Pyrrhonian Skepticism

Walter Sinnot-Armstrong,
Editor

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EDITED BY

Walter Sinnott-Armstrong

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PART II

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WALTER SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG

Introduction to Pyrrhonian Skepticism

Recently as well as traditionally, skepticism has posed one of the central challenges in epistemology. Externalists and contextualists, as well as good old-fashioned foundationalists and coherentists, often present their theories as reactions to skepticism. A few philosophers have even defended skepticism, at least in part.

This discussion has focused largely on one particular variety of skepticism. This version is often called Cartesian skepticism, although it was not held by Descartes (who attacked it). So-called Cartesian skepticism is usually defined as a claim that nobody knows anything, at least about a large area (such as the external world). Opponents respond by arguing that this skeptical claim is incoherent or unjustified or false or true only in esoteric contexts.

When these opponents attack skepticism, their definitions show that they are concerned solely with Cartesian skepticism. A foundationalist, Robert Audi, defines knowledge skepticism "as the view that there is little if any knowledge."[1] A coherentist, Keith Lehrer, writes, "The deepest form [of skepticism] denies that we know anything at all."[2] An externalist, Robert Nozick, says, "The skeptic argues that we do not know what we think we do."[3] And a contextualist, Keith DeRose, asserts, "One of the most popular skeptical claims is that the targeted beliefs *aren't known* to be true."[4] These definitions differ in detail, and these authors distinguish many kinds of skepticism, but they still share the assumption that skepticism should be defined by some claim concerning the

impossibility of knowledge. It is that claim that they oppose and try to refute or soften.

Strangely, this debate rages about a claim that almost nobody makes. A few brave souls, such as a young Lehrer and Peter Unger,[5] have argued that nobody knows anything, but even they fairly quickly gave up their Cartesian skepticism.[6] Some philosophers do claim that we lack all knowledge in large fields, such as religion, morality, or the future, but Cartesian skepticism is more general. So those who work hard to refute Cartesian skepticism are attacking an empty castle. Their attempts can still be worthwhile, since many of us are at times (while students?) tempted by Cartesian skepticism, and it can be illuminating to specify what is problematic about Cartesian skepticism. Nonetheless, it seems at least as useful to consider positions that are actually held.

After ancient times, the only actual skeptical tradition has been Pyrrhonian. Montaigne, Hume, and Wittgenstein can be interpreted as representatives of this tradition.[7] This tradition has been revived and extended recently in a major work by Robert Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*,[8] which has spawned many lively debates.[9] Like Sextus Empiricus,[10] who championed Pyrrhonian skepticism in the ancient world, Fogelin does not claim that nobody knows anything. So Pyrrhonians are not Cartesian skeptics. But they also do not deny Cartesian skepticism. Instead, the doubt of Pyrrhonians is so deep that they suspend belief about both Cartesian skepticism and its denial. Nonetheless, some Pyrrhonians, including Fogelin, argue that they can still hold "common beliefs of everyday life" and can even claim to know some truths in an everyday way. By distancing themselves from Cartesian skeptics in these (and other) ways, Pyrrhonian skeptics hope to avoid many of the criticisms that trouble Cartesian skeptics.

It remains to be seen whether Pyrrhonian skepticism will be undermined by problems of its own. This volume is intended to investigate that issue. The first part, which includes five essays, explores the historical background that informs our understanding of Pyrrhonian skepticism. The second part then looks at objections to Pyrrhonian skepticism and its relation to other alternatives on the contemporary scene.

Gisela Striker opens by contrasting the ancient Pyrrhonists' stance with Fogelin's neo-Pyrrhonism. She argues that unlike other skeptics, ancient and modern, the ancient Pyrrhonists did not decide to suspend judgment on epistemological grounds. Rather, they claimed to have found themselves unable to arrive at any judgment at the end of their attempts to settle the many conflicts of appearances and opinions that surrounded

them. However, by giving up the attempt, they also claimed to have unexpectedly reached the aim of their investigations: tranquility. Faced with the objection that total suspension of judgment is humanly impossible because it would leave one unable to act, they responded that they were following the customs of ordinary life, passively going along with beliefs they found themselves having, but without ever claiming to have found the truth. It is this detachment from their own beliefs, according to Striker, that allegedly allowed the Pyrrhonist to keep his peace of mind without any major disturbances. Striker concludes that this antirational attitude is not likely to be typical of ordinary people, nor would it seem desirable to modern defenders of ordinary practices like Fogelin.

