. In fact, Unger uses precisely such syntactic features and use of these terms to distinguish them from terms that denote<sup>24</sup> properties which are matters of degree, which he titles ‘relative terms’. Namely, Unger’s case is that augmenting modifiers, such as ‘very’, ‘extremely’, and the like, preserve their original

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<sup>18</sup> In *Ignorance* he remarks these ‘might best be called “*absolute limit terms*”’, cf. *Ignorance*, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Unger exhibits caution in making this claim, both in “A Defense” and in *Ignorance* albeit in a different manner; the above paraphrase is from the article (p. 210), and there he specifically states that this *is* so “at least in the case of *some* of these terms”, if his account is correct, whereas in *Ignorance* he writes that “in the case of *many* of these terms it *appears*” that it is so, again, if his account is correct (p. 65, emphasis added).

<sup>20</sup> In *Ignorance* he adds that semantically “absolute terms indicate, or purport to denote an absolute *limit*.” (p. 55), and this relates to the first trait of absolute terms to be outlined in the following text.

<sup>21</sup> “A Defense”, 207; *Ignorance*, 61; as I add ‘certain’ here in what Unger would call ‘impersonal context’, it should be added that he takes ‘certain’ to have the same meaning in both personal and impersonal contexts (“A Defense”, 208; *Ignorance*, 63).

<sup>22</sup> “A Defense”, 203; *Ignorance*, 54.

<sup>23</sup> Unger gives the example of ‘cube’ in its spatial meaning for *defined* absolute term, while ‘flat’ would be a basic one (“A Defense”, 203; *Ignorance*, 56).

<sup>24</sup> I use ‘denote’ as Unger does so, but some would suggest that ‘connote’ would be better; cf. Gerald Barnes, “Unger’s defense of skepticism” *Philosophical Studies* 24.2. (1973), 121.

function with relative terms but have opposite, diminishing function when applied to basic absolute terms<sup>25</sup>:

(...) we have granted that it is common for us to say of a surface that it is pretty, or very, or extremely flat. And it is also common for us to say that, in saying such things of surfaces, we are saying *how* flat the surfaces are. What we say here seems of piece with our saying of a surface that it is pretty, or very, or extremely bumpy, and our then saying that, in doing this, we are saying *how* bumpy the surface is. But, even intuitively, we may notice a difference here. For only with our talk about “flat,” we have the idea that these locutions are only convenient means for saying how closely a surface approximates, or *how close it comes to being*, a surface which is (absolutely) flat. Thus, it is intuitively plausible, and far from being a nonsensical interpretation, to paraphrase things so our result with our “flat” locutions is this: what we have said of a surface is that it is pretty *nearly* flat, or very *nearly* flat, or extremely *close to being* flat and, in doing that, we have said, not simply how flat the surface is, but rather *how close* the surface is *to being* flat. (...) That is, when we say, for example, that something is (really) very flat, then, so far as flatness is concerned, we seem to say less of the thing that when we say, simply, that it is (really) flat.

When absolute terms are used in comparative locutions<sup>26</sup>, Unger would again have us apply the same procedure of paraphrase which he argues is appropriate with augmenting modifiers, but with a provision that one of the things being compared might just have the property indicated with an absolute term; thus to say that ‘one surface is not as flat as the other’ would be to say “the first surface is *either not flat though the second is, or else it is not as nearly* flat as the second.”<sup>27</sup> Again, the paraphrase, Unger states, would make no sense if applied to relative terms, as comparative phrases regarding properties denoted by these mean precisely that a property is present in a higher degree in one of the things being compared (i.e. *is* present in both). The two aforementioned characteristics of absolute terms, noticeable through this procedure of paraphrase, are precisely, according to Unger, what makes application of these terms troublesome. The characteristics when observed for term ‘flat’ would yield the result that saying “that a surface is flat is to say that some things or properties which are matters of degree [bumpiness, curvature] are not instanced in the surface to *any degree at all*”<sup>28</sup> and entail “that, *as a matter of logical necessity*, if a surface is flat, then *there never is* any surface which is flatter than it is.”<sup>29</sup> From this Unger argues for the doubtful applicability

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<sup>25</sup> “A Defense”, 205-6; *Ignorance*, 57-8.

<sup>26</sup> In *Ignorance* he further claims that these contexts provide “more sensitive test than modifying adverbs” as the latter do not apply smoothly to all basic absolute terms (p. 59).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. “A Defense”, 205-6; *Ignorance*, 58-9.

<sup>28</sup> “A Defense”, 203; *Ignorance*, 54, emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> “A Defense”, 211; *Ignorance*, 66, emphasis added.



of absolute terms, and it is here that he uses the notice regarding suspension of judgment in both of his skeptical writings dealt with in this study<sup>30</sup>:

When we look at rather smooth block of stone through a powerful microscope, the observed surface appears to us to be rife with irregularities. (...) Our understanding of the stone's composition, (...) makes it reasonable for us to suppose that any similarly sized or larger surfaces will fail to be flat (...). At the same time, it would be *perhaps* a bit rash to suppose that much smaller surfaces would fail to be flat as well. *Beneath the level of our observation* perhaps there are small areas of the stone's surface which are flat. (...) So *perhaps there are* physical objects with surfaces which are flat, and *perhaps it is not now reasonable for us to assume that there are no such objects*. But even *if this strong assumption is not now reasonable*, one thing which does seem quite reasonable for us now to assume is this: *we should at least suspend judgment* on the matter *whether there are any objects with flat surfaces*. That there *are* such objects is something *it is not now reasonable for us to believe*.

Here Unger cautiously avoids suggesting that the account of absolute terms establishes (*can* establish) a 'strong' negative claim that there are *no* objects which are (*actually*) flat, as such objects to which the absolute term would properly apply might exist though human beings (now) fail to perceive them. Yet, in noting that *at least* suspension of judgment "on the matter *whether there are any objects* of the kind" seems reasonable, what he suggests is not simply that one should suspend judgment due to the matter being (for now) unresolved. His suggestion is that, on the account of absolute terms, it has been established that "*it is not now reasonable for us to believe*" that such objects do exist. Namely, his claim is not to the effect that *perhaps* such a belief would be presumptuous as well; his claim is that, it is *not now* reasonable to believe such a thing, as what we do (i.e. can) observe (now) serves as evidence to the contrary. Therefore, what at first might appear to one as notice of a thesis-void, reveals itself as a 'softening remark'<sup>31</sup>, and the statement which might appear to be a notice of dialectical tension, actually serves the purpose of supporting the 'lesser' claim *at least*. In *Ignorance*, Unger supplements the quoted passage with a statement that<sup>32</sup>:

At the same time, it does seem reasonable to believe that (in comparison with all) *at most* hardly any physical objects have surfaces which are actually flat.

But the supplement, content-wise, does not add on to what has been stated before, it is simply an explicit statement of what is, on careful reading, already suggested in Unger's outline, i.e. that it is reasonable to suppose the lesser claim analogue to the first premise supporting his

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<sup>30</sup> "A Defense", 211-2; *Ignorance*, 67, emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> Unger himself, in *Ignorance*, upon discussion of the turning about (outlined above), refers to the remarks made as 'softening remarks' (p. 48) and to the thesis presented in "A Defense" as a 'less radical thesis.'

<sup>32</sup> *Ignorance*, 67, emphasis added.

skeptical thesis is true. From this Unger further argues that, with ‘certain’ being an absolute term, and with absolute terms having the characteristics he outlines, belief that there is “hardly anything, *if* anything at all”<sup>33</sup>, or, in other words “at most hardly anything” of which human beings are certain, seems reasonable.

Unger’s use of the notice of suspension of judgment preserved in his later writing thus confirms the suggested interpretation of the notice which does not reappear. After all, the claim in the article goes<sup>34</sup>:

And so (...) the thesis of scepticism, also deserves, *if not* our acceptance, *at least* the suspension of our judgment. If this thesis *is not* reasonable to accept, then neither is its negation, the thesis of “common sense.”

Unger’s procedure here, observed through the prism of authentic skepticism, appears curiously reversed. He argues for a thesis, then notes potential suspension of judgment it deserves (*at the very least*) to its advantage, and in the end uses the seeming dialectical tension to preclude negation of the thesis. This is easily distinguished from authentic approach, where opposed answers are exposed as the thesis-void, in which acceptance of either of the answers does not present itself as a viable option, and the question is continued. Comparison also leaves one with an impression that, in referring to the counterpart of his skeptical thesis, Unger’s notice of the dialectical tension is, in a specific sense, empty, as “the thesis of ‘common sense’” solely appears in role of a negation of the skeptical thesis and the *tension* is not dealt with explicitly<sup>35</sup>. It is worth noting that in *Ignorance* the argumentation appears reversed as well, but in a different guise. There Unger, in a place corresponding to the aforementioned quote, a bit more cautiously writes<sup>36</sup>:

This is the skeptical thesis for which, at the beginning of this chapter, we set out to argue. Now that we have seen what lies behind this skeptical thesis, and behind parallel theses concerning what is or is not flat (...), *we might pause to try to assess what it is that the theses contradict.*

The theses, Unger proceeds, contradict the beliefs that what we call ‘flat’ or ‘certain’ *is* actually flat and certain, and interrelated belief that the use of language does not “involve us

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<sup>33</sup> For the claims in this sentence see e.g. “A Defense”, 216, *Ignorance*, 87.

<sup>34</sup> “A Defense”, 216, emphasis added.

<sup>35</sup> In other words, Unger does not directly engage the argument for the opposed thesis, and while one can conjecture what specifically Unger is referring to, ‘the thesis of “common sense”’ appears to be ambiguous at best. In bringing about the continuity of the question, authentic skepticism argues from the premises accepted in the countered account, and thus when tension between the two conclusions is revealed it is quite clear how the two proposed answers bring about annulment.

<sup>36</sup> *Ignorance*, 88, emphasis added.

in error systematically”<sup>37</sup>, which “need not clash with experience”<sup>38</sup>. It is this last notice that once again serves to defend the ‘skeptical theses’. In fact, it is precisely the point from which his defense of skeptical thesis commences; namely, the point that smooth functioning of absolute terms and their helpfulness for practical purposes, do not represent a case against skepticism. That is to say, for practical purposes one might claim that something is flat, when it approximates the absolute limit that is ‘flat’, or claim to know, when in a position approximating what ‘know’ stands for, and false application of the terms may not be problematic, but one is engaged in falsehood nonetheless. What needs to be noted here is that in both of the quoted passages which mention the opposed, the contradicted, Unger’s suggestion is the same, namely that the opposed has been shown as not reasonable to accept. In his words<sup>39</sup>:

(...) if scepticism is right, then all is not well with common sense, however useful those beliefs have been as a basis on which science might grow. If the meaning of our ordinary terms is really so demanding that simple sentences express no truth, and so ‘verbal’ beliefs have no truth, then common sense cannot be left unchanged.

If in *Ignorance* Unger is more cautious in outlining what is contradicted by the thesis he puts forth, he is also more straightforward in noting what his arguments are meant to do<sup>40</sup>:

In response to a philosophical environment which is so hostile to scepticism, I will speak of myself throughout this chapter as *defending* this sceptical thesis. But I am trying to advance it just the same.

To advance the ‘less radical skeptical thesis’<sup>41</sup> in “A Defense of Skepticism” Unger bears down on the requirement of certainty, and for him the arguments to that effect represented from the beginning solely a “part of the groundwork for more powerful defenses of skepticism”<sup>42</sup>. In his later ‘skeptical’ writings<sup>43</sup> he proceeds to develop an argument which, in bearing down on normative requirements, brings about a “conclusion of universal skepticism”<sup>44</sup> that “nobody ever *knows* that anything is so”, which is further followed by

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<sup>37</sup> This is the phrase he uses at the beginning of his outline, “A Defense”, 199; *Ignorance*, 50.

<sup>38</sup> *Ignorance*, 88; see also *Ignorance*, 50, 51, 53, 89; “A Defense” 200-202.

<sup>39</sup> *Ignorance*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ignorance*, 48.

<sup>41</sup> “A Defense”, 198; *Ignorance*, 48.

<sup>42</sup> “A Defense”, 217.

<sup>43</sup> This conclusion is advanced in “An Argument for Skepticism” *Philosophic Exchange* 1.5. (1974), which appears in *Ignorance* as chapter 3.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Unger, *Ignorance*, 95ff. Namely, Unger starts with the proposition that “if one knows that something to be so then it is *all right* for this person to be absolutely certain that it is so”, and goes on to deny that it is ever *all right* for anyone to be certain that anything is so; in following sections Unger further develops an ‘argument for complete ignorance’ and proceeds with an outline of ignorance, its

arguments to the effect that “no one can ever be reasonable in anything, not even in the least degree, and that no one can ever be justified”<sup>45</sup>. As the purpose of this outline was primarily to examine more closely the seeming dialectical tension Unger notes, juxtaposed to the thesis he proposed to defend, it seemed best to attend to the part of his writings where he uses most authentic like expressions in outlining it<sup>46</sup>. The examination shows that even in passages where Unger utilizes authentic-like phrases it is to the effect of favoring the skeptical thesis he presents. As ‘suspension of judgment’ serves as a softening remark, so the seeming notice of dialectical strain in a negative form serves the purpose of reverting to the thesis defended.

### *Revisiting Lehrer’s theses*

Lehrer, much like Unger, utilizes authentic-like utterances in his defense of skepticism. In one such utterance, Lehrer illusively professes not take the first order negative claim simply as the thesis of skepticism, as he claims that “the contention is that *no one knows anything, not even that no one knows anything*”<sup>47</sup>. The claim sounds authentic in two respects. Namely, the term ‘contention’ might stand for debate, dispute, controversy, and not solely for a statement one upholds as true, and furthermore the use of turning about seems to signal annulment, in which negation cancels itself. In his treatment of the turning about, Lehrer seems to note the implied annulment of answers, as he writes<sup>48</sup>:

You might feel a surge of confidence in face of such contention simply because the sceptic has admitted that he does not know that he is correct, and hence, that he does not know that you are incorrect when you affirm that you do know something. But this confidence is misplaced because scepticism entails that, just as the sceptic does not know that we do not know anything, so we do not know that we do know anything, and moreover, that we do not know anything.

Yet, in his account, this annulment is illusive, as the thesis of skepticism for Lehrer is the thesis “affirming universal ignorance”<sup>49</sup>, and in his account the skeptic “affirms that we know

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‘wages’, skeptical utterances and truth. As it is of interest for this study solely to unveil the phantom missteps which cause his affirmation of ignorance, a detailed account of his argument is not needed. Stroud’s “Review of Peter Unger, *Ignorance: A Case for Skepticism*” *The Journal of Philosophy* (1997): 246-257 (Reprinted as “*Taking Skepticism Seriously*” in B. Stroud, *Understanding Human Knowledge*, 38-51 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), provides a more detailed insight into inconsistencies of Unger’s claims.

<sup>45</sup> The so called “thesis of skepticism about rationality”, cf. Unger, *Ignorance*, V; for the quote specifically, 242.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Unger utilizes the supposed tension to the same effect in his “Skepticism and Nihilism” *Nous* 14.4. (1980): 517-545, in reference to the “thesis of radical nihilism”.

<sup>47</sup> “Why Not Skepticism,” 284, emphasis added.

<sup>48</sup> “Why Not Skepticism,” 284.