Janet Broughton widens the discussion by introducing Descartes in contrast with three skeptical figures. The Doubting Pyrrhonist gives up all claims to knowledge after recognizing that any knowledge claim can be challenged with an unending supply of eliminable but uneliminated defeaters. The Agrippan Pyrrhonist holds on to the conviction that we have knowledge but finds that we cannot back up this conviction with rationalizing evidence or a general theory of justification. The Cartesian Skeptic is committed to a general theory of justification, which says that all grounds must be contents of the believer's mind, and which leads to the conclusion that most of our beliefs are unjustified. Broughton argues that the meditator in Descartes' *Meditations* is different from all three of these skeptics. Unlike the Cartesian Skeptic, Descartes' meditator does not assume that all grounds must be contents of the believer's mind. Unlike the Doubting Pyrrhonist, the meditator raises doubts by using global defeaters. And unlike the Agrippan Skeptic, the meditator uses "dependence arguments" that are supposed to avoid the Agrippan modes of regress, circularity, and arbitrariness. Seeing the distinctive character of the meditator helps us understand how Descartes could have hoped to meet the challenge of skepticism.

Descartes' rationalist response to skepticism is often contrasted with empiricist responses to skepticism. Berkeley is a standard example, but Ken Winkler's essay challenges this common interpretation of Berkeley. Although Berkeley never explicitly refers to Pyrrhonian skepticism, Winkler shows how Berkeley's idealism is partially motivated by a need to overcome the mode of relativity, which had been pressed by Pyrrhonists. Berkeley's solution to relativity is close to that of Protagoras as presented in Plato's *Theaetetus*. Sextus says that Protagoras "is thought to have something in common with the Pyrrhonists." Nonetheless, Berkeley is no Pyrrhonist. He tries hard to distance himself from Pyrrhonism and other

forms of skepticism. Still, Berkeley's own position seems to be affected by the Pyrrhonists' uses of the mode of relativity. Berkeley also illustrates how far one must go to avoid skeptical conclusions once one admits relativity. Winkler argues that Berkeley needed to depend on reason—intuition or demonstration—in order to avoid skepticism, so Berkeley turns out to be closer to the rationalist tradition than is usually recognized. This aspect of Winkler's interpretation should stimulate not only Berkeley scholars but also anyone who thinks that empiricists have an adequate solution to the Pyrrhonian mode of relativity.

One philosopher who definitely is an empiricist is David Hume, the subject of Don Garrett's essay. To determine the ways in which Hume was and was not a skeptic, Garrett distinguishes varieties of skepticism along six dimensions. He argues that Hume is unmitigated in his rational support of skepticism and in his prescriptive skepticism about certain "high and distant enquiries" but mitigated in his general practicing skepticism and in his general epistemic merit skepticism. Hume's skepticism must be seen as mitigated in these respects, according to Garrett, in order to solve four puzzles for Hume scholars and, more particularly, to understand Hume's endorsement of the title principle, according to which reason "ought to be assented to" when it "is lively and mixes itself with some propensity" to belief. Hume scholars who see Hume's skepticism as less mitigated will be challenged by Garrett's evidence. Contemporary epistemologists will also learn from Garrett's precise framework for classifying skeptics, which shows how even a mitigated skepticism can contain "a small tincture of Pyrrhonism."

Skipping a few centuries, Hans Sluga locates Ludwig Wittgenstein within the Pyrrhonian tradition. Sluga explains some ways in which Wittgenstein was more Pyrrhonian, even in his early *Tractatus*, than is usually recognized. Sluga traces the roots of Wittgenstein's Pyrrhonism to a surprising source, Fritz Mauthner, a now-obscure philosopher and theater critic of the early twentieth century who lived in Prague, Vienna, and Berlin. Wittgenstein's later views moved even closer to those of Mauthner, although Wittgenstein never became as thoroughgoing a Pyrrhonian as Mauthner had been. Despite their remaining differences, Mauntner's neo-Pyrrhonian view of language was, according to Sluga, "responsible for the linguistic turn in Wittgenstein's thinking and thereby indirectly also for the whole linguistic turn in twentieth-century analytic philosophy."

After this tour through the history of Pyrrhonism, part II begins with comparisons between Pyrrhonism and its main contemporary competitors. Michael Williams first claims that the Pyrrhonian regress argument

presupposes a "Prior Grounding" conception of justification. Williams contrasts this with a "Default and Challenge" structure, which leads to a contextualist picture of justification. This contextualist picture differs from both foundationalism and coherentism, which he sees as "overreactions" to the Pyrrhonian challenge. Contextualism is said to "incorporate the best features of its traditionalist rivals" and also to avoid skepticism by insisting on an explanation of how our grounds might be mistaken and why they need to be defended. In the end, Williams argues that we should not ask whether the Prior Grounding or the Default and Challenge conception is really true. Instead, we should give up epistemological realism because it encourages skepticism, which makes it "hard to square with ordinary justificational practices."

Next Ernest Sosa, a prominent externalist, lays out the rationale for two fundamental principles—ascent and closure—and shows how they imply further principles of exclusion and of the criterion. Such principles lead both to the "Pyrrhonian Problematic," which foundationalism and coherentism attempt to solve, and also to the clash of intuitions between internalists and externalists. Sosa suggests that the kind of knowledge that externalists and foundationalists claim should be distinguished from the kind of knowledge that internalists and coherentists claim, and which Pyrrhonists doubt. Sosa traces this distinction between kinds of knowledge back to Descartes' distinction between *cognitio*, which requires reliability but not a reflective perspective, and *scientia*, which requires both reliability and reflection. If Sosa is correct, then externalism and internalism might both be correct but about different topics. Pyrrhonism might even turn out to be compatible with externalism, if all that Pyrrhonists deny is *scientia*. This would not be the first time that a philosophical debate gets resolved by distinguishing the subject matters of apparently conflicting views.

Robert Fogelin also tries to reconcile Pyrrhonism with supposed competitors, but in a different way. Fogelin explains his own Pyrrhonian skepticism in contrast to Cartesian skepticism, then turns to externalism and contextualism, which he did not discuss in detail in his book but which have become popular recently. Fogelin argues that although externalists and contextualists often present themselves as opponents of skepticism, what they oppose is Cartesian skepticism. They actually back themselves into a Pyrrhonist position, according to Fogelin, because externalists give up the search for reasons for belief and contextualists (exemplified by Keith DeRose) admit that believers have no reasons for their beliefs within epistemological contexts, which is whenever skepticism is at issue. These arguments show how hard it is to avoid Pyrrhonian skepticism.

Neo-Pyrrhonism still faces problems, as Barry Stroud argues. Stroud explains Fogelin's Pyrrhonism in sympathetic terms but then suggests that Fogelin gives up on Pyrrhonism at crucial points. In particular, Fogelin claims that when he and others reflect on how we disregard uneliminated but eliminable defeaters while making knowledge-claims in everyday life, our level of scrutiny rises and we are inclined to give up those claims to know. Stroud explains why a Pyrrhonist should resist this inclination and retain everyday knowledge-claims. Part of Stroud's strategy is to argue that the possibilities Fogelin classifies as "uneliminated but eliminable defeators" are actually eliminated by everyday evidence that we possess. As a result, Pyrrhonism is supposed to depend on other defeaters that are uneliminable and which do not raise the level of scrutiny or undermine everyday knowledge claims as readily as Fogelin might seem to think.

The relation between everyday knowledge-claims and Pyrrhonian skepticism is also a main topic in my contribution. I invoke a technical framework of contrast classes within which Pyrrhonians can accept (or deny) knowledge-claims that are relativized to specific contrast classes but avoid all unrelativized knowledge-claims and all presuppositions about which contrast classes are really relevant. Pyrrhonians can then assert part of the content of everyday knowledge-claims without privileging the everyday perspective or any other perspective. This framework thus provides a precise way to understand the central claims of neo-Pyrrhonism while avoiding most, if not all, of the problems and objections raised by its critics.