<sup>49</sup> “Why Not Skepticism,” 285.

nothing”<sup>50</sup>. To understand what Lehrer intends to convey through use of authentic-like utterance which seems to announce annulment requires a reading of such an utterance bound to a thesis. To allow a claim to devour itself in authentic account *is* to disavow allegiance to the claim, and to allow a thesis-void to stand in place of an affirmation or a negation. As thesis-void reveals itself as both impoverishment and openness, if one observes Lehrer’s use of authentic utterance through the prism of authentic skepticism, one might feel compelled to conclude that the annulment of answers for Lehrer amounts to an affirmation of impoverishment, and that the very statement of openness to *περιτροπή*, is solidified into a thesis. Such an enclosure of the thesis-void into a thesis, in terms used here, would amount to a mistreatment of *ἀπορία* as a result of dialectical tension between opposing accounts, a disregard for the authentic openness to the question, the very openness original skeptics sought to signal in their use of admission of self-refutation in utterance of skeptical phrases. Had Lehrer chose to interpret annulment as affirmation of universal ignorance, to utilize the words used in exchanges of original skeptics, consistency in *ἀπορεία* would be lost, and preference given. But it would seem that for Lehrer the path from annulment inherent in turning about to affirmation of universal ignorance, if examined carefully, is much simpler. Much like in Unger’s account, for Lehrer the path from turning about to the skeptical thesis also leads through a treatment of turning about as not troubling. Thus the skeptic, though he ‘does not *know* that we do not know,’ can assume a different attitude toward his thesis and toward the arguments that bring it about<sup>51</sup>:

(...) the sceptic looks as though he must inevitably fall into embarrassment. For in saying why he says what he does, must he not fall back on the claim that he *knows* various things to be true which support his conclusion? Again the answer is negative. The sceptic is not prevented by his agnology from *believing* most of the same things that we believe; indeed, all his position debar him from believing is such things as would entail that we have knowledge. (...) He *affirms* that we know nothing, but he believes most of what most men believe. He affirms much else besides, only here he must be careful not to mislead with his sceptical speech. (...) His words are addressed to us *in the full conviction that they are the truth* but without any pretense to knowledge.

The set of claims supposedly shielding the skeptic from embarrassment has an underlying assumption, namely, that all the attitudes listed do not amount to knowledge, and for Lehrer’s skeptic only a claim *to know* would be troubling. Dealing with the turning about through

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<sup>50</sup> “Why Not Skepticism,” 284.

<sup>51</sup> “Why Not Skepticism,” 284-5, emphasis added. Lehrer’s use of the term ‘agnology’ will be discussed further in the following text.

‘softening’ of the skeptic’s claim implies that the lesser attitude *is not* knowledge, i.e. is carried on the assumption regarding what knowledge *is*, much like the *affirmation* of ignorance in its own right. In his own way Lehrer notes this, and provides an account of knowledge, prior to outlining his set of arguments<sup>52</sup>:

Before attempting to offer any argument for so general a thesis as one affirming universal ignorance, it is essential to include (...) an account of what knowledge entails. And here we immediately confront the problem that whatever one philosopher has said knowledge is another philosopher has rejected. Hence it is impossible to avoid controversy. Having written elsewhere on this subject, I shall have to reply on those results. I shall consequently assume that if a man knows *that p*, then it is true *that p*. It has seemed evident to most epistemologists that no one can know anything to be true which is not true. Second, I shall assume that if a man knows *that p*, then he believes *that p*. This has been controverted, but I shall not undertake any defence of the assumption here. Next, I shall assume that if a man knows *that p*, then he is completely justified in believing *that p*. A word of explanation. As I am using the locution, “completely justified,” it is logically possible that a man should be completely justified in believing something even though he has no justificatory argument to support his belief. However, (...) I shall deny the existence of such beliefs. Though completely justified true belief is a necessary condition of knowledge, it is not sufficient for reasons that might further aid the cause of scepticism.

Lehrer does not take on the defense of these assumptions in “Why Not Skepticism,” nor does he elaborate each assumption in detail, but he does refer the reader to his other writings, in which such a defense or elaboration is undertaken<sup>53</sup>. The assumptions constitute a slight modification of the so called ‘tripartite’ analysis of knowledge, which posits justified true belief as a necessary condition of knowledge, with Lehrer’s addition of requirement that the true belief needs to be *completely* justified, and, at the time common assumption that the three conditions are not sufficient. In announcing that he will deny such beliefs here, Lehrer is not simply announcing that he is *to argue for* a negation, as the skeptic of his account *affirms* the thesis of universal ignorance; and, if one observes the softening remarks in his treatment of turning about coupled with the outline of assumptions regarding knowledge, it would seem that the supposed skeptic in his account would deny the requirement he doesn’t claim for himself, namely, complete justification. This is, for most part, what Lehrer skeptic does, and, as it is precisely with regard to ‘complete justification’ requirement that Lehrer’s notice of dialectical tension between skepticism and philosophy of common sense appears, it remains to

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<sup>52</sup> “Why Not Skepticism,” 285.

<sup>53</sup> In “Belief and Knowledge,” *The Philosophical Review* 77.4. (1968), he defends the second assumption, or as he calls it the “entailment thesis” (p. 491). In “Knowledge, Truth and Evidence,” *Analysis* 25.5. (1965) he elaborates the locution ‘completely justified’ (pp. 168-9).

be seen how the thesis in his account circumvents the tension and persists in place of a thesis-void.

To counter Thomas Reid's and the like<sup>54</sup> foundationalists' thesis, by which there is a set of basic beliefs which are *prima facie*<sup>55</sup> (completely) justified without supporting arguments, Lehrer conceives what he calls his 'skeptical hypothesis'<sup>56</sup>, i.e. a twentieth century tailored counter-example<sup>57</sup> outlining phenomenally indistinguishable (mostly) non-veridical (yet very nearly correct) counterparts to all of our beliefs. Specifically, the basic beliefs targeted in Lehrer's counter-example are those attested by senses, memory, and attentive reflection<sup>58</sup>, natural faculties veracity of which, according to Reid, we do<sup>59</sup> (and are to<sup>60</sup>) initially take for granted<sup>61</sup>. The example is conceived to incorporate the traits of these basic beliefs described in Reid's work, thus, with mankind being collectively deceived there would still be 'universal agreement'<sup>62</sup>, with beliefs being 'very nearly correct', conduct of life<sup>63</sup> and

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<sup>54</sup> Although Lehrer specifically mentions Reid ("Why Not Skepticism," 291-292), it is obvious that he is trying to address a number of similar views when he writes of the basic beliefs that "the dogmatists have generally agreed that at least some kinds of perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, and beliefs concerning our conscious states are among them".

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Lehrer, *op.cit.*, 291. Reid, in saying that first principles he outlines are not immune to examination, invites us to "deal with them as an upright judge does with a witness who has a fair character," namely to accept "the testimony of such a witness while his character is unimpeached; but, if it can be shewn that he is suborned, or that he is influenced by malice or partial favour, his testimony loses all its credit and is justly rejected"; cf. Reid, "Essays on Intellectual Powers of Man" in *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D.* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1852), 234.

<sup>56</sup> Although nowadays a common part of philosophical discourse, this might be regarded as an unfortunate choice of a title, if one would want to capture a Reid-like philosopher's attention, as hypotheses are, according to Reid, to be treated with "just contempt, as the reveries of vain and fanciful men, whose pride makes them conceive themselves able to unfold the mysteries of nature by force of their genius" (*op.cit.*, 236) which should be (and this is what he posits as "a fundamental principle in (...) inquiries into the structure of the mind and its operations") ignored; cf. *ibid.*, 379.

<sup>57</sup> In his example the cause of error is thus not an omnipotent deity, but a group of intellectually superior aliens, who in turn, are also deceived by a group of even more intellectually superior aliens, also being deceived, as the string of deception continues *ad infinitum* (cf. Lehrer, "Why Not Skepticism," 292). Perhaps Lehrer was here utilizing a segment from Reid's writings, where, interestingly, the notion of 'superior natures' which "may have intellectual powers which we have not" also appears with a notice that still "we have no reason to think that God has given fallacious powers to any of his creatures", as "this would be to think dishonorably of our Maker, and would *lay a foundation for universal skepticism*" (*The Works*, 335).

<sup>58</sup> I use Reid's wording here (*The Works*, 232), who also simply uses 'consciousness' (e.g. *ibid.*, 327), while Lehrer's description is of resulting 'beliefs concerning our conscious states' ("Why Not Skepticism," 292).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Reid, *The Works*, 328, 448.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Reid, *The Works*, 328.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Reid, *The Works*, 233, 447ff.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Reid, *The Works*, 230, 233, 247, 439ff.

<sup>63</sup> Reid uses this, as it is commonly used, against the skeptics who in the conduct of life 'trust the authority of their senses and other faculties' (*op.cit.*, pp. 233-234, 416, 448).

interaction with the environment would be unobstructed. Presumably<sup>64</sup>, men in the counterexample would still be immediately compelled to trust the testimonies of their faculties, which would be just what they are in the cases countered, and their faculties would ‘by Nature’ produce irresistible beliefs in them, yet these beliefs would be mostly erroneous due to different causal history in deceptive practices of a group of superior beings. In setting out a case in which correctness of any belief a man might have does not depend on one’s capacities and faculties but on a whim of a superior being, Lehrer thus puts to question the evidence of these capacities and faculties as “a voucher of all truth”<sup>65</sup>, i.e. the veracity or truth-conduciveness of the sources of belief taken for granted in Reid’s account. With regard to the original skeptical arguments presented in the first part of this study, Lehrer’s counterexample resembles Cartesian dream and omnipotent deity arguments, as the conundrum he wishes to put forth<sup>66</sup> is not in the mere possibility of beliefs being incorrect<sup>67</sup>, but in a disconnect between correctness of beliefs and evidence of one’s capacities and faculties<sup>68</sup>. Namely, if erroneousness of beliefs, as Lehrer claims upon the outline of his hypothesis, entails that the beliefs in question are not completely justified, it is precisely because in the place of assumed truth-conduciveness of sources of belief in the countered account it is assumed otherwise, as adequacy of evidence is put to the test.

Even though it could be noted that immediacy and irresistibility of beliefs in Reid’s account accompanied by admission of proneness to error and contempt for hypotheses seem to suggest that a *sorites*-like argument might have been a better choice in addressing a Reid-like philosopher’s account, Lehrer’s choice is better understood in light of his aspiration to both question and utilize the conception of *prima facie* justification and the manner in which he intends to pursue this course of argumentation. Namely, upon noting how arbitrary and question-begging it would be to justify a dismissal of the counter-case simply by indicating

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<sup>64</sup> Lehrer does not explicitly mention the immediacy or irresistibility of the beliefs in question.

<sup>65</sup> Reid, *The Works*, 448.

<sup>66</sup> Albeit broader, see section I.4.1 above for Descartes’ writings.

<sup>67</sup> Reid, after all, allows that we are liable to error in the use of all our faculties (e.g. *ibid.*, 259, 335, 339).

<sup>68</sup> Or, in verbiage Lehrer employs in his subsequent works, the missing (not accounted for) truth-connection between the truth of *prima facie* reason (evidence of faculties in question) and the truth of produced (noninferentially justified) beliefs; cf. Lehrer and Stewart Cohen, “Justification, Truth and Coherence,” *Synthese* 55.2. (1983). In that paper the description of not-accounted for truth connection is meant for contemporary foundationalists, and Reid’s philosophy appears in a different role as connection of his epistemology with cognitive psychology is outlined and utilized.



that it conflicts with the attested basic beliefs<sup>69</sup>, Lehrer revisits this conception which, in a specific sense, serves as a lever to shift the burden of proof to the opposing side<sup>70</sup>:

The beliefs of common sense are said to be basic and thus completely justified without any justificatory arguments. But why, the sceptic may query, should the dogmatists' beliefs be considered completely justified without argument and his hypothesis be rejected without argument? Dogmatists affirm that the beliefs of common sense are *innocent until proven guilty*, but why, the sceptic may inquire, should his hypothesis not receive comparable treatment before the bar of evidence? Why not regard the sceptical hypothesis as innocent until proven guilty. Indeed the sceptic might continue, why not regard all beliefs as innocent until proven guilty?

Where Reid would have us treat 'first principles' as one would treat a witness whose character and credibility have not (yet) been impeached, Lehrer draws another courtroom-based analogy for *prima facie* justification, the one of presumption of innocence. While in a court of law the two analogies used are far from equivalent, in this context Lehrer presumably feels that they are utilized to the same effect, namely, as witness's credibility tends to be questioned through cross-examination so presumption of innocence implies that it is on the prosecutor to prove the opposing side's guilt. In proposing a generalization of what he treats as 'presumption of innocence' for all beliefs under the title of 'principle of impartiality' by which "no hypothesis should be rejected as unjustified without argument against it"<sup>71</sup> Lehrer aims to outline an argument 'that does not prejudicially presuppose that the burden of proof rests on one side or the other but instead takes an impartial view of the matter', an argument which would yield as a conclusion his skeptical thesis. Commencing with the (i) proposed principle, the argument runs as follows<sup>72</sup>:

Consequently, (ii) if the skeptic puts forth a hypothesis inconsistent with the hypothesis of common sense, then there is no burden of proof on either side, but neither may one side in the dispute be judged unjustified in believing his hypothesis unless an argument is produced to show that this is so. (iii) If contradictory hypotheses are put forth without reason being given to show that one side is correct and the other in error, then neither party may fairly be stigmatized as unjustified. However, (iv) if a belief is completely justified, then those with which it conflicts are unjustified. (v) Therefore, if neither of the conflicting hypotheses is shown to be unjustified, then we must refrain from concluding that belief in one of the hypothesis is completely justified. (...) From this premiss it follows in a single step that (vi) *we do not know those beliefs* [the beliefs of common sense] *to be true* (vii) because they are not completely justified. And the sceptic wins the day.

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<sup>69</sup> Which might be reminiscent of Reid's claim that "opinions which contradict first principles, are distinguished from other errors, by this: That they are not only false but absurd (...)" and thus deserving of ridicule (ibid., p. 438).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Lehrer, "Why Not Skepticism," 292, emphasis added.

<sup>71</sup> Op.cit., 293.

<sup>72</sup> Op.cit., 293-4, emphasis added.

Even though Lehrer's principle sounds authentic as it seems to require that neither side to the dispute is to resort to the question-begging dismissal of the opposite, a closer examination of his argument reveals its basis in 'phantom' interpretation of skepticism leading up to the phantom skeptical thesis and affirmation of impoverishment.

In seeking to generalize *prima facie* justification to all beliefs Lehrer suggests that this would end what he perceives as an unproductive debate on who should be the bearer of the burden of proof, as his principle of impartiality would preclude exclusive claims from either side in the dispute to preferential treatment. In this, he feels, it is more appropriate than both dogmatists' claims and the "precept that the burden of proof always lies with the affirmative"<sup>73</sup>. While Lehrer's principle might sound fair-minded, in thinking about the consequences of its application one is faced with situations similar to the one Russell describes in writing about exchanges between skeptics and dogmatists albeit in a different area of philosophy<sup>74</sup>:

Many orthodox people speak as though it were the business of sceptics to disprove received dogmas rather than of dogmatists to prove them. This is, of course, a mistake. If I were to suggest that between the Earth and Mars there is a china teapot revolving about the sun in an elliptical orbit, nobody would be able to disprove my assertion provided I were careful to add that the teapot is too small to be revealed even by our most powerful telescopes. But if I were to go on to say that, since my assertion cannot be disproved, it is intolerable presumption on the part of human reason to doubt it, I should rightly be thought to be talking nonsense.

Lehrer's principle might not posit that it is 'intolerable presumption' to *doubt* the hypotheses which have not been disproved, but it does artificially alleviate substantial burden of proof from those seeking to affirm a thesis. As the route taking Lehrer to the proposed principle begins with the question why skeptical hypothesis shouldn't receive comparable treatment

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.; for the precept Lehrer refers the readers to a passage from Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (here quoted from *The Works of George Berkeley, D.D.*, vol. 1. London: printed for T. Tegg, 1843). The passage is among the closing paragraphs of the first dialogue (p. 180), and Hylas, having been asked by Philonous to give further reasons he might have for believing in existence of 'material beings' responds: "(...) I do not find I can give you any good reasons for it. But thus much seems pretty plain, that it is at least possible such things may really exist; and as long as there is no absurdity in supposing them, *I am resolved to believe as I did, till you bring good reasons to the contrary*" (emphasis added). It is clear why Lehrer chose this particular passage, as, after Hylas shifts the burden of proof to Philonous, Philonous' response is: "(...) Then you will have me bring reasons against it: though another would think it reasonable, *the proof should lie on him who holds the affirmative.*" Pace Lehrer, it doesn't seem that the precept exhausts Berkeley's reply to the dogmatist at that point; as the reasoning against the countered position continues, the 'precept' seems more as a side-comment on the burden of proof being shifted in such a manner.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted from Russell, "Is There a God?" in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol.11, ed. John G. Slater and Peter Köllner (London: Routledge, 1997), 547-8.