Roy Sorensen closes the volume with a wide-ranging and amusing exploration of many uses of ignorance. Sorensen's serious point is that we are more vulnerable to pessimists than to skeptics per se. When knowledge is unwelcome, we have an uphill struggle to defend our protestations of ignorance. According to Sorensen, Pyrrhonian skeptics, including Fogelin, are conditional skeptics and, hence, not really skeptics at all. Moreover, Sorensen argues, conditional skeptics refute themselves, for when they assert conditionals, they make assertions. Since these conditionals are philosophical in content, Pyrrhonians do not avoid all philosophical assertions, as they claim.

Whether or not these objections can be met, these essays together provide ample material for understanding and assessing Pyrrhonian skepticism both as a historical movement and as a contemporary alternative in epistemology. This collection should thus be useful in classes on skepticism, for epistemologists who want to broaden their view of skepticism, and to philosophers who are already studying the Pyrrhonian

tradition. These investigations will help us understand not only skepticism as it is actually practiced but also knowledge of the kind that we might hope to have. The contributors as a group reveal the diversity, liveliness, and pertinacity of the Pyrrhonian skeptical tradition, while also contributing to the ongoing Pyrrhonian project.

Notes

1. Robert Audi, *Epistemology* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 284.
2. Keith Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1990), 176.
3. Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 167.
4. Keith DeRose, "Introduction: Responding to Skepticism," in *Skepticism*, ed. K. DeRose and T. Warfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2. Perhaps here is the place to confess that I myself committed the mistake of defining skepticism as such a claim in "Moral Skepticism and Justification," in *Moral Knowledge?*, ed. W. Sinnott-Armstrong and M. Timmons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6.
5. Keith Lehrer, "Why Not Skepticism?" *Philosophical Forum* 2.3 (1971): 283–98; Peter Unger, "A Defense of Skepticism," *Philosophical Review* 80 (1971): 198–218.
6. See Keith Lehrer, *Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); and Peter Unger, *Philosophical Relativity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
7. Interpretations of Hume and Wittgenstein as Pyrrhonian skeptics are developed by Robert Fogelin in *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (Boston: Routledge, 1985) and *Wittgenstein* (Boston: Routledge, 1976, 1987). See also Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).
8. Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
9. See *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62.2 (1997), *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7.22 (1999), and *Philosophical Issues* 10 (2000).
10. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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PART I

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1

GISELA STRIKER

Historical Reflections on Classical Pyrrhonism and Neo-Pyrrhonism

On the occasion of celebrating a self-declared neo-Pyrrhonian, one might ask oneself what differences, if any, there might be between Robert Fogelin's neo-Pyrrhonism and its classical ancestor. In trying to answer this question, I will make a terminological distinction between Pyrrhonists and Pyrrhonians, using the label "Pyrrhonist"—like most scholars these days—for adherents of the ancient sect, and "Pyrrhonian" for later followers, including contemporary philosophers who may take their inspiration from the classical texts, but who offer a modified version of their predecessors' views, setting aside what they take to be superfluous or mistaken.[1]

Fogelin's ancient Pyrrhonist is a philosopher who suspends judgment on all matters philosophical or speculative because he has found that no philosophical doctrines or beliefs can be conclusively justified—not, at any rate, by the standards proposed by his philosophical peers. According to Fogelin, the main argument behind the Pyrrhonist's stance can be found in the so-called Modes of Agrippa—a set of epistemological arguments designed to show that any attempt at justifying judgments must be circular, lead to an infinite regress, or reveal the judgment as an arbitrary and unsupported assertion. When faced with the familiar objection that universal suspension of judgment will leave one paralyzed, unable to act since action requires belief, the Pyrrhonist replies that he does not feel bound by

his dogmatic opponent's demand that one should give one's assent only to impressions or thoughts that are certified as true, whether by a proof or as satisfying what the ancients called a "criterion of truth." He will not assent in this way to philosophical theses based on argument or theory, but he will act following his natural instincts and the practices of ordinary life, turning his back on the attempt to discover a deeper truth behind appearances.