“before the bar of evidence”<sup>75</sup>, the question that presents itself is why he would ask for such a treatment of the presented counter-case. An authentic skeptic need not require (ii) to be perceived as *justified in believing his hypothesis* unless an argument is presented to show otherwise<sup>76</sup>, as in authentic application of skeptical arguments counter-examples appear in role of a question, or more specifically, a question posed to the countered account. In as much, justifiedness of this question, much like the question itself, arises out of the claim in the account put to question, and can be elaborated by pointing out how and why the question arises<sup>77</sup> within the framework in which the account is outlined, but need not be defended in a manner in which a thesis put forth need be.

In placing skeptical hypothesis on equal ground with dogmatists’ basic beliefs, principle of impartiality entails a phantom interpretation of skepticism. Namely, authentic skepticism avoids the burden of proof through absence of claims. Thus it is not a preconceived presupposition of skepticism that the burden of proof rests with the affirmative, but it would seem that such a supposition lies readily in the context of debates, in which the side upholding the debated thesis, be it in form of an affirmation or a negation, is required to provide support for it<sup>78</sup>. It might be noted that even ‘presumption of innocence’ in legal contexts, utilized by Lehrer as an analogy for *prima facie* justification, resides on the same precept, as the idea is that burden of proof resides with the prosecution, i.e. the side making a claim which, in turn, needs to be supported by adequate evidence. Furthermore, Lehrer himself seems to fall into this customary pattern of thinking, as (in iii) “reason being given to show that one side is correct and the other in error” prior to judging that a side in the debate is unjustified would precisely be the burden of proof one bears in seeking *to claim* that something is unjustified (and/or the complementary claim that the opposite is justified). In short, artificial precept of impartiality in reasoning seems redundant in unveiling the tension<sup>79</sup>,

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<sup>75</sup> Lehrer, “Why Not Skepticism,” 292, quoted above.

<sup>76</sup> After all, if that was the claim of skepticism, especially in application of the type of argument Lehrer uses, then there wouldn’t seem to be much difference between the skeptic and the dogmatist in Russell’s example.

<sup>77</sup> Hence the above notice on the applicability of *sorites* to a thesis in which veracity of a fallible witness is taken for granted.

<sup>78</sup> Accustomedness to such a precept, it would seem, is the reason why answers such as Hylas’ (see above) and thesis reminiscent of Russell’s teapot strike one as illegitimate in the context of debate.

<sup>79</sup> It perhaps should be noted here why I refrain from treating Lehrer’s argument as an instance of *reductio ad absurdum*. Namely, if his argument was to be treated as such, it would be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the general principle Lehrer himself proposes, and not of a particular claim of philosophy of common sense. For the argument to be applied to a particular claim an assumption would need to be included, namely, the assumption that generalization of a claim is the test of how appropriate it is (applied, among other contexts, in legal context Lehrer borrows his analogy from). As Lehrer himself argues for the appropriateness of the principle of impartiality by pointing out how it precludes

and Lehrer in invoking it, if anything, makes it seem as though skepticism would need to reside in precepts of its own. That being noted, (iii) contradictory hypothesis put forth or derived from a framework are what makes for the dialectical tension authentic skeptic unveils, and if Lehrer had wanted to expose the thesis-void, he could have stopped at that point in the argument, unveiling the unresolved tension. Of course, if he had wanted to counter the claim to knowledge authentically, steps (iv), (v) and (vii) could have been used as framework-based<sup>80</sup>, borrowed premises which unveil that both claim to knowledge and claim to ignorance can be derived. Still, the conclusion of Lehrer's argument is in skeptic winning the day through proving (vi) the negating thesis, and the supposed 'single step' (vii) through which the skeptic achieves this victory is more complex than suggested. The denial of knowledge on the basis of unmet requirement of 'complete justification' resides on the aforementioned assumptions pertaining to 'tripartite' analysis of knowledge, assumptions Lehrer takes on regarding the term at hand at the very beginning of his defense of skepticism. Thesis-void in authentic accounts, as noted, appears as a result of annulment of each of the propositions, as neither can be perceived as the answer without begging the question, and of perpetuity of both proposition, as the question is continued. For Lehrer there is no puzzlement at the end, as his notice of the tension is illusive and transitional, serving as a stepping stone toward the conclusion that we do not know anything to be true<sup>81</sup>, i.e. the thesis he believes the skeptic would affirm.

### *Theses and the seeming dialectical tension*

When 'skeptical' theses and the notice of dialectical strain appear in unison in Lehrer's and Unger's account, dialectical strain serves the purpose of furthering the theses offered. In both accounts the strain between the opposed theses/hypotheses, on closer examination, reveals itself as illusive, much like thesis-void-like notices utilized. Unger, in a specific sense, misuses the authentic-like phrases to signal the preclusion of the opposite to the thesis he argues towards, whereas Lehrer artificially invokes the tension to serve solely as a transitional argumentative step back to the thesis his skeptic affirms. In reversing to the theses the two accounts share additional common elements. Much like Lehrer is found

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question-begging particular claims, it would seem that his argument is that the generalization *is* more appropriate, and that it leads to skepticism winning the day, and not that *if* such a claim was to be made into a maxim *then* it would yield the skeptical thesis (in which the starting premise is negated).

<sup>80</sup> (vii) being the 'single step' Lehrer mentions in the conclusion, arising out of assumptions relating to the tripartite analysis of knowledge; it could be noted here that steps (iv) and (v) would not be accepted in those accounts which render justification context-dependent.

<sup>81</sup> "Why Not Skepticism," 297.

arguing for the general principle of impartiality to unveil the dialectical strain, Unger, prior to noting that the thesis he proposes is as reasonable to accept as the thesis of common sense, outlines his conception of absolute terms. The turning about in both accounts is followed by softening remarks outlining the attitudes the skeptic can avail himself of. While in an authentic account such remarks might serve the purpose of showing the opponent that the countered account itself leaves room for the undisturbed conduct of life even in face of annulment, that doesn't seem to be the impetus to the claims in the outlined arguments of these two authors. Where Lehrer's reversal to the thesis finds support in tripartite analysis of knowledge, Unger's thesis is brought forth by a premise summarizing the traditional conception of knowledge as comprising certainty. In these argumentative moves, the claim made is not to the effect that '*if this is knowledge then the negative claim can be brought forth as well*', but is better understood as a claim to the effect that '*this is knowledge, but unattainable*'. Unger feels compelled to argue for the traditional conception of knowledge and show where accounts that abandon the requirement of certainty go wrong, while Lehrer does not argue for the assumptions of tripartite analysis in the article where he speaks in favor of skepticism, but does explicitly state that the outlined skeptical account "does imply that *if anyone knows anything, then that person must not only have true belief, but complete justification as well*"<sup>82</sup>.

The urge Lehrer and Unger feel to argue for the premises utilized in their arguments, and to support specific analysis of knowledge, reveals that the premises are not merely borrowed from the countered account, that the analyses are not merely put to question, and that the softening remarks are not claims made from the questioned account. In unveiling the seeming tension between their argumentation and common sense philosophy these authors do not seek to unveil annulment of a set of answers in the quest for knowledge. The fleeting tension in both accounts serves as a stepping stone toward a thesis which is to represent quite a general verdict regarding the quest at hand, and upholding such a thesis implies acceptance of the premises utilized, including acceptance of assumptions pertaining to the analysis of knowledge. In authentic account the void is exposed on the basis of rules and argumentative structures on which annulled answers were brought forth, and one remaining at the point of exposition is not even bound to the structure which brings forth the void. As was previously noted, this is precisely what the ancient skeptics sought to signal through additional use of

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<sup>82</sup> "Why Not Scepticism," 286.

*περιτροπή* as an instrument, i.e. the welcoming of self-cancelation of the arguments utilized<sup>83</sup>. Thesis-void and resource-void, both implied by turning about, as previously stated, are inextricable. A thesis, on the other hand, is inextricable from resources, and in upholding it one exhibits a commitment to the structure which brings it about.

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<sup>83</sup> See section I.2. above.

## II. 3. Resource adherence as opposed to the resource-void

### *Thesis-void violation and resource-void violation*

As previously noted, already a choice *to defend* skepticism reveals itself as the misstep of treating skepticism as an epistemological theory. By extension, skepticism's 'thesis-void' is mistaken for a dogmatic 'thesis' and arguing for a thesis implies resources. As 'thesis-void' cannot be understood nor stated in the same terms and manner as a 'thesis', so the resource-void of authentic skepticism cannot be understood in the same terms or stated in the same manner as resources pertaining to an epistemological doctrine. Dialectical tension seemingly exposed through resource-void violation reveals itself as illusive. Illusory nature of such a tension is apparent in the emptiness of Unger's early remarks regarding the thesis of common sense<sup>1</sup>. Emptiness in the claim that if skeptical thesis "is not reasonable to accept, then neither is (...) the thesis of 'common sense,'"<sup>2</sup> is closely associated with a sentiment that such a claim, without additional qualifications, is illegitimate, as Unger's arguments do not seem directed at putting to question "common sense" generally speaking. Similarly, when Lehrer invokes the principle of impartiality to expose the seeming tension between his hypothesis and foundationalists' account, the artificial nature of the principle, its disconnectedness from the countered account and customary procedures, leaves one with an impression that the supposed tension was exposed in a question-begging manner. What seems illegitimate in both procedures, and what makes for the illusory nature of the tension exposed, observed through the prism of authentic skepticism, is that the respective opposite theses these authors argue for are not brought forth from the opposed accounts. As previously noted, thesis-void in authentic account, representing annulment of answers, i.e. continuity of the question, is exposed as perpetuity of both negative and positive judgments in a dialectical interplay within a specific framework. Negation, in authentic argumentation, is exposed as arising from the very framework, account, argumentative structure bringing about the affirmation. The tension thus exposed is legitimate, as an answer is put to question on the grounds on which it claims legitimacy as an answer; the debate is meaningful as the opposing sides converse through the same resources, and if the question is continued, what is in the question is revealed through the resources in which the opposing answers are delivered. As noted in the elaboration of the thesis-void, what is in the continued question can be further defended by philosophers who wish to abandon it or pursue it, with the former defending it as irresolvable, and the latter

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<sup>1</sup> See section II.2.1 above.

<sup>2</sup> "A Defense of Skepticism," 216.

defending it as the question of relevance. The fleeing dialectical tension Lehrer and Unger seemingly expose appears illegitimate, as it is not at all clear that the opposed, debated answer does accept the presuppositions through which the tension is brought about, through which the question is posed. It is thus not clear that the question *is* posed to the countered account, and, in a specific sense, that it is a genuine question at all, as the forthcoming answers reside on the very presuppositions bringing forth the question.

When Unger announces how the arguments to be presented in his paper are to differ from traditional skeptical arguments, he notes that it is because his writings are produced “at a time when there is a common faith that, so far as expressing truth is concerned, all is well with the language that we speak.”<sup>3</sup> This remark appears to be appreciative of authentic skeptic’s role, as it seemingly implies that once the “common, optimistic assumption”<sup>4</sup> of dogmatists has shifted, skeptical argumentation (as the dialectical counterpart) shifts as well. The same claim can be made for Lehrer’s introductory comments to the outline of assumptions regarding knowledge, namely, his notice that one offering a skeptical argument faces a difficulty, as “whatever one philosopher has said knowledge is, another philosopher has rejected.”<sup>5</sup> Such an introductory remark makes it seem as though he is setting the stage for putting to question one such attempt at elaboration of knowledge. The assumptions Lehrer takes on, pertaining to the ‘tripartite’ analysis of knowledge, were, after all, *the* assumptions accepted by some of the epistemologists *at the time*<sup>6</sup> when Gettier published his notorious counterexamples in “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge” in 1963, and *later* the debate which ensued included those who took this analysis to be adequate and, among them, revolved around either the choice of approach in strengthening the ‘justification’ condition, or the choice of the ‘fourth clause’ which would annihilate the counterexamples presented<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> “A Defense,” 199.

<sup>4</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>5</sup> “Why Not Scepticism,” 285.

<sup>6</sup> Though this analysis tends to be widely referred to as ‘traditional analysis of knowledge’ I refrain from using the title as it is misleading, in that it implies that there was a ‘tradition’ of such an approach to knowledge. Gettier specifically mentions only Chisolm’s *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (1957) and Ayer’s *The Problem of Knowledge* (1956) as instances, though he hints at the possibility, which I do not think is the case, for this to be the analysis accepted by Plato in *Meno* 98; cf. Edmund L. Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge” *Analysis* 23.6. (1963),121.

<sup>7</sup> It is, as Plantinga (“Justification in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. I. (1990), 45) appropriately calls it, “an interesting historical irony” for a *tradition* to be created in an attempt to destroy it. As Chisolm in 1957 doesn’t mention ‘justification’ as such, a better candidate according to Plantinga might be Lewis’ *An analysis of knowledge and valuation* (1947), cf. Plantinga, op.cit., p. 46; Čuljak in addition mentions (though noting that this is not without controversy, as he also tends to be understood as a critic of it) Russell’s *Problems of Philosophy* (1912), and *Human*



The remarks of Unger and Lehrer, seemingly appreciative of the authentic skeptics' role, do set the stage on which the arguments are to be developed, and generally speaking, the stage is shared by a number of authors which seek to claim the opposite. Still, this is not a guarantee that their fleeting questions are genuine questions. As noted, what makes the dialectical tension seem illegitimate in their accounts, i.e. their questions loaded questions, are the assumption apparently not shared. Applied to the above remarks, Unger evaluates the common assumptions through his outline of absolute terms not necessarily shared by linguistically oriented "optimistic" accounts, Lehrer, on the other hand, does not put to question the tripartite analysis, he utilizes it as a prism through which he evaluates the claims to knowledge, and not necessarily claims to knowledge made from that account. Authentic skeptic, if arguing by way of negation, annuls the answer as the answer it proposes to be, and thus the question is continued. Yet, to argue by way of negation through prism of one's own resources does not in itself expose annulment of the answer negated. In other words, if one questions a competing answer, or a theory, through the prism of another answer or a theory, without pointing out that there is something inherently flawed in the answer/theory countered, the opposed answer has not been returned to a question. If anything results from such a practice it is a claim that the countered answer, if observed through the prism of the proposed answer, seems inadequate<sup>8</sup>. Further claim, that the countered answer *is* inadequate is based on adherence to and argumentation for the premises of the proposed account, but still does not amount to the annulment of the proposed answer in a sense that the question is continued. The negating claim at the end of such a practice presents itself as the answer, conclusion residing on a set of affirmed premises. Returning the answer to a puzzle authentically puts to question the (common) grounds on which opposed answers were brought forth. Lehrer's and Unger's fleeting questions rely on the grounds on which they are transformed back into the negative thesis. Inasmuch, these resemble the negating dogmatist practice, which, as outlined, evaluates through an accepted framework, but does not put to question authentically. Where authentic skeptic would allow for the resources, the argumentative structure bringing forth the answers to self-destruct, as the answers are revealed as a question, Lehrer and Unger utilize

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*Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (1948); cf. Zvonimir Čuljak, ed. *Vjerovanje, opravdanje, znanje* (Zagreb: Episteme, 2003),7.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the outline of Lehrer's and Unger's arguments here is to the effect that, observed through the prism of authentic skepticism, these arguments are not skeptical arguments, i.e. do not fit the description of what would be properly called 'skepticism'. Yet, this claim, in isolation, does not *annul* the negative dogmatic theses the authors put forth. This further claim would require a deeper analysis of their arguments from within the framework in which these were outlined.

the resources to bring to an answer, a thesis defended, and at times, as noted, even feel compelled to defend the resources as hand.