Fogelin endorses Agrippa's arguments, working out a modern version of them in the second half of his *Pyrrhonian Reflections*. He then also offers a modern interpretation of the Pyrrhonists' claim to adhere to the practices of ordinary life, arguing that such practices show us ways of dealing with everyday questions, justifying beliefs on different levels and by different methods as each particular situation requires—ways which need not, and indeed cannot, rely upon a more fundamental justification. The contrast between philosophy and ordinary life then leads Fogelin to compare the Pyrrhonist stance to Wittgenstein's contrast between ordinary language and philosophical speculation.

This crude sketch is meant to bring out what I take to be the three main elements that may have led Professor Fogelin to declare himself a Pyrrhonian: namely, that one refrain from dogmatic assertions, endorse Agrippa's general arguments against the possibility of justifying beliefs or claims to knowledge, and adhere to the practices of ordinary life. All three elements can be found in the books of Sextus Empiricus.[2] Suspension of judgment is the characteristic attitude of the ancient skeptics. The Modes of Agrippa are one of Sextus's favorite antidogmatic weapons, though they are apparently a relatively late addition to the Pyrrhonist repertoire, having been introduced by more recent "Skeptics"[3] only after the time of Aenesidemus. Adherence to the customs and practices of everyday life is part of the skeptical way of life which Sextus outlines in response to the objection that the Pyrrhonist would be unable to act if he really suspended judgment on all matters (*PH* I:21–24). Still, this picture of Pyrrhonism is selective, and the three elements are not put together by Sextus in exactly the same way as Fogelin combines them—or so I shall argue. In the end, I will suggest that Fogelin is not a Pyrrhonist of the ancient variety—fortunately, I should think—but that he can, nonetheless, quite plausibly and legitimately be described as a Pyrrhonian.

Classical Pyrrhonism is represented for the modern reader by the works of Sextus Empiricus—inevitably so, since we do have at least some of Sextus's books, while those of his skeptical predecessors, if they wrote anything at all, have been lost. But Sextus comes at the end of a development that had been going on for more than four centuries, and he himself

makes it clear that the history of ancient skepticism had not been uniform. In fact, the label "Pyrrhonism" was probably introduced only some two hundred years after the death of Pyrrho of Elis, by Aenesidemus in the first century B.C. Aenesidemus himself seems to have been a disaffected member of the New or Skeptical Academy who broke away from his school because he thought it had in effect abandoned skepticism. Cicero's *Academic Books*[4] provide us with a picture of the New Academy at the time Aenesidemus is likely to have left it. The Academics that Aenesidemus rejected were Hume's "mitigated Skeptics"—philosophers who had given up on the possibility of knowledge and advocated the pursuit of plausible or persuasive opinion instead. Aenesidemus thought that this was simply a more modest version of (Stoic) dogmatism, and he founded a new movement under the label of Pyrrhonism. The new movement has been described by Michael Frede as "not so much a revival of Pyrrho's philosophy, but a revival of classical Academic skepticism under the name of Pyrrhonism, to distinguish it from the dogmatism which Aenesidemus and Sextus associated with the later skeptical Academy."[5] While I agree with the view that Aenesidemus's Pyrrhonism should be seen as deriving in large part from earlier Academic skepticism, I do not think that the choice of Pyrrho as philosophical ancestor was merely a matter of returning to an earlier generation of Academics, in particular Arcesilaus and Carneades. With the name of Pyrrho came the claim that Pyrrhonism or Skepticism is a way, even the only way, to tranquility, and as far as I can see, this was not a claim put forward by either Arcesilaus or by Carneades. According to Sextus, some Skeptics would call themselves Pyrrhonists because they saw Pyrrho as a kind of embodiment of the Skeptical attitude (*PH* I:7), a person who might serve as a conspicuous model of the Skeptics' way of life. What Pyrrho exemplified was precisely tranquility—a tranquility based on detachment and indifference to the worries of philosophers and of ordinary people alike. As we will see, the idea of Pyrrho as a model or paradigm raises questions about the Pyrrhonists' professed adherence to the customs of ordinary life.