Lehrer himself, in the opening paragraph to the defensive article, seeks to revitalize the term ‘agnoiology’, the title of a theory of ignorance, and writes, in reference to mutual inconsistency and numerousness of refutations of skepticism<sup>9</sup>:

This should create some suspicion in the minds of philosophically wary that some theory of ignorance, an agnoiology, might sustain the contentions of skepticism. I shall develop an agnoiology for the defense of skepticism against dogmatic knowledge claims.

An authentic skeptic might be found ‘arguing for’ the negative counter-thesis, and in as much, support to the counter-thesis might resemble or coincide with the claims of an agnoiologist. But the authentic skeptic is not bound to the resources he argues from, unlike the agnoiologist who develops them. Observed through the prism of authentic skepticism, Lehrer’s impetus to develop an agnoiology is misguided. Similarly misguided seems Unger’s curious path<sup>10</sup> in *Ignorance*, as Unger, by his own admission<sup>11</sup>, advances the hypotheses he does because he feels these explain the “notable feelings and intuitions”<sup>12</sup> which arise upon investigation of the so-called *malicious demon* argument, and its contemporary counterparts. In seeking to unveil the compelling nature of skeptical arguments, and in an effort to make their effect on us more permanent<sup>13</sup>, Unger takes the path of trying to reconstruct the theses, premises that support it, i.e. he either fails to see the resourcelessness of skeptical argumentation, or feels that the resource-void needs to be reconstructed into a resource in order for ‘skepticism’ as he sees it to be appreciated. Both of these possible impetuses to his argumentation are not solely at odds with the authentic approach but perpetuate the illusion that skeptic starts from presuppositions of his own and thus the illusion that skepticism can be ‘treated’, understood, in much the same terms as epistemological theories. Both Lehrer and Unger can be seen as developing an

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<sup>9</sup> Lehrer, “Why not skepticism,” 283. As Lehrer notes, the word agnoiology, much like epistemology, seems to have been introduced into English by James F. Ferrier in *Institutes of Metaphysics: A Theory of Knowing and Being* published in 1854 (Edinburg and London: William Blackwood and sons). James F. Ferrier felt that results of Epistemology, and coincident results of Agnoiology (p. 48) compose a path to Ontology, not “by choice or preference of any individual thinker, but by the very necessity of the case, which will not admit of the problems of philosophy being taken up in any other way.” In Ontology, answering *what is* resolves *what is truth*, for Ferrier, “the ultimate and last question of philosophy”. In the context of this study it might be of interest to the reader that Ferrier does not seem to mention ‘skepticism’ in the *Institutes*.

<sup>10</sup> Lehrer (op.cit., 283) himself also refers to Unger’s account as “an interesting bit of recent agnoiology”.

<sup>11</sup> *Ignorance*, §10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ignorance*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ignorance*, 9-10.

agnoiology, a theory of ignorance, yet any theory of ignorance, on the reading suggested here, is simply a negative epistemological theory. Pace Lehrer, an agnoiology is not needed to “sustain the contentions of skepticism”. If anything, to solidify the resourcelessness of skepticism into a resourceful theory is to ‘phantomize’ it, i.e. to reinforce the blindness to authentic skepticism’s dialectical aim. When it comes to Unger’s and Lehrer’s decision to *defend* skepticism at specific points in their careers, the impetus for both authors resembles not the authentic skeptic’s choice to ‘openness’, but the choice of an epistemologist seeking to propose an alternative. The proposal of an alternative one wants us to move towards<sup>14</sup> or one thinks is needed<sup>15</sup> in these accounts does not arise out of an unsolved puzzle, a continued question, as resourcefulness within the framework argued against cannot amount to authentic use of skepticism.

### *Resource-void*

The original skeptics welcomed self-refutation in which their own arguments would turn on themselves<sup>16</sup>, signaling thus the absence of dogmatic-like commitment to the argument deployed, and suggesting that the self-canceling nature of the arguments is a consequence of the dogmatists’ framework, and consequently their responsibility. Such a noncommittal approach to the arguments utilized is best understood through appreciation of authentic skeptics’ practice of bringing forth the continuity of the question. To authentically return to the question is to bring forth *ἀπορία* from the resources, account, framework engaged in an answer challenged. The word ‘ἀπορία’ originates from ‘being ἄπορος’, and, as in ἄπορος privative *a* signals, in the very origin of this concept, an ‘absence-of’ is implied. In Greek *πόρος* stood for ‘means of passing a river’, ‘strait, a sea passage-way’, ‘a bridge’, ‘a pathway’, ‘passage (through)’ and for ‘way and mean of achieving and discovering’, ‘a way-out of’, ‘mean of providing’, ‘resources’ in general<sup>17</sup>. By extension, to expose *ἀπορία* is to expose an impasse. Understanding of *ἀπορία* reveals the connectedness of an answer, a thesis, to the path toward the answer, the resources utilized. If an answer is returned to the continued question, the path toward the answer is exposed as lacking in what it proposes to be, namely ‘the

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<sup>14</sup> E.g. Lehrer’s assertion on possibility of analyzing rational belief “on the basis of probabilities and epistemic values”; “Why not skepticism,” 297.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. when Unger suggests in *Ignorance* (p. 6), that what he outlines can serve as “possibly indicating good starting points for linguistic reconstruction”.

<sup>16</sup> In the sense of ‘self-cancelation’ of Pyrrhonists’ arguments, and self-destruction of dialectics noted by Academics, as outlined above (cf. section I. 2.).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Liddell, Scott, Jones (1996) entry.

passageway-through'<sup>18</sup>, resource and mean of passing across, getting out or working through the difficulty at hand. Understanding of ἀπορία also reveals, as noted, that remaining at the point of exposition of the thesis-void and the non-committal attitude are interconnected. As theses (in form of affirmation and negation) imply commitment, so would a defense or affirmation of the thesis-void; as both proposal of an alternate path toward the sought goal, and proposal that inquiry needs to continue on an altogether different plain require a commitment to a set of resources. The skeptic is, in comparison, resource-less, his resources are in the specified sense borrowed from the framework, account, context or plain of inquiry he puts to question.

Putting to question an answer is putting to question its resources, and is authentically carried out through their application. As outline of the original arguments reveals, in Academic skeptics' practice the very resources of Stoics brought forth the puzzle. To see the modes of Pyrrhonists as *their* resources of a dogmatist kind would be to ignore longevity of the instances of the modes, as well as the noted *ad hominem* character of the conflicting propositions. Namely, as content-wise what the modes offer is not new in the specified sense, this serves to show that they represent argumentative schemata *tested* in bringing to question, models or patterns of bringing to question capable of repetition in various instances of debate. The fact that such repetition was possible goes to show that the question and/or modes of answering it challenged were similar/same, or furthermore, speaks in favor of what has been denoted as the 'free-floating character of authentic skepticism', the trait of being unattached to the context, also arising from the resource void, which allows for the revitalization of these arguments in another philosophical context. To understand resource void in authentic skeptical argumentation is to understand that the question *is* always posed within a framework, yet it is *not* bound to the framework in the sense an answer is. When posed in a different framework or context authentically, it again works off of conceptual resources in *that* framework, and in as much, *is* a different question. This change in the question is brought about by those defending the thesis-void, or those proposing a modification to the path of

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<sup>18</sup> This is reminiscent of Heidegger's outline in lectures on Plato's *Sophist*: "ἀπορος ist dasjenige, was ohne Durchgang ist, wo man nicht durch-kommt. (...) ἀπορία: das Betrachten der Welt kommt nicht durch, findet keinen Weg." (cf. *Platon: Sophistes*, vol. 19 of *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. I. Schübler (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, 1924/5, 1992), 126-7); the ἀπορία is here presented as an intermediate position of Dasein, as διαπορεῖν and ἀπορεῖν continued is the setting on the way of uncovering. Compare also Heidegger's analysis of πόρος in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1987), as "Durchgang durch..., Übergang zu..., Bahn" (p. 116), as "a going through..., a going over to..., a route"; cf. *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 162.

inquiry toward a thesis<sup>19</sup>, not the skeptic. Still, it should be noted that the very fact that specific models of bringing to question can be thus reproduced does not preclude the possibility of creation of a new question or a new model of bringing to question, i.e. does not entail staticity of skeptical approach.

Attempts at approaching skepticism through showing “skeptical arguments to be much more complex and theory-laden than their proponents want to admit, (...) by making available for critical scrutiny their *unacknowledged* theoretical preconceptions”<sup>20</sup>, observed through the prism of the resource-void, actually reveal much more about the frameworks and contexts of epistemology than about the skeptical arguments or the skeptical approach<sup>21</sup>. If anything, the attempts to unveil such theoretical preconceptions or principles seem to speak in favor of the free-floating nature of the models of bringing to question, as the assumptions unveiled vary in description, ranging from metaphysical commitments to epistemological commitments of different kinds<sup>22</sup>. In a similar manner, the approach to skeptical arguments as beginning “with premises that seem pretheoretically plausible, even obvious, and then proceed by valid reasoning to a conclusion that is outrageous”<sup>23</sup> seems to restate that the premises and the reasoning, at least prior to further investigation and in the sense specified in their elaboration, fit the framework at hand. Both of these attempts at dealing with skeptical arguments, it would seem, take skepticism to be static<sup>24</sup> and to exhibit the resource-adherence characteristic

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<sup>19</sup> In the latter instance there is a change in what leads up to the answer (how the sought is to be obtained), in the former what is in the answer (what is sought) changes.

<sup>20</sup> M. Williams in *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 146ff; also in *Unnatural Doubts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. xvii. Williams calls this approach “theoretical diagnosis.”

<sup>21</sup> Not solely about the accounts/frameworks/contexts countered by the skeptics, but also about the account countering skeptical arguments in such a way. Namely, if the claim being made is that the doubt supposedly based on these theoretical preconceptions is not natural and intuitive, then one finds (at least) implied a set of assumptions about what *is* natural; see e.g. Fogelin’s treatment of M. Williams’ diagnostic approach in “The Sceptic’s Burden,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7.2. (1999), 159-172.

<sup>22</sup> Williams (*Unnatural Doubts*, 51) himself lists and rejects some of the alternatives to his thesis that Cartesian skepticism resides on foundationalists’ conception of knowledge.

<sup>23</sup> John Greco, “Skepticism about the External World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*, ed. J. Greco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 109; cf. Keith DeRose, “Solving the Skeptical Problem” *The Philosophical Review* 104.1. (1995), 2; DeRose and Ted A. Warfield, *Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-3; Ernest Sosa, “How to Defeat Opposition to Moore” *Noûs* 33, suppl. (1999), 143-146; Duncan Pritchard, “Recent Work on Radical Skepticism” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 39.3. (2002), 217-218. This approach would seem to be in line with what Williams calls “direct approach” (*The Problem of Knowledge*, 146).

<sup>24</sup> The same can be said for some instances of what Williams calls “therapeutic diagnosis”, according to which skepticism is not a real problem as it resides on a misuse of language. As these approaches are not dealt with explicitly in the main text, it could be noted here that these types of diagnosis, from the prism of authentic skepticism, seem to imply that the framework-change (‘what is in the question’)

of epistemological theories. With the dialectical aim of authentic skeptic's arguments disregarded, it is neglected that this type of argumentation, when proceeding by way of negation, aims to reveal that on *a particular* account (and by the rules of logic utilized in *that particular* account) negation also ensues, and skeptic winds up burdened with a set of presuppositions and premises supposedly endorsed. Much like the presuppositions Lehrer and Unger take on in their defenses of skepticism lead to fleeting questions and a sentiment that a true dialogue with the countered accounts was not established, the approaches to skepticism outlined here lead to a lack of proper conversation, as for most part the solidified skeptic is treated as not really posing questions, or not posing *significant* questions, and on occasions the questions addressed seem not to have been posed to the account addressing them; consequentially, from inauthentic dialogue the unhinged phantom taskmaster emerges.

In favor of the defenses of skepticism it could be noted that portrayals of the static, resource-bound skeptic invite them. Though Unger's and Lehrer's portrayals of skepticism reinforce the 'phantom' interpretation, the impetus to their defense is, in a specific sense, a notice of the lack of authentic dialogue, a notice that the "sceptic has been mistreated"<sup>25</sup>, and that "few philosophers now take skepticism seriously"<sup>26</sup>, due to misguided interpretations of what it entails or what it requires. Inasmuch, these approaches, though advancing the 'phantom' understanding of skepticism, can be seen as efforts to restart the dialogue with skepticism. Studying a specific instance of use of the model for bringing to question, even if 'phantom' adherence is assumed, could prove useful in moving away from inauthentic dialogue as well; namely, such an analysis could reveal 'what was in the question posed' (what was sought), providing that the epistemologist conducting it is careful not to allow his belief of 'what the answer is' to be the prism through which the question is observed<sup>27</sup>. Still,

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renders skepticism meaningless, yet are mostly rejected precisely by pointing out the exchange between the skeptic and the epistemologists, interestingly, by those not portraying skeptic authentically (cf. Lehrer, "Why not Skepticism," 289-290; Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*, xvi-xvii).

<sup>25</sup> Lehrer, "Why not Skepticism," 283.

<sup>26</sup> Unger, "A Defense," 198.

<sup>27</sup> Barry Stroud in *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) similarly writes that "the study of the very nature of a philosophical problem can be an illuminating activity quite independently of whether it ever leads to a better answer. (...) even if we never arrive at something we can regard as a solution to a philosophical problem. In fact the two might even work against each other; adopting something we take to be an acceptable answer to a philosophical problem might be just what prevents us from learning the lesson that a deeper understanding of the source of the problem could reveal" (pp. x-xi). Though Stroud in this book writes about the negative-thesis skepticism, his, and the like approaches (Thomas Nagel's being one example) can be seen as an effort to mend what is misunderstood in dismissive attitudes toward skepticism (and can thus, from the prism of authentic skepticism, be seen as shedding some light on the question posed, negative thesis disregarded, within a specific framework).

authentic dialogue can solely be restored through appreciation of the resource-void of skepticism, i.e. appreciation of authentic skepticism as revealing the negation or opposition present in the conceptions/framework accepted/advocated by others, and as needing no *separate* rationale. If the ‘pathway’ dissolves itself, and the puzzle is perpetuated, the ‘appeal’ of the skeptical side to argumentation is inextricably bound to the ‘appeal’ of the resolution (or change) of the question; or, in other words, it is philosophy that perpetuates skepticism. Mere exposition of the thesis-void requires of one not to be bound to an answer, and not to be bound to a question, and this is only achieved if one does not commit to the path, account, context or framework of inquiry.

The question that presents itself upon the thesis-void-resource-void outline as presented, the question that philosophers were wont to pose to the original skeptics, is whether one *can* put something to question if detached from the resources, or, in other words, whether putting to question implies a commitment of a sort, as it would seem one has to have a relation to what is in the question in order to put it to question. The question, if and when addressed to the skeptics is, in short, if the void<sup>28</sup> pertaining to their stance and inquiry are compatible. The problem put forth is reminiscent of the so called ‘Meno’s problem’ regarding the possibility of inquiry. In Plato’s dialogue, after reporting to have been reduced to *ἀπορία* (80a), Socrates’ interlocutor accuses him of being like a torpedo ray mostly for the effect<sup>29</sup> of paralysis he produces in those he approaches. Socrates’ reply is that the comparison would stand solely if “the torpedo was torpid itself” (80c), and proceeds in a well known manner, noting that it is not from *εὐπορία*, from an answer, having his doubts removed (*εὐπορῶν*)<sup>30</sup>, resourceful and well-provided, that he brings others to *ἀπορία*, renders them perplexed and speechless; he himself utterly in doubt (*ἀπορῶν*) makes others doubt (*ἀπορεῖν*). It is at that

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<sup>28</sup> Though the problem is discussed here and thus primarily in terms of the resource-void, the thesis-void and resource-void being inextricable, the problem applies to both sides of the void, in a manner to be explicated in the following text.

<sup>29</sup> This, of course, is a simplified version of the exchange, subtext to the exchange being much more extensive, cf. Jacob Klein’s *A commentary on Plato’s Meno* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 91ff

<sup>30</sup> Note that *εὐπορῶν* stands for ‘having the answer’, ‘having *εὐπορία*’, and ‘being resourceful’ as well. The statement *οὐ γὰρ εὐπορῶν αὐτὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ποῖω ἀπορεῖν* has seen various translations, W.R.M. Lamb suggested (London: William Heinemann, 1924/1952): “for it is not from *any sureness in myself* that I cause others to doubt”, B. Jowett (Macmillan Publishing, 1949) “for I perplex others, not because *I am clear*”, R.C. Bartlett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) “for I don’t make others perplexed, while *I myself am free of perplexity*”, G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 1976) renders it “(...) for I myself *do not have the answer* when I perplex others”, R. Waterfield in *Meno and Other Dialogues* (Oxford University Press, 2005) verses it “it’s not that I make other people stuck while *being clear myself*”, and G. Anstaplo and L. Berns (Newburyport MA: Focus Publishing, 2004) “for it is not while *being well-provided myself* that I make other unprovided or perplexed.”

point, as Socrates suggests to Meno that they continue to search together (80d), that Plato has Meno pose the question<sup>31</sup>:

(M1) Why, on what lines (*τίνα τρόπον*) will you look (*ζητήσεις*), Socrates, for a thing of whose nature you know nothing at all? (M2) Pray, what sort of thing, amongst those that you know not, will you treat us to as the object of your search? (M3) Or even supposing, at the best, that you hit upon it, how will you know it is the thing you did not know?

Socrates then, through pretence of paraphrasing, turns Meno's question into the notorious dilemma on the possibility of inquiry (80e):

Do you see what a captious argument you are introducing – that, forsooth, a man cannot inquire either about what he knows or about what he does not know? (S1) For he cannot inquire about what he knows, because he knows it, and in that case is in no need of inquiry; (S2) nor again can he inquire about what he does not know, since he does not know about what he is to inquire.

The question whether void and inquiry are compatible resembles first part of Meno's question (M1, M2) and second arm of the dilemma Socrates presents (S2); it is a question whether one can (profess to) be way-less (*ἄπορος*) and yet have a way (*τρόπον*) to inquire. In other words, if some form of pre-existing *grasp* of the object of inquiry is needed to inquire, it would seem that the resource-less skeptics either cannot engage in inquiry, or, as they do engage in inquiry, that they have such a grasp, and therefore are not actually resource-less as they profess to be. As resource-void, resourcelessness authentically understood, is in the specific lack of commitment (ontological and epistemological)<sup>32</sup>, in posing thus the question to the skeptics one can be seen as implying that a specific type of commitment *is* in the pre-existing grasp of the object of inquiry. This implication is precisely what the original skeptics utilized to turn the tables when faced with these allegations<sup>33</sup>. The mechanism to do so is already present in the first arm of the dilemma Socrates adds on (S1). Namely, the dilemma, as taken by the dogmatists, was how to explain the preexisting grasp (M2), while not rendering inquiry superfluous (S1), yet allowing 'what is in the question' to be fixed in such a manner to enable

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<sup>31</sup> Both translations from W.R.M. Lamb (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1924/1952).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. sections I.2. and I.4. above.

<sup>33</sup> The dogmatists' allegations can thus take the form Sextus reports on in *PH* II 2 and *M* VIII 337. Grgić suggests that it might be that Sextus himself chooses to voice the allegations in form of Meno's problem, cf. Filip Grgić, "Sextus Empiricus on the Possibility of Inquiry," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 89 (2008), 441ff. It should be noted that Grgić outlines the strategy of the original skeptics in dealing with the Meno problem-like allegations as dialectical in nature; for the opposing view see e.g. Brunschwig's "Sextus Empiricus on the *κριτήριον*," 145-176.



confidence in an answer (M3)<sup>34</sup>. The original skeptics' strategy was to put to question the commitment in supposedly determined pre-existing grasp, questioning whether this grasp-commitment is such to make inquiry superfluous<sup>35</sup>, or circular, or impossible to get off the ground altogether. Specifically, if preexisting grasp of a commitment type is granted, would the existing *διαφωνία*<sup>36</sup> render inquiry impossible at the very start of it, or would the requirements of the grasp make it so that one cannot inquire without grasping the object of inquiry, nor grasp it without inquiring<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, if some sort of assent is implied in this grasp, then the dogmatist would have to either give up arguing against other dogmatists<sup>38</sup>, or accept that they assent to their conceptions; if some ontological commitment is carried in the concepts utilized, they would likewise be faced with the challenge regarding their ability to engage the claims of their opponents. In short, by putting to question the pre-existing commitment-like grasps of the objects of inquiry, the route left, that dogmatists grant that no-commitment is implied in this grasp of resources, would entail that all can inquire<sup>39</sup>, making it so that those remaining open to the question, authentic thesis-resource-void skeptics, inquire further. It serves well to note that, once again, what might be taken as an explication of the resource-void takes a form of a dialectical move of putting to question the claims of dogmatists. Inasmuch, resource-void is not *defended* either, but portrayed as the path dogmatists seem to be left with as well, at the beginning point of their inquiries.

Resource-void of authentic skepticism is what enables fair questioning<sup>40</sup> while allowing one to remain at simply posing a question, i.e. at the exposition of the thesis-void. Authentic skeptic's approach, thus, in avoiding claims, in being detached in the specified sense, avoids burden of proof. The lesson from the history of skeptical tradition seems to be that dialectical enterprise in authentic skepticism needs to be commitment-free or else it collapses into negative dogmatism. Negative dogmatists are challenged on the basis of the premises they introduce/adhere to, much like other dogmatists are. They can rightly be asked on what grounds specific claims they put forth are endorsed. Authentic skeptics put forth a

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<sup>34</sup> Sextus reports that skeptics (pertaining to M3) compare dogmatists "investigating unclear things with people shooting at some target in the dark," cf. *M VIII* 325.

<sup>35</sup> *PH II* 11.

<sup>36</sup> *PH II* 8; *M VIII* 332a-334a.

<sup>37</sup> *PH II* 9.

<sup>38</sup> *PH II* 5-6; *M VIII* 335a.

<sup>39</sup> *PH II* 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Theaetetus* 167d-168a, where Socrates, speaking on behalf of Protagoras notes that fair questions posed by dialecticians are those that tell the adversary "the errors in which he has fallen through his own fault, or that of the company he has previously kept".

more formidable challenge through genuine dialogue. Genuine communication arises out of a shared set of resources, as to understand an authentically posed question is to understand that it is always posed within a framework (account), and that what is put to question reveals itself through those resources. Exposition of thesis-void, the continuity of the question, furthermore, requires detachment from the framework/account, otherwise annulment of answers would be affirmed, and skeptics transformed into advocates of the framework, on which annulment is argued for.

*From resource-void violation to violation of the thesis-void: Pyrrhonian case*

It has been noted throughout this study that accusations for ‘negative dogmatism’ have been, and in recent literature are again<sup>41</sup>, in a specific sense reserved for Cartesian or Academic arguments. The role Pyrrhonists’ efforts in delineation, built on such a charge, played in the creation and perpetuation of the ‘phantom’ figure was also outlined. Therefore, it is interesting to observe that Robert J. Fogelin, a contemporary self-proclaimed advocate of Pyrrhonism, in his delineation between Cartesian skepticism and Pyrrhonism starts precisely from the (same) presumption that in this one finds the central difference between the two approaches<sup>42</sup>:

(...) cartesian<sup>43</sup> skepticism, but not Pyrrhonian skepticism deals in strong negative evaluations. For example, taking claims to perceptual knowledge as their target, cartesian skeptics typically present arguments purporting to show that perception cannot provide us with knowledge of the external world. The Pyrrhonian skeptic makes no such claim. Instances of perceptual variability (...) can be used to challenge empirical claims made from a particular perspective. Why, it can be asked, should we give this perspective a privileged status? But even if no suitable answer is forthcoming to this question, this does not show that empirical knowledge is impossible. Reaching this negative conclusion would depend on establishing a strong claim to the effect that no perceptual perspective is epistemically privileged. No

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<sup>41</sup> While this is not the exclusive verdict of our times, as apparent from Sextus’ critique of the Academy, it also apparent that it is not the interpretation common to all times. Hume for one envisions Pyrrhonists as excessive, and Academics as mitigated skeptics (EHU 12.24; SBN 161), Hegel (*Lectures on the history of philosophy*, vol. II. trans. Haldane and Simson, 340) thinks the differentiation Pyrrhonists attempt from the Academy concern nothing more than “mere form”, and perceives both approaches to run more deeply than the modern skepticism (pp. 331-332).

<sup>42</sup> “The Skeptics Are Coming! The Skeptics Are Coming!” in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, ed. Walter Sinnott Armstrong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 162; see also his *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 192ff; the distinction is repeated in Walter Sinnott-Armstrong’s “Classy Pyrrhonism,” in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, 188, and in Peter Klein’s “Skepticism,” in *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 336ff.

<sup>43</sup> Fogelin feels that capital C is inappropriate as Descartes himself was not a skeptic (“The Skeptics are Coming,” 161).

Pyrrhonian who knows his business would accept the burden of establishing such a claim. Pyrrhonian skeptics are adept at avoiding burdens of proof.

In the quoted delineation Fogelin notes the dependence of ‘negative conclusions’ to establishment of claims which would lead up to it. In terms used here, he notes that ‘thesis-void’ is transformed to a ‘thesis’ through a specific type of commitment, through acceptance of the ‘burden of proof’. Thus his assumption seems to be that Cartesian skepticism does not avoid taking on a burden; in other words, not unlike his Pyrrhonist predecessors with regard to the Academy, Fogelin seems to accept a ‘burdened’, resource-bound interpretation of Cartesian skepticism. He does note repeatedly that Cartesian arguments “rely on an antecedent philosophical commitment to the way of ideas”<sup>44</sup>, that they arise out of a privileged epistemic status awarded to mental contents<sup>45</sup>, i.e. “a strong commitment to internalism”<sup>46</sup>. This commitment is accompanied, Fogelin claims<sup>47</sup>, by a “strong commitment to pure (or unfettered) inquiry – that is, inquiry that protects no propositions from interrogation.” It perhaps should be noted that in his later writings he is more cautious in ascribing these commitments to Cartesian skepticism, and simply states them as something *commonly associated* with the approach at hand<sup>48</sup>. Yet, as these serve the purpose of delineation between his approach and the approach of ‘dogmatic skeptics’<sup>49</sup> in his account, understanding his ‘Pyrrhonian’ approach calls for an understanding of the supposed commitments of what he sees as a counterfeit form of skepticism.

First commitment, as Fogelin sees it, takes on the form of acceptance of what he calls ‘the thesis of ontological internalism’<sup>50</sup>:

For *S* to be justified in believing that *p*, the grounds that justify this belief must be contents of *S*’s mind.

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<sup>44</sup> Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 192-3.

<sup>45</sup> cf. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 121 for a more detailed account.

<sup>46</sup> Fogelin, “Contextualism and Externalism: Trading in One Form of Skepticism for another,” *Noûs* 34. Supplement: Philosophical Issues 10 (2000), 43.

<sup>47</sup> “Contextualism and Externalism,” 43.

<sup>48</sup> Namely, in this article Fogelin’s approach is a bit more cautious than in his earlier work, as he writes: “*Setting aside scholarly questions of accuracy*, Cartesianism is *usually thought of* as containing two key elements” (ibid., emphasis added); the notion of ‘pure inquiry’, as Fogelin uses it, seems to be more in line with Michael Williams’ treatment of the conception (cf. *Unnatural Doubts*, 213ff), than with all implications of Bernard Williams’ outline of Descartes’ project (*Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*, London: Routledge, 1978/2005).

<sup>49</sup> *Pyrrhonian Reflections*, 99 (for the title).

<sup>50</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 120.

The interpretation of Cartesian arguments presented in the first part of this study is at odds with such a reading, and it is not easy to read Fogelin's 'cartesian skeptic' into the skeptical problem as presented in Descartes' *Meditations*<sup>51</sup>; yet, what is of interest at this point is Fogelin's way of dealing with the 'Cartesian' arguments, as he conceives them, in an effort of delineation. His view of these as embedded in a philosophical doctrine, leads to a further claim<sup>52</sup>:

The so-called problem of the external world is itself a result of an extended piece of philosophizing and is not, as some seem to think, a primitive problem that every epistemological theory must address. If the philosophizing that leads to this problem is flawed, there may be no such problem to be solved.

Interestingly, Fogelin also claims that a type of internalism generates 'Agrippa problem', the five modes presented in the first part of this study. This problem, as he sees it, is generated by what he calls 'methodological internalism' embodied in the following thesis<sup>53</sup>:

For *S* to be justified in believing that *p*, *S* must *base* his belief on the grounds that justify it.

Namely, Agrippa problem, according to Fogelin, gains importance when "high standards of epistemic responsibility"<sup>54</sup> are evoked, or, in other words, it is invited by "a commitment to a strong *normative* principle of epistemic justification"<sup>55</sup>. This commitment, which Fogelin titles 'Cliffordism', is a commitment to an idea that (solely) adequate or sufficient grounds would render acceptance of a belief epistemically responsible, which, coupled with a further belief "that knowledge exists or at least could exist"<sup>56</sup>, is symptomatic of justificationists' programs. As Fogelin sees *both* skeptical problems as invited by a type of internalism, one might wonder how is it that Pyrrhonian skepticism does not rely on a 'piece of philosophizing'. Here Fogelin's claim seems in line with the authentic interpretation offered in this study<sup>57</sup>:

It is important to see that the Pyrrhonists themselves are not engaged in the Cliffordian project, for the Pyrrhonist does not hold that it is epistemically irresponsible to believe things on the basis of insufficient evidence. As always, the Pyrrhonist simply takes the standards of the dogmatist at face value and holds the dogmatist to them. The Pyrrhonist invokes the modes for dialectical purposes.

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<sup>51</sup> For argumentation along these lines, cf. Janet Broughton, "Cartesian Skeptics," 29-31.

<sup>52</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 187.

<sup>53</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 120.

<sup>54</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 115.

<sup>55</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 114.

<sup>56</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 115.

<sup>57</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 115-6.

In terms used here, it would seem that Fogelin feels that his Pyrrhonian skeptic remains resource-less, while Cartesian skeptic through acceptance of resources affirms the negative thesis. Before analyzing this resourcelessness of the Pyrrhonian, the second commitment he ascribes to the Cartesian skeptic needs to be addressed, the commitment to ‘pure inquiry’. If pure inquiry is ‘inquiry that protects no propositions from interrogation’, it would seem not to conflict with the openness to the question of authentic skeptics. In fact, Descartes’ goal, in committing to such inquiry, seems to have been to unveil a point where a question can no longer be posed. Yet, Fogelin’s Pyrrhonists are not committed to (pure) inquiry in this sense. In this he grounds the next point of differentiation between Cartesian and Pyrrhonian skeptics<sup>58</sup>:

Another difference between the cartesian and the Pyrrhonian skeptic is that the cartesian skeptic, but not the Pyrrhonian skeptic, raises doubts that call into question our most common beliefs about the world around us. If I am no more than a brain in a vat on a planet circling Alpha Centauri, so wired that all I seem to see around me is nothing but a dream induced in me by a malicious demon, then I do not know – as I think I know – that I am writing this essay on the bosky shores of Partridge lake. For the cartesian skeptic, if an adequate response to this challenge is not forthcoming, I am then obliged to reject even my most common, ordinary claims to knowledge. In contrast – though this is a disputed point – the Pyrrhonian skeptic does not target common, everyday beliefs for skeptical assault. (...) The Pyrrhonian skeptic leaves common beliefs, unpretentiously held, alone.