Sextus tells us how the Pyrrhonist arrives at tranquility at the beginning of *PH* I (12, 26–29). "Men of talent," he says, desire to find a way out of the troubling disorder of things in the world that presents them with innumerable conflicts—of appearances, thoughts, opinions, and doctrines (12). They turn to philosophy for help to settle the conflicts by discovering the truth but find themselves time after time in a situation of equipollence, where the reasons for all of a set of conflicting views seem to be of equal weight, so that they cannot decide among them. Frustrated by

his lack of success, the Skeptic gives up in despair—and finds himself unexpectedly in just the state he was trying to reach, namely tranquility and freedom from trouble. Tranquility, then, is a consequence of suspension of judgment. But note that the Pyrrhonist's suspension of judgment is not a stance adopted out of rational caution, on the grounds that none of the conflicting views seem to be sufficiently justified. Rather, suspension is an experience forced upon the Pyrrhonist by his inability to settle disputes in *any* field. He does not start out as an epistemologist, trying to clear the ground for philosophical doctrine by showing how knowledge can be acquired. Epistemological arguments turn up much later in Sextus's book, with the Modes of Agrippa, as a way of showing his dogmatic opponents that *they* ought to suspend judgment, given their epistemological standards. These arguments do not lead to a situation of equipollence; their conclusion is unequivocally negative: no knowledge is possible. The Pyrrhonist has reached suspension by a different route—he does not conclude that he *ought* to suspend judgment but finds himself simply unable to make up his mind.

Given this account of the Pyrrhonist's experience, it is at least understandable that many people since ancient times have thought that the Pyrrhonists claim to lead a life without any beliefs. For it seems obvious that just about any view, philosophical or otherwise, can be made the subject of an undecidable disagreement, simply by asking the question "Is it really so?" To cite a simple example: Diogenes Laertius quotes Pyrrho's pupil Timon as having said, "I do not assert that honey is sweet, but I agree that it appears so" (9.105). Furthermore, Sextus spends a lot of time explaining why anything that appears to be an expression of belief on the part of the Pyrrhonist should not be taken as an assertion—it is merely a report of the way he is affected, or an avowal, or a misuse of language, never a claim about how things really are.[6]

Hence the Pyrrhonist cannot simply reject the objection that his own actions refute his allegation that he lives without beliefs by pointing out that he need not feel bound by the standards that would oblige the dogmatist to suspend judgment.[7] According to the Pyrrhonist's own story, he has not *chosen* to refrain from judgment; he is literally unable to arrive at any.

Nevertheless, I think that Sextus's reply to this objection does show that the Pyrrhonist has beliefs of a sort—though not the sort expected by the dogmatist, nor indeed the sort held by ordinary people. Sextus's answer is set out in a chapter entitled "The Criterion of Skepticism" (*PH* I:21–24). It begins with the general announcement that "we attend to appearances," then explains how this enables the Skeptic to lead a perfectly ordinary life.

> We say, then, that the criterion of the skeptical way of life is appearance, implicitly meaning by this the impression, for it lies in passive and involuntary affection and is not an object of investigation. Hence no one, presumably, will raise a controversy over whether something appears this way or that; rather, they investigate whether it is such as it appears. Thus, attending to appearances, we live in accordance with everyday observances, without holding opinions—for we are not able to be utterly inactive. These everyday observances seem to be fourfold and to consist in guidance by nature, necessitation by feelings, handing down of laws and customs, and teaching of kinds of expertise. By nature's guidance we are naturally capable of perceiving and thinking. By the necessitation of feelings, hunger conducts us to food and thirst to drink. By the handing down of customs and laws, we accept, from an everyday point of view, that piety is good and impiety bad. By teaching of kinds of expertise we are not inactive in those crafts which we take up. (*PH* I:22–24)[8]

While one might think that the first two items on this list describe adherence to appearances as simply a matter of instinctive response to external influences, it has often been pointed out that the last two items can hardly be seen as anything but beliefs. If the skeptic accepts piety as good and impiety as bad, and if he learns technical skills and applies them in the exercise of a profession (remember that Sextus was a doctor), surely this shows that he shares the moral beliefs of his community and has acquired the knowledge that guides his practice as a professional. I think this is correct, but it does not refute the Skeptic's claim to live without opinion. All four parts of the "everyday observances" are covered by the initial remark that they arise as passive and involuntary affections and hence are not subject to critical examination. Moral beliefs, for example, are inculcated in us through our upbringing, and technical skill can be acquired by simply following the instructions of a teacher. Once one has absorbed these, one may then act on them in the same way as one responds to feelings of hunger and thirst. Following appearances in this way never requires a decision as to what is true or false, nor endorsement of what appears to be the right way of proceeding. Such decisions the Skeptic feels unable to make—but as it turns out, they are not needed in order to lead an ordinary life. Sextus is thus drawing a distinction between what we might call judgments—the voluntary and reason-based acceptance of something as true—and mere beliefs that we find ourselves having involuntarily and without any critical reflection. There need not be a difference in content between the beliefs of a dogmatist and those of a Skeptic; the crucial difference lies in the way those beliefs are acquired.