Fogelin, in accepting the so called ‘urbane’ interpretation of skepticism<sup>59</sup>, feels that common beliefs are ‘protected’ from Pyrrhonists’ attack. As noted in the first part of the study<sup>60</sup>, urbane treatment would seem to suggest that ‘common beliefs’ are *sans* ontological or epistemological commitments, void of conceptions which *are* or could slide into becoming the basis for a dogmatic theory, and that these are monolithic, immune to disagreement. Without repeating the argumentation previously offered, the attention here needs to be paid to how Fogelin perceives urbane skepticism. Namely, it would seem that his Pyrrhonian skeptic allows himself more, in terms of relation to the common beliefs and common ways of expressing them, than even an urbanely understood Pyrrhonist would, as Fogelin feels that

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<sup>58</sup> “The Skeptics Are Coming,” 163.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 5-10; “The Skeptics Are Coming”, 163-4.

<sup>60</sup> See section I.3. above.

urbane interpretation suggests classical Pyrrhonists were “defenders of common beliefs against the criticism of dogmatic philosophy”<sup>61</sup>. He writes<sup>62</sup>:

Historically, the Pyrrhonian skeptics have targeted the philosopher as the object of their skeptical attack. Here the philosopher is understood as someone who either (1) attempts to *replace* our common fallible modes of thinking about the world with new modes that transcend them, or (2) accepts these common modes of thinking, but attempts to *ground* them in modes that transcend them. (...) The point of Pyrrhonian skepticism is to reject all such [philosophical] moves that attempt to transcend – rather than to improve or perfect – our common justificatory procedures.

What seems to be suggested here is that the Pyrrhonian skeptic would not *reject* those moves that attempt to “improve or perfect” the “common justificatory procedures”, as supposedly a *defender* of the common beliefs, or, in an updated version, *defender* of the common way of expressing such beliefs<sup>63</sup>, would not be troubled by such attempts. Observed through the prism of authentic interpretation of skepticism, such suggestions imply not solely, as intended, a limited scope of what is put to question<sup>64</sup>, but also a commitment to a set of resources and claims. Namely, if one ventures to *defend* something it would seem that one is committed to what the defended *is*. This seems quite different than following a specific set of practices, in which one can *follow* what appears to be the set of practices accepted. To utilize Sextus’ notion, it is not at all clear how one can *defend* something, while remaining *ἀδοξάστως*<sup>65</sup> (even in the narrow, urbane sense). For those familiar with Fogelin’s reflections, the question specifically posed to his approach is clear, namely, it is a question whether or not the “positive results”<sup>66</sup> of “an attempt to rescue our ordinary concept of knowledge from those philosophers who have assigned it burdens it cannot bear”<sup>67</sup> can be achieved under the title of a skeptical approach.

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<sup>61</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 10. Fogelin does note that this doesn’t mean they were proponents of common sense philosophy, but the point to be made is not that he suggests this kind of philosophical allegiance.

<sup>62</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 88-89.

<sup>63</sup> Again, Fogelin is careful to note that this does not amount to defending “common language as the privileged philosophical language,” cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 10.

<sup>64</sup> This is, after all, what Fogelin wants to stress, that, in opposition to Cartesian arguments, Pyrrhonist/Pyrrhonian would not question *all*.

<sup>65</sup> Discussed in section I.3. above; as I hope the following text will show, there is a significant difference to Sextus’ proclaimed ‘struggle’ on the side of the ordinary beliefs, and Fogelin’s *defense*.

<sup>66</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 100.

<sup>67</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 10.

Fogelin thinks that “describing what we mean when we claim to know something and (...) describing the standards we use in employing such claims”<sup>68</sup>, i.e. approaching the ‘common justificatory procedures’ merely descriptively in this sense, does not entail a problematic type of commitment. On his account the following biconditional would describe what is *meant* in saying that one knows<sup>69</sup>:

*S* knows that *P* iff                    *S* justifiably came to believe that *P* on grounds that establish the truth of *P*.

If a slogan is needed: Knowledge is not simply justified true belief, but (...) it is justified true belief justifiably arrived at.

Thus the meaning of the knowledge claim, according to Fogelin, corresponds to the tripartite analysis of knowledge<sup>70</sup>, with the justification clause broken down into two components, one depicting the ‘knower’s’ procedure in coming to believe the ‘known’ as epistemically responsible<sup>71</sup>, and the other is an appraisal of the knower’s reasons or grounds as ‘adequate to establish the truth’ of the known (proposition)<sup>72</sup>. The two components, Fogelin notes, should be observed in unison<sup>73</sup>, as the *grounds* being assessed as adequate are the grounds/reasons utilized in *justifiable*, i.e. epistemically responsible attainment of belief<sup>74</sup>. At the same time, Fogelin’s description implies the two should not be conflated, as positive evaluation of one’s performance “does not commit us to the truth of what *S* claims to know”<sup>75</sup>, while positive evaluation of one’s grounds in the aforementioned sense does, as “we accept *S*’s justificatory framework as legitimate and, concurring with *S*’s evidential appraisal, join him in accepting a

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<sup>68</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 98. It needs to be noted here, if solely in passing, that Fogelin’s view of what seems to be problematic and rash in dogmatists’ account, suggests itself precisely as what leads him to claims to the effect that Hume’s and Wittgenstein’s approach belong to Pyrrhonian tradition. In terms used in this study, it could be stated that the selective view of what *is* dogmatic leads Fogelin to conflate ‘authentic use of skepticism’ and ‘skeptical approach’.

<sup>69</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 28.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 20.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 19.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 27-28; i.e. should not be allowed to, as Fogelin puts it, ‘drift apart’, hence the condensed version in the biconditional.

<sup>74</sup> According to Fogelin, the solution to the Gettier’s counterexamples is in noticing that due to an ‘informational mismatch’ the two clauses fall apart. Namely, as in observing these counterexamples, we have access to additional information not available to the person in the counterexample, we are willing to grant that the person in the counterexample ‘justifiably came to believe’ something, yet we see the grounds as inadequate in establishing the truth of what the person came to believe (cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 22), or the other way around (if the additional information provides us with reasons to judge that the person was epistemically irresponsible, cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 26-7).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 90.

set of grounds as establishing the truth of what he claims to know”<sup>76</sup>. An assessment of responsibility/grounds of the ‘knower’, Fogelin argues, is always made from within a justificatory framework<sup>77</sup>, from within an epistemic context<sup>78</sup> of the *assessor* (commentator), and commonly in these appraisals, Fogelin suggests, “ordinary justificatory procedures” serve as a basis for judgment<sup>79</sup>:

By an ordinary justificatory procedure – I am not trying to produce a definition – I mean a process that we usually go through when we are seeking justified true belief. Examples of justificatory procedures include such things as looking through a peephole to see who is at the door, consulting an expert to find out whether parking tickets are tax deductible, using a standard procedure to check the accuracy of a chemical analysis. Simple or complex, theoretical or nontheoretical, these are procedures that we actually use; as a result of using them, we come to believe that we have grounds for accepting certain propositions as true.

These commonly employed justificatory procedures, in Fogelin’s view, demand elimination of what he terms ‘eliminable legitimate doubts’<sup>80</sup>, and these doubts are the questions that should be addressed prior to making a knowledge claim<sup>81</sup>, the actual possibilities exclusion of which is embedded in a particular practice. Yet, and this is one of Fogelin’s key points, in our everyday practices it is not the case that we eliminate all doubts, address all ‘eliminable’ questions, and this is embedded in the use of ‘know’ in conversational exchanges<sup>82</sup>:

II. When people claim to know things, they do not do so in the belief that they have eliminated all eliminable refuting possibilities, nor do their auditors suppose that they believe this.

Thus the standards we use in making knowledge claims, according to Fogelin, are not very stringent, at least in ‘normal’ circumstances. Yet, it is a part of justificatory practices that meticulousness is triggered by ‘risky’ circumstances<sup>83</sup>, Fogelin argues, and in such circumstances people become more careful and critical. In the words he borrows from the language of law, the level of scrutiny rises. If the refuting possibilities are brought up, or

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.; it is important to note that accepting that the grounds *establish* the truth is not the claim that knower’s grounds imply the truth (the verdict is reversible, in face of new information; cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 97); see also Barry Stroud’s commentary in “Contemporary Pyrrhonism,” in *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*, ed. Walter Sinnott Armstrong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 179

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 95-98

<sup>78</sup> “Replies to Rosenberg, Villanueva, Valdés-Villanueva” *Noûs* 34. Supplement: Philosophical Issues 10. (2000), 91.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 89.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 91.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 95.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. “Contextualism and Externalism,” 47-8 for a description.



contemplated, even more so if these are eliminable<sup>84</sup>, the “fragility of our common practices”<sup>85</sup> is revealed. The refuting possibilities represent a challenge which will, in this new context of heightened level of scrutiny, result in asserting of ignorance where one claimed knowledge, and furthermore<sup>86</sup>:

Reflection on unexcluded remote or *not so remote* possibilities can lead us to think we almost never know the things we claim to know. As long as we maintain this “intense view of things” we will be disinclined to think we know things or are justified in believing things that we normally accept without hesitation.

It is of interest for this study to observe that a Pyrrhonian skeptic, when faced with remote unexcluded possibilities<sup>87</sup>, would too be willing to say he *does not know*. Such an admission of ignorance, observed through the prism of authentic skepticism, would seem to imply that the descriptive route Fogelin chooses *is* resourceful in the ‘phantom’ sense<sup>88</sup>. Fogelin’s stance here would probably be that such an admission does not conflict with the Pyrrhonian undogmatic approach. Namely, on Fogelin’s description of the standards for making knowledge claims<sup>89</sup>:

There is, it must be said, a fact or a set of facts in virtue of which an epistemic claim will be correctly deemed true from within a justificatory framework functioning at a particular level of scrutiny.

And, as Pyrrhonist “undogmatically accepts the everyday epistemic practices”<sup>90</sup>, presumably this is what leads Fogelin to admit ignorance (of his own name) in face of the unexcluded remote possibility, i.e. pressed in a context of stricter level of scrutiny. Fogelin, it would seem, feels that by leaving open the question of whether or not “epistemic claims obey the law of bivalence”<sup>91</sup>, and by not privileging any level of scrutiny<sup>92</sup>, the Pyrrhonian remains free of the bounds of dogmatism, while explaining the pull skeptical challenges have. It is, after all, precisely the privilege given to the strict level of scrutiny and pressing for justification that Pyrrhonian finds problematic in traditional epistemological enterprise and ‘cartesian’ skepticism. Yet, if that is to serve as the defense of the lack of commitment, it

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 193.

<sup>85</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>86</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 94. Fogelin himself notes that the description is “very Humean”.

<sup>87</sup> The example of the remote possibility is that he is a changeling, and upon reflecting on the possibility Fogelin admits not knowing his name, cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 93.

<sup>88</sup> Or, as Stroud would state, that his Pyrrhonism is ‘unpurged’; cf. Barry Stroud, “Unpurged Pyrrhonism,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57.2. (1997), 411-416.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 95.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 195.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 95.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 100.

would still seem to be at odds with the Pyrrhonian claim/admission not to know. If the Pyrrhonian is “under no constraint to conform his activities – including his linguistic activities – to philosophical standards”<sup>93</sup>, wouldn’t he, in line with the ordinary practices, simply ignore the remote possibility, or eliminate it, if it is legitimate (in his sense of the word) in the context he occupies? It seems that the meaning of knowledge claims Fogelin outlines and the description of standards of use as incorporating the sliding levels of scrutiny<sup>94</sup> prevent him, at times, from doing specifically what he claims people do in everyday justificatory practices. In as much, it would seem, the Pyrrhonian fails at times in being the urbane defender he proposes to be, and more importantly, in authentically suspending judgment as well, i.e. in exposing the issue raised (within a context) as an open question. It should be noted that Fogelin’s descriptive *defense*, as he repeatedly notes, does not amount to a claim that “our [common] epistemic practices are legitimate”<sup>95</sup>, and he is careful not to slide into the dogmatic route toward that end. The problem rather seems to be in line with the tendency he ascribes to epistemological theories, a “tendency to drift toward skepticism [in the sense of *denial, deprivation of knowledge*] without acknowledging that this is happening”<sup>96</sup>.

Fogelin’s slips toward negative claims happen in places where he, in description, acknowledges the fragility of our everyday epistemic procedures, and slides from *apparent* loss of legitimacy of the grounds utilized in the procedure (in the context of strict scrutiny)<sup>97</sup> to groundlessness of our beliefs<sup>98</sup>. Though Fogelin feels that descriptive remarks on groundlessness of our beliefs are not problematic<sup>99</sup>, in the sense of carrying the dogmatic commitment, the slip he is drawn into making time and again is a slip from a claim to the effect that one’s grounds will (or might) be judged inadequate in a stricter context, to a claim that it is a (illusory) presumption that ground utilized (in everyday context) *are* as such *adequate* to establish the truth of what is believed (with inadequacy revealed when level of scrutiny rises)<sup>100</sup>. This *is* what Fogelin seems to suggest in writing<sup>101</sup>:

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 195.

<sup>94</sup> This is not a “philosophical imposition”, cf. his “Contextualism and Externalism,” 48.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 200.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 139.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. “Replies,” 87.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 200.

<sup>99</sup> Though they might be misleading, and understood as casted with a critical tone (cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 99). This will be addressed further in the following text.

<sup>100</sup> According to Fogelin, we make knowledge claims through appraisal of grounds and (interrelatedly) responsibility and this is how we use ‘know’; but, at the same time sliding levels of scrutiny (and new information) will put the adequacy of those grounds (and procedure) to test. ‘Groundlessness of our beliefs’ suggests something in addition to just ‘leaving eliminable refuting possibilities uneliminated’, and here I do not suggest that therefore it is a criticism of some sort (it is not a claim that we lack

If anything, when (...) actual grounds [of our epistemic practices] *are revealed for what they are*, their legitimacy seems to be lost.

Fogelin would have us believe that the slip is not entailed by his analysis of knowledge claims<sup>102</sup>:

There *may be* no justificatory framework that stands up under the unlimited heightening of scrutiny. In fact this (...) possibility strikes me as being *correct*, but that is not something that follows from the analysis of knowledge claims I have presented. It is something that has to be shown in detail by examining various attempts to produce philosophical theories of justification.

This does seem correct; his analysis of knowledge claims alone would not justify the general claim about our justificatory procedures. The question that presents itself, when Fogelin's remarks are observed through the prism of authentic skepticism, is how a dialectical engagement, in which annulments of answers offered in a set of theories is revealed, could lead one to apparent correctness of quite a general possibility that no answer is forthcoming, unless one feels that a failure of this set of answers provides an insight into something further than just the inadequacy of these theories *on their own grounds*. Namely, it is quite different to say that one lacks justification, if justification is (or needs to be) as dogmatists would have it, and to say that "if we press for justification (...) we quickly become aware that *none* is forthcoming"<sup>103</sup>. In the latter claim the notion that solely a justificatory procedure which is final (i.e. bears up in the context of strictest scrutiny) would do, seems to be assumed. The noted contrast appears in the descriptive part of Fogelin's efforts as well, as it is quite different to state that when we commonly make knowledge claims, we bracket the remote or impractical refuting possibilities, and to state that "in making knowledge claims, we always (or almost always) assert more than we have a *right* to assert"<sup>104</sup>. The former claim is

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something that we ought to have). The claim above is that Fogelin slides from description of the use of 'know' to a description of our epistemic *condition*. Fogelin writes following Wittgenstein: "it is a fact that I *trust* something, not the *inherent trustworthiness* of what I trust, that lies at the base of my language games" (*Pyrrhonian reflections*, 93). It is one thing to say that our grounds are deemed inadequate in a framework of stricter scrutiny, quite another to say that no grounds would withstand such a test, that we are in a specific sense *justification-less*.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 200.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 98.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 195, emphasis added; the comment blurs the purity of the dialectical aim in his application of modes of Agrippa. This is also a point made by Stroud (cf. "Unpurged Pyrrhonism," 415), but his diagnosis is somewhat different.