This reply to the inactivity argument was no doubt inspired by the Pyrrhonists' Academic predecessors. At *Ac.* II:104, Cicero explains a distinction between two kinds of assent ascribed to Carneades: he said that the wise man will never assent in the strong sense of accepting something as true, but that he will approve of certain impressions depending on their persuasiveness. Persuasiveness is not the same as truth, and so the person who approves of a persuasive impression may be said to hold a belief, but without necessarily taking what he believes to be true. This is the distinction the later Academics invoked to justify their pursuit of persuasive or plausible opinions while maintaining that knowledge could not be attained. However, the Pyrrhonists go a step further—they reject even the modest appeal to greater or lesser plausibility and refuse to discriminate among impressions altogether. Approval, even if it does not amount to dogmatic assent or judgment, will still be voluntary, and the Academics no doubt adopted it in the hope that a plausible view was more likely to be true than an implausible one. The Pyrrhonist considers such hopes to be groundless—he sees no reason to think that there might be a link between persuasiveness and truth (cf. DL 9.94). His way of following appearances, then, is entirely passive and unquestioning, not based on any reasons at all.

Sextus makes this point in his chapter on the differences between Pyrrhonists and Academics (*PH* I:228–30):

> The members of the New Academy, then, prefer plausible and scrutinized appearances to those which are merely plausible, and to both they prefer appearances which are plausible and scrutinized and undistracted [i.e., not in conflict with other accepted appearances]. Even if both Academics and Skeptics say that they go along with certain things, the difference even here between the two philosophies is clear. For "go along with" is used in different senses. It means not resisting but simply following without strong inclination or adherence (as a boy is said to go along with his chaperone); and it sometimes means assenting to something by choice and, as it were, sympathy (as a dissolute man goes along with someone who urges extravagant living). Hence, since Carneades and Clitomachus say that they go along with things, and that some things are plausible, in the sense of having a strong wish with a strong inclination, whereas we say so in the sense of simply yielding without adherence, in this respect too we differ from them.

"Going along" (Greek, *peithesthai*) here corresponds to Cicero's "approve" (*adprobari*) and indicates the weak kind of assent distinguished from dogmatic assent by Carneades. We have, then, a distinction of three kinds of belief or assent, in descending order of strength: there is, first, dogmatic

assent or judgment, accepting something as true and fully justified; second, there is approval, based on considerations of plausibility and coherence with other beliefs or impressions, but without the presumption of truth; and third, there is the purely passive acquiescence of the Pyrrhonist. What it means to act following appearances in this last way is illustrated a few pages later in Sextus by the example of the Methodic doctor (*PH* I:238):

> By the necessitation of feelings Skeptics are conducted by thirst to drink, by hunger to food, and so on. In the same way Methodic doctors are conducted by feelings to what corresponds to them: by contraction to dilatation (as when someone seeks refuge in heat from the compression due to intense cold), and by flux to checking (as when those in the baths who are dripping with sweat come to check it and so seek refuge in the cold air). And it is clear that things foreign to nature force us to proceed to remove them: even a dog will remove a thorn which has got stuck in his paw.

It is significant that Sextus assimilates the performance of the doctor to the instinctive actions triggered by hunger or thirst, and that he compares these to the behavior of an animal: no reasoning is involved in either case, and the physician's actions should presumably be seen as a kind of conditioned reflex.