<sup>104</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 94.

associated with a description of how we are trained to use the language<sup>105</sup>; the latter suggests that this bracketing amounts to a specific *lack* of justification underlying our everyday use of epistemic terms. Fogelin does warn against taking the latter claim as criticism, as “it is intended merely descriptively”<sup>106</sup> and one should not, I agree, understand him here as using evaluative language for evaluative purposes. Yet, it would seem that *what* he describes is more than just our linguistic practices<sup>107</sup>. That these two claims describe different epistemic issues is further apparent when Fogelin writes<sup>108</sup>:

The Pyrrhonist, we might say, falls in with the others in their modest, undogmatic, epistemic practices. The Pyrrhonist, like others, simply enters into what Wittgenstein calls forms of life, and does so without believing that these forms of life are justified. Furthermore, if we press for justification (...) we quickly become aware that none is forthcoming. *Why don't we feel this lack of justification?* Well, *philosophizing can make us feel it*; but *why*, if it is so ready at hand, *don't we feel it in our everyday use of terms of epistemic evaluation?* The answer – and here I follow Wittgenstein – lies in the way in which we acquire and then employ ordinary concepts.

The first question Fogelin poses is about the *condition* due to which we “assert more than we have the right to assert”, the second, accompanied with an answer, is on reasons for which this condition does not impose itself on our linguistic practices. The lack of justification in the first question is something we do not *feel* until we enter the philosophical perspective, but the implication is that *we are* lacking in this respect, and the only lack of justification that Fogelin might be referring to, in line with his own description of our practices, would have to be the lack of a final one. His description of our everyday practices would imply that we are *evaluated* as having (adequate) grounds and being responsible within a specific context at a specific level of scrutiny when we are *deemed* to know, which makes the *assertion* of knowledge plausible (or better yet, in line with the common use of epistemic terms). When Fogelin makes the claims about *groundlessness* of our beliefs, *lack of justification* of our common practices, and us overstepping (in making claims) what we are entitled to, he allows for the description to be about more than just knowledge claims, i.e. allows for the descriptive and dialectical parts of his efforts to converge, and hints or reveals a stance about our

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<sup>105</sup> We are, Fogelin claims in Wittgensteinian manner, trained to ignore skeptical doubts in everyday practice of use of epistemic terms (*Pyrrhonian reflections*, 196).

<sup>106</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 99.

<sup>107</sup> Unlike the former claim, which does seem limited to how we use epistemic terms.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 195-6, emphasis added.

epistemic position<sup>109</sup>. The failure of epistemological theories becomes a *lack* of, an absence in our condition. It is what motivates him to claim that<sup>110</sup>:

It takes nothing more than a reflection on our ordinary modes of justification to feel the need for something more.

The dogmatist slips he makes *are*, though he seems unwilling to admit to it, as much a consequence of the analysis of knowledge claims he presents, as of the justificationists' project. Namely, it is in being equipped with the resources concerning the meaning of 'know', the standards of how epistemic claims are made, the accompanying mechanism of rising scrutiny (seen as *invited* but not *created* by epistemological project), and impressed with what he sees as the results of his dialectical project, that Fogelin drifts into making negative dogmatic claims, where suspension would be the practice of traditional approach. It is the connection of the everyday practices, as he sees them, and the project of epistemology that he addresses, the very connection which allows him to explain the pull of both epistemology and skeptical doubts, that steers him toward the dogmatist claims<sup>111</sup>. Otherwise, it would seem that a Pyrrhonian who "does not hold that it is epistemically irresponsible to believe things on the basis of insufficient evidence"<sup>112</sup> wouldn't be so easily swayed by the unexcluded possibilities.

Observed through the prism of authentic skepticism, the diagnosis seems simple, as his stance drifts toward negative dogmatism through the resources Fogelin takes on. Yet, in face

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<sup>109</sup> Fogelin rightly suggests, as noted, that a mere description is here difficult to put into words without a misleading appearance of evaluation. With that in mind, an attempt to describe what Fogelin hints at, could take the following form: we trust/ take for granted (epistemic condition) though justification-less, adequacy of grounds that we comment on is evasive (if we press for epistemic responsibility, as in epistemological project it turns elusive), and though this is how we speak (linguistic activity), adequacy of reasons/grounds we speak of/appraise/give is not inherent to the grounds, it is when 'graced by nature' (cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 92), i.e. when the facts do not defeat us, that we are spoken of as *knowing*. It is not that we are said to know because our grounds *are* adequate, in claiming to know "we *rely* on the grace of nature not to defeat us" (loc. cit. emphasis added). And this is where Fogelin writes: "When so graced, we are said to know. The philosopher, we might say, wants to replace this covenant of grace with a covenant of work." (ibid.). Fogelin's slips, could be then stated in the following manner: he goes from 'our grounds can be *deemed* illegitimate from within a stricter context or in light of additional information' to 'we are (in a sense specified above) justification-less (but trust/rely)'. This latter claim suggests that having-justification is having-justification-of-the-final kind; i.e. that, though appraised as adequate in a framework (when 'graced'), the grounds *are* non-grounds.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 203. This is, Fogelin feels, another difference between cartesian and Pyrrhonian/ Pyrrhonist skeptics; Pyrrhonists do not rely on "skeptical scenarios" to put to question (cf. "The Skeptics Are Coming," 165, *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 193).

<sup>111</sup> In this, the mechanisms leading from meaning of 'know' to (albeit rare in comparison) dogmatist slips appear similar to those yielding negative conclusions from Unger's account of absolute terms.

<sup>112</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 115.

of apparent simplicity one needs to be cautious. It wouldn't be appropriate to note, it should be added, that Fogelin completely misses the mark in his efforts to delineate his approach from negative dogmatic stance. Rather, the more specific diagnosis from the prism of authentic skepticism would need to be that he mistakes, in terms used here, 'authentic use of skepticism' for 'authentic skepticism'. In this the fact that he writes of both Hume and Wittgenstein as Pyrrhonian skeptics is revealing. Observed through the interpretation of skepticism offered here, both of these authors would seem to be better described as using skepticism to turn from specific questions. In a specific sense this seems to be what Fogelin is doing as well. The justificationists' program, according to his argumentation, through privileging the heightened levels of scrutiny threatens to destroy even or everyday knowledge claims. He feels that the descriptive program of the kind he offers protects them. And though, as noted, he is lead into dogmatic conundrums through conflation of the dialectic portion of his program with the descriptive one, it would seem to be a legitimate question, on his behalf, whether or not a description of our practices would be problematic to an authentic skeptic. The question would then seem to be whether or not the description is of the same kind as Sextus' makes regarding appearances, and Pyrrhonists' practices. And it seems clear that Fogelin's descriptions are much more elaborate and aim to have a wider application. But that is not the main reason for one to proclaim them inauthentic, or not adequately Pyrrhonian (and here it needs to be noted that this diagnosis remains the same, even if one disregards the dogmatic slips described above). What seems to have slid past Fogelin's efforts to maintain Pyrrhonist-like scruples is the disagreement on what 'know' stands for in both philosophical debates and everyday life. The meaning of 'know' that he describes is not without controversy, and not solely because of the way justification condition is outlined. If, regarding justification, one might point to a disagreement regarding whether or not we really comment or evaluate knowledge claims by commenting on one's justificatory procedure as the right one, rightly applied and concurring with one's evaluation of the grounds, or to disagreement on whether or not this is done from a specific context, or to disagreement of what it is that would trigger our withdrawal of such a claim; it needs to be noted that these set of disagreements would still be a 'narrower' issue taken up, so to speak. Namely, the broader issue is that there seems to be disagreement, and I again take this to be the case in both philosophy and the everyday, with regards to whether or not the tripartite analysis of knowledge actually fits the way we apply this concept in everyday life. To utilize the example already mentioned in this study, there are those who feel that a belief is not a condition for knowledge. As Fogelin disregards these disagreements, this shows that he is limiting his

skeptical efforts to a specific area, that he decided that problems lie elsewhere. It perhaps should be noted here that if our ‘training’ and everyday practice actually concurred with what Fogelin describes, the classical Pyrrhonist would have followed the practice, much like he followed and observed other practices of the culture surrounding him. Still, he would not describe them as *the* practices people use, or connect them to the *natural* lure of skeptical problems. The classical Pyrrhonists, as Fogelin himself notes, were apt at avoiding burden of proof. Fogelin takes on the burden of proof associated with both the claim that ‘know’ means what he suggests it means, and the further, interconnected, claim on how standards of application deliver us to skepticism. If it is not entirely<sup>113</sup> appropriate to claim that he poses questions *through* his resources, it is on these resources<sup>114</sup> and impressed by annulment of answers that he drifts away from authentic approach. Fogelin feels, not unlike the authentic interpretation offered here, that turning-about is a defining characteristic of true skepticism. Yet, in line with his approach, he takes it to signal something different<sup>115</sup>:

(...) Pyrrhonian arguments are not simply dispensable, for, *as specimens of philosophizing*, they too stand in need of elimination.

Fogelin sees *περιτροπή* as signaling not the void of authentically putting to question, but the purge of philosophizing elements after putting to question<sup>116</sup>. His resources, as he understands them, are not philosophical. Here again an authentic spirit would need to notice that much of *philosophy* today is equally un-philosophical. When he notices the similarities, he is wont to show that these *new* theories are backing up toward skepticism<sup>117</sup>. Yet, through the prism of authentic skepticism, it would seem that he is also in movement. By (for most part) authentic, but selective, use of arguments he can be viewed as backing up toward and participating in the *new* epistemology.

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<sup>113</sup> Even in the first part of Pyrrhonian reflections he puts in an effort to question theories through the framework, though he is led by conviction of adequacy of analysis of knowledge claim he presents and the solution that it provides to Gettier problem. Yet it should be noted that he adds on to Agrippa’s modes a set of “success conditions” that a theory must meet (*Pyrrhonian reflections*, 117-119) which are, as he himself notes, not accepted by epistemologists themselves. It could be argued that these too, at least partially arise from his ‘defense of common’ in face of philosophy. From the perspective of authentic skepticism ‘success conditions’ should not be outlined by the skeptic himself.

<sup>114</sup> Or, in Stroud’s words, “on that ladder that was to have been thrown away” (“Unpurged Pyrrhonism,” 413).

<sup>115</sup> *Pyrrhonian reflections*, 4.

<sup>116</sup> It should be noted that the difference in the two seem to be the scope and focus. Due to the narrower scope of Fogelin’s claim (which would be applicable to parts of authentic approach), the focus is different. It is not the lack of commitment in the sense of consistency in *ἀπορία*; it is lack of commitment to philosophizing.

<sup>117</sup> “The Sceptics Are Coming,” 71.

## II. 4. Concluding remarks

Philonous: Pray, Hylas, what do you mean by a *sceptic*?

Hylas: I mean what all men mean, one that doubts of everything.

George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*<sup>1</sup>

This study, as noted, resulted from efforts to find conceptual clarity in dealings with skepticism. As the title ‘skeptical’ seems to be easily described and debated in both philosophy and the everyday, perhaps one might think that ‘skeptical’ called for no such efforts. Much like Berkeley’s Hylas, when probed for a definition of skepticism, in philosophy and the everyday discourse alike, one might confidently assert *a definition* as something *all* would subscribe to. Yet, if Hylas’ confidence is representative of the confidence one feels when dealing with concepts widely known and used, the exchange between Hylas and Philonous best represents precisely the unfortunate fate of the title ‘easily’ defined. Just a few sentences later, upon admitting that such doubt could not “consist in embracing the affirmative or negative side of a question,” Hylas suggests his definition is in need of a supplement, with the skeptic, “one that doubts of everything,” further defined as one “who denies the reality and truth of things”. In the face of such and similar conflation of skepticism with instances of advocacy of negative theses, the suggestion of this study was that a *skeptic* is not and cannot be both. Or, in the words Berkeley has Philonous utter, the one “that denieth any point, can no more be said to doubt of it, than he who affirmeth it with the same degree of assurance. (...) And consequently, for such his denial is no more to be esteemed a *sceptic* than the other.” By outlining the traits of skepticism properly so called, in contrast to the traits of illusively ‘skeptical’ negative dogmatism and philosophical theories generally speaking, the insights of this study suggest a path toward achievement of conceptual clarity; more precisely, a way to guard against further instances of such misuse of the title at hand. The path leads through appreciation of the traits of the approach committed to posing questions; in this study first outlined through the preliminary critique as congenial traits in those arguments that sought to reveal the lack of answers, then further defined in this second part of the study in juxtaposition with those arguments through which an answer was proposed.

The preliminary critique proceeded from the original sense of the title ‘inquirers’, and from the insight that the delineation from dogmatism this title was supposed to convey failed; namely, the insight that the title was easily ‘corrupted’. Analysis of the skeptical arguments of

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<sup>1</sup> For all quotations, cf. George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues* [1734 edition], ed. Howard Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109.



Pyrrhonists, Academics, and those used by Descartes, allowed for negative dogmatism to be distinguished more clearly from the answerless approach; thus the critique discloses the congeniality in not settling for an answer in contrast to the dogmatic missteps that might invite the phantom understanding of these forms of skepticism, more precisely, the stigmata of negative dogmatism these arguments bear. Authentic revision of contemporary forms of alleged skepticism primarily took the form of an outline of the stumbling stones to skepticism properly so called. Hence here the effort to look over, reexamine the phantom form, served again to bring-forth the contrast which allows for the authentic approach to be understood as distinct from the answer-bound approaches.

Those philosophical approaches which propose answers, which *deny* and *affirm* with assurance, do so precisely on the basis of the argumentative structure which brings forth the thesis supported as *the answer* (in form of affirmation and negation). Thus commitment to and confidence in a thesis displayed in these philosophical approaches is bound to and arises from commitment to and confidence in the argumentative structure that supports it. The aim of inquiry in such approaches is to provide an answer to the question that served as impetus to inquiry, and depending on the degree of assurance in their affirmation or denial, the question is experienced as a resolved question, the answer as determined. By contrast, authentic skeptics' arguments close in absence of determinations, i.e. (perpetuated) questions, and, as noted repeatedly throughout this study, questions are not voiced, nor brought forth in the same manner an answer is. To emphasize precisely the distinctiveness of authentic skepticism as devoid of commitments pertaining to the answer-bound approach, which makes the customary approach of outlining philosophical theories inapplicable in addressing it, the traits pertaining to the genuine commitment to *σκέψις* were here elaborated as *thesis-void* and *resource-void*. It is in disregard of these two (inextricable) sides to the void which distinguishes the questioning approach from the ones in which an answer is presented, that the absence of determinations in authentic skepticism turns elusive, and phantom interpretation is invited.

Thesis-void was revealed here as *absence* properly understood through the prism of skeptics' argumentative practice and their dialectical aim in argumentation. Authentic skeptics' arguments analyzed in this study were conceived to *put to question* what was perceived as answered. To put to question authentically, to bring forth thesis-void, was revealed as an effort to nullify an answer, deprive it of its force and effectiveness, to invalidate it, and to re-state the question this answer proposed to resolve, give it force anew, continue it. The continuity of the question which ensues is *opposed* to the answers challenged, yet it is not simply their negation. Authentically skeptical argument, simply put, brings forth

*ἀπορία*. Observation of specific instances of putting to question further revealed that if negation was *argued for* it represented a stepping stone, being itself in opposition to the continuity of the question. *Continued* questions authentic skeptics' investigations expose, as noted, are invited by and bound to the dialectical aim of the arguments they cast. To understand Academics' arguments as proposing a negating *answer* is to ignore that their piecemeal argumentative practice of outlining meticulously the premises that their opponents would accept was precisely the practice of putting to question the suggested answers in this countered account. To understand Pyrrhonists' efforts as closing with the answer is to equally ignore the efforts in this tradition to expose the dialectical strain in the answers proposed by others. To understand Descartes as closing his skeptical pondering with a negation, is to disregard that he presses for negation to remain present in order to guard himself from falling back to the comfort of the answers easily accepted, i.e. precisely to the effect of remaining with the question exposed. To guard against taking the negation argued for, or annulment of answers, as *the answer* affirmed, one needs to closely observe the distinctiveness of the manner in which thesis-void is voiced and brought forth. Namely, as the preliminary critique demonstrated, thesis-void easily eludes one once it is voiced in answer-like terms and observed absent the context of inquiry.

To appreciate the continuity of the question in original skeptics' practice is to recognize the thesis-void as implied by specific openness displayed toward *περιτροπή*. Namely, in allowing for the answer-like phrases at the close of inquiries to apply to themselves, and to be canceled along with those countered, a peculiar lack of commitment is displayed toward the answer argued for; the lack of commitment which would be unbecoming for other philosophical approaches. A philosopher proposing an answer which is, in the context of debate, found to be a self-applying, self-canceling answer would hardly welcome such a development. In allowing for *περιτροπή*, in lacking commitment to what was put forth, the answerless approach announces itself as *answerless*, and in doing so, as preliminary critique disclosed, this approach uses precisely the mechanisms of the dogmatists' making to reveal that in putting to question, an alternative answer was not proposed. This un-attachment to that phrase which might seem to mimic the answer at the close of inquiries is, in close examination, revealed as closely connected to a distinctive un-attachment to resources, lack of commitment to the arguments casted. In putting to question, in seeking to cure the rashness of assent, the answerless, *authentic* approach of *continued inquiry* can allow for the arguments, once used, to devour themselves, as it is not committed to an answer in a manner any other approach would be.

By contrast, answers imply commitment, not solely to what is claimed, but also to the path leading up to it. This is how one tends to approach theories examined, defended, or proposed, through the route (*ὁδός*) traveled and the traveled-to. As it would seem curious to offer an answer absent commitment and resource-less, it would seem odd if one, being resourceful and committed, professed to authentically remain at the point of exposition of the question. Accordingly, the authentic revision revealed that the openness to *περιτροπή* in the recent illusively skeptical efforts receives quite a different treatment from the use it has in authentic approach. With regard to their theses, Lehrer and Unger seem to go through the motion of turning about routinely, so to speak, to prevent the long-lived objection<sup>2</sup>. It is not, they claim, that one *knows* that he *does not know*. Yet, they stop short in following through on what *περιτροπή* signals, as their accounts do not pursue the effect of exposing annulment (continuity of the question), but of proposing a negation. At the end of their accounts is a negation the inauthentic skeptic can affirm and reasonably suppose to be true. For Lehrer's and Unger's skeptics *περιτροπή* cannot signal consistency in *ἀπορία*, as for them there is no *ἀπορία*. There is an answer, a negative one. Furthermore, and appropriate to proposals of answers, Lehrer and Unger further their negative theses through a commitment to a set of resources of their own making, thus in these instances of phantom argumentation, a disavowal of allegiance to the arguments cast could hardly have been expected. For Fogelin, on the other hand, *περιτροπή* does signal a disavowal. But for him this disavowal amounts to the purge of *philosophizing* elements, and precisely in limitedness of *ἀπορία* thus exposed, i.e. through commitment to that which he exempts from questions, he slides into taking annulment of answers as an answer. The phantom missteps in his account seem to be, not unlike Lehrer's and Unger's, connected to a set of resources of his own, although the mechanism bringing forth the phantom is different. Fogelin perhaps didn't seek to further the negative thesis, yet slides into accepting it, on those argumentative structures not canceled along with what was put to question.

Acceptance of resources in argumentation invites for an answer to be accepted. Arguments Academics used served as the dialectical counterweight to the opponents' arguments and claims, and Pyrrhonists posed questions through revealing the dialectical tension between opposing accounts. To appreciate the disavowal of the 'tools' used in argumentation and the disavowal of the 'argued-for' in these traditions is to further appreciate the directedness of the argumentation that puts to question, and hence the peril inherent to an

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<sup>2</sup> Lehrer explicitly notes this in "Why not Scepticism," 284.

attempt to observe such argumentation absent the context of inquiry. Namely, absent the context of inquiry it might very well appear that skeptics argued from a set of resources of their own, yet an authentic question is always a question posed-to an account. To understand authentic questions as *posed-to* is, after all, to acknowledge a defining part of the dialectical enterprise in inviting the continuity of the question. In observing the contrast to the resourceful phantom skepticism, the continuity of the question in authentic accounts can further be understood as the effect of posing (or exposing) the *right question rightly*.

As noted, to expose *ἀπορία* is to pose a question-to an account, to reveal *annulment* of an answer and show that the question this answer purportedly resolves remains a puzzle (unresolved). Resource-void, in authentic accounts suggested in allowance for *περιτροπή*, in allowing for the self-cancellation of the resources utilized, reveals that a question is always posed-to an account/framework/context *from* this very account/framework/context. To put-to-question authentically is not *merely* to argue for a negation of what is in an answer, it is to put-to-test the resources purporting to be *the* pathway to *the* answer. In authentic arguments negation is exposed as arising from the very framework, account, argumentative structure bringing forth the (countered) affirmation. Disavowal of the arguments utilized in authentic approaches served to reveal that it is not the skeptic who is bound to those resources, but those who sought the answer through them. Authentic skeptic brings those proposing this answer to the resource-void. At the same time, bringing about the resource-void requires that the skeptic himself is resource-less, in the specified manner. In leading to an authentic question skeptic's resources are not *his*, but always from that which is put-to-question. If the argumentative support collapses, it was the structure bringing forth the answers that *is* devoured; if it is preserved, the counter-thesis the 'skeptics' argue for would have to be granted as equally established. In both cases, there are no conclusive answers, and this turns to be a burden for the countered accounts to bear (in being committed to these 'tools' and seeking to propose *the* answer).

Once the questioner proposes to put-to-question through resources which the other side would not accept, the question turns inauthentic. In that case what is perceived as answered is not shown to be a non-answer, but is (simply) a negated answer. Negative theses, as shown in the revision of contemporary phantom forms of skepticism, are inauthentically posed questions. A comparison of authentic and inauthentic questions shows that in the case of the former, but not the latter, a true dialogue (with a shared set of resources) is established. One faced with an authentic question, in seeking to answer it re-examines his own resources in bringing forth the answer annulled; yet one faced with an inauthentic question, can question

the resources of the questioner, seeking to prove that these are flawed, all the while taking his answer as *the* answer, untouched by the negation. Inauthentic question is not a question-to an account; it is a verdict-from an account. And, much like Lehrer and Unger pose loaded questions of this sort, Fogelin slides into posing them for much the same reasons.

Fogelin's missteps toward the phantom thesis can be observed as congenial to his conflation of authentic skepticism and authentic *use* of skepticism. Where authentic skeptics can be found allowing the 'thesis-void' to stand at the end of their inquiries, in what has been designated as 'authentic use of skepticism' *ἀπορία* served the thinkers to start anew, as a lever to re-question the question or to demonstrate that investigation should continue in another framework. Authentic skeptic puts to *question* a context/framework/account. In openness to 'turning about' he allows for the context/framework/account to collapse on itself and remains at the point of exposition of a question, while the burden of proof falls on those seeking to preserve the context/framework/account (or modify it). The authentic skeptic *determines nothing* (not even that he determines nothing), he *questions*. Philosophers *using* skeptical argumentation authentically, mimic much the same moves, and expose *a* question continued, where others or even they themselves have sought to posit or find answers. The preconceived opinions in such a practice are counter-balanced (AT 7:22; CSM 2:15), brought to question. Yet in seeking to stress that *εὐπορία* is to be found elsewhere, or that specific *ἀπορία* needs to be interpreted differently, or needs to be abandoned, positive commitments pertaining to the view they are to propose, would from the perspective of authentic skepticism still be seen as dogmatic ties, albeit of a different form. In fewer words, a tincture of skepticism is not skepticism<sup>3</sup>. Still, during the *authentic use* of skepticism, philosophers guard themselves against falling prey to potential dogmatic ties. Fogelin's slips are in the ties he maintains upon questioning a framework which he professes not to be committed to. Such ties *might* lead *philosophers* who seemingly question authentically to, in retrospect, call for a definitive negative verdict where suspension was required. If this happens, at that point, their approach (in use of skeptical arguments) turns into a phantom form, as the resources preserved *have bearing* on the question posed. Impressed by the failure of justificationists' accounts, and (his) outline of the "need for more" which invites them, Fogelin turns to describing our procedure of appraising grounds and commenting of justificatory procedures in 'knowledge claims' in which the need for more is easily invited; and bit by bit annulment lapses into a thesis. The more that *is* required appears as unattainable/inexistent, and not (as authentic use of

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<sup>3</sup> As, I believe, Hume would agree (cf. EHU 12.24; SBN161).

skepticism would imply) as unattainable/inexistent *if it is as required by the dogmatic account*. If Descartes in his authentic use of arguments suffered a Chrysippus-like fate of being perceived as supplying the skeptics with new tools to use in questioning, Fogelin's inauthentic slips seem to be similar to the fate of the late Academy, namely of those Carneades' followers who equally exempted parts of inquiry from questions, which consequentially led them to answers.

In observing the thesis-void-resource-void quality of authentically skeptical arguments one is better equipped to understand which questions are posed by different skeptical arguments. Namely, as authentic question is always posed-*to*, what is in the question *is* what is addressed in the question. In other words, to understand skepticism authentically is to view specific instances of authentic questions as reflecting (being limited by/ arising from) the account/framework/context put to question. What is revealed as *still-a-question* is revealed as such on the basis of the set of recourses from the account put-to-question. In that sense each thesis-void exposed in particular instances of use of skeptical argument is *limited* to the account/framework/context which is engaged in questioning. Yet this limitation does not imply that the question is posed through a commitment to the account/framework/context. It utilizes the resources of the account, yet does not imply commitment to these as *the* resources in a manner in which an answer would; in being *a question* (as opposed to an answer) it is not bound to the account/framework/context questioned. Free floating character of ways (modes) of putting to question, their reappearance in different contexts/accounts/frameworks, reveals that a question can be posed in the same manner to different accounts, and free floating character of specific instances of authentic skeptics' questions reveals that same questions can be invited by different accounts. But, it is always the account questioned that reveals within itself *how* it can be returned to the question, and *which* question is posed. The account/framework/context questioned thus set the tone of the question; hence, to understand the differences in questions posed at different times authentically is to understand the differences in accounts put-to-question, i.e. to understand the question is to understand *what* is left unresolved, or in other words, where the inquiry was continued. Authentic skeptics and those utilizing skeptical arguments authentically, in short, are engaged in a Socratic-like dialogue; this is why in authentic argumentation one finds the *right* question is *rightly* posed, i.e. why skeptical argumentation results in *annulment* of answers. As noted, to appreciate the authentic questions as posed-*to* an account is to be sensitive to the dialectical enterprise in inviting the continuity of the question.

The loss of dialectical grip which original authentic skepticism had is visible in the treatment skeptical arguments receive in epistemology of the day. Namely, in being observed absent their epistemic counterpart, arguments of skepticism are no longer perceived as (pieces of) *inquiry*, but as structures delivering us to conclusions an epistemologist seeks to avoid. The interconnectedness of the thesis-void and the resource-void in skepticism, properly understood as the dialectical counterweight to the ‘conclusively settled’, is lost if one seeks to analyze the *question* posed by attending to the structure a skeptical argument leading up to the question displays (or appears to display), and the supposed commitment of the skeptic. As those who attempted to defend skepticism, through these very efforts at defense, seem to fail in establishing a dialogue of authentic kind with their counterpart philosophers, so those who no longer treat skepticism as posing questions, and in seeking to counter it treat instances of skeptical arguments as statically understood seeming paradoxes<sup>4</sup>, are not conversing with the skeptic, but are trying to bring down a static structure standing in the way of claims to knowledge. In this, the supposed skeptic turns into a crazy taskmaster, as what he requires is what need not be required, his tasks being unfounded, inappropriate, and meaningless. Inherent to the dialectical grip of authentic arguments is the *rightly* posed question as always posed-to, posed through but not bound to the resources of what it is posed to; hence, to try and detect the source of inappropriateness and meaninglessness in the argumentative resources of the authentic skeptic is to question that which was put to question by the skeptic himself. In ignoring the peculiar un-attachment of skepticism, as noted, the dialectical aim of skeptical arguments is disregarded (and, by extension, the dialectical grip these have is lost).

Such loss of focus on the dialectical aim of skepticism is, in a way, a loss of specific kind of self-reflection in philosophy. Philosophers who have used skeptical arguments authentically were seeking to utilize them to ‘change the subject’ under debate, or to change the course of debate, all the while aware of what is *in* the question thus posed, i.e. of the losses and gains from such a treatment. To embrace the question as meaningful, reveals itself as a quest to preserve an object of inquiry and implies that a set resources lost need to be (re)established. It takes on a form of a return to the question not properly attended to, by those who were seeking to answer it. To abandon the question is to disconnect oneself from the set of resources of those who sought an answer to it. To proclaim it as illegitimate is to proclaim

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<sup>4</sup> I take the description to fit not solely the instances in which tropes of Agrippa are treated as a regress problem (the interpretation which Lammeranta counters, cf. “The Pyrrhonian Problematic,” 11), or as relying on the prior grounding requirement (cf. M. Williams, *Problems of Knowledge*, 147), but also applicable to the instances of treating Cartesian arguments as modus ponens relying on the ‘eliminate all doubts’ principle, or a modus ponens relying on the closure principle.

what is *in* the question as illegitimate as well<sup>5</sup>. If one observes the exchanges with the phantom skeptic, the same self-awareness is not at all obvious. Presumably, this is what self-proclaimed Pyrrhonian Fogelin seeks to signal in suggesting that some of the new epistemologists are backing up toward skepticism. What he misses, from the perspective of the authentic approach, is that this move as well is open to question. The prerequisite, then, for establishing the dialogue which seems lost, is to apply scrutiny to what is *in the* question, as this signals who ought to address it and why. Furthermore, similar scrutiny should be applied to all that *can be put to question* by those committed to inquiry, in order not to fall prey to the rashness they are seeking to cure. Such would be the benefits of restoring conceptual clarity in dealings with skepticism, namely, in dealing with skepticism authentically understood.

Skepticism properly so called is revealed as being as meaningful as what it addresses (as it receives meaning from it) and its relevance, for philosophy, is in *ἀπορία* it brings forth. After all, answers are invited by questions, and solely in face of *ἀπορία*, does the search for *εὐπορία* become meaningful, regardless of what is in the question. Perhaps *new* questions were expected to be posed in this study. Yet this study, in delineating authentic skepticism, in outlining the traits of the dialectical counterpart to determinate philosophy, can represent solely a part of preparatory work for those who seek to engage in new questioning. The further task, difficulty and extensiveness of which were already exposed by Cicero as reasons for skepticism being “almost bereft of adherents” (*ND* I 11), is to master all those systems of philosophy one seeks to question. To notice that without such an undertaking one cannot authentically bring to question is to recognize the labors of authentic skepticism and to pay due tribute to all who did and all who will take it upon themselves to practice it.

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<sup>5</sup> It seems to me, pace Fogelin (*Pyrrhonian reflections*, 197ff), that this is what Wittgenstein hints at in referring to misuse of ‘to know’ (*Über Gewissheit*, § 6).



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## Curriculum Vitae

Vanda Bazdan received her BA degree in philosophy and sociology in 2004. Upon graduation she worked mostly in market research and for translation agencies till 2006, while volunteering in several projects run and initiated by non-government organizations, most notably in ALAC project by Transparency International. From 2006 till 2008 she worked as an expert associate in National Centre for External Evaluation of Education, specifically, as a research associate in Research and Development Department, and later as a coordinator of expert groups for development of assessment materials in Organization and Implementation Department. From 2008 (to present day) she is a Lecturer at Rochester Institute of Technology Croatia [RIT Croatia, previously known as American College for Management and Technology], briefly also taking the position of adjunct faculty member at University of Dubrovnik in academic year 2009/2010. From 2013, in addition to her position as a Lecturer, she serves as the Area Head for Professional Courses at RIT Croatia.

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