What emerges from these passages is that the Pyrrhonist has abandoned not just philosophical argument as a means of arriving at a judgment, but ordinary reasoning as well—and this, I should think, is no longer in agreement with "everyday observances." But why should the Pyrrhonist insist on only this minimal kind of belief, comparable to the kind we might even ascribe to animals? What lies behind this is, I think, once again concern for tranquility. Sextus describes the way the skeptical Academics "go along" with plausibility as being accompanied by a strong inclination and sympathy. And such strong inclination (or aversion) is exactly what, according to Sextus, characterizes ordinary people's beliefs about values.

> Those who hold the opinion that things are good or bad by nature are perpetually troubled. And when they have acquired these things, they experience more troubles; for they are elated beyond reason and measure, and in fear of change they do anything so as not to lose what they believe to be good. When they lack what they believe to be good, they take themselves to be persecuted by natural evils and they pursue what (so they think) is good. But those who make no determination about what is good or bad by nature neither avoid nor pursue anything with intensity, and hence they are tranquil. (*PH* I:27–28)

The Pyrrhonist prefers to "go along" with the beliefs he finds himself having without reflection, taking as it were the attitude of a neutral observer even to his own inclinations. He will treat piety as good and impiety as bad; he will be disturbed by pain, since he is a sentient creature, but he will not aggravate matters by adding the judgment that pain is really bad, or piety really good. By distancing himself from his own reactions and beliefs, he preserves his peace of mind—or so at least Sextus invites us to think. Consider for example this passage from *M* XI:159–160:

> For do we not observe how, in the case of those who undergo surgery, often the patient who is being cut manfully endures the torture of the cutting . . . whereas the man who stands beside him, as soon as he sees a small flow of blood, grows pale, trembles, gets in a great sweat, feels faint, and finally falls down speechless, not because of the pain (for it is not present with him) but because of the belief he has about pain being an evil? Thus the perturbation due to the belief about an evil as evil is sometimes greater than that which results from the so-called evil itself.[9]

It is questionable whether the Pyrrhonist's attitude could be maintained by any ordinary person, or indeed whether it helps to think that pain is bad, but perhaps not really bad. But this seems to be what Sextus postulates—a Pyrrhonist will indeed have the same beliefs as his fellow citizens, but he will preserve his peace of mind by endorsing none of them. It is also understandable that dogmatic philosophers—and probably also some ordinary people—found the Skeptic's stance morally suspicious. Thus Diogenes Laertius reports (9.108) that some dogmatists claimed that the Skeptic might not avoid eating his father, if he were commanded to do so.[10] The Skeptic, if he were Greek, would no doubt reply that his upbringing would prevent him from doing such a thing—but what if the natural instinct to avoid torture gets in the way? Sextus discusses an example of this kind at *M* XI:162–66. The dogmatist's point, as I understand it, must be that passive adherence to "everyday observances" will not be enough in the case of a moral dilemma, when natural instinct conflicts with moral belief. Both are allegedly parts of the "Skeptical criterion," so how will the Skeptic decide which one he is to follow? Sextus's reply is disappointing: he claims that "they [the dogmatists] do not comprehend that the Skeptic does not conduct his life according to philosophical theory (for so far as regards this he is inactive). . . . And when compelled by a tyrant to commit any forbidden act he will perchance choose the one course and avoid the other owing to the preconception due to his ancestral laws and customs." But this ignores the point of the

argument, which was to ask why one should expect the Skeptic to choose in accordance with traditional moral beliefs rather than follow his natural instinct for survival. It is true that ordinary non-Skeptics might also succumb to dire threats in such situations, but at least one must assume that the Skeptic will feel no regret if he ends up doing something that his community considers as wrong, and that might be an uncomfortable thought for those who live around him. Tranquility, then, separates the Pyrrhonist not just from philosophers who make dogmatic assertions, but also from ordinary people who take their beliefs seriously. If most of his beliefs agree with those current in his culture, it is not because he has come to respect such opinions as a modest alternative to philosophical certainty, but simply because he has been conditioned to have just those beliefs. "Everyday observances" can be a substitute for reasoning, and they may have the additional advantage of suggesting that the Pyrrhonist, in spite of his lack of conviction, is not likely to break the rules of his community.

These, I think, were the main innovations introduced into ancient Skepticism when it was revived as Pyrrhonism; and if detachment from one's beliefs is the characteristic feature that makes for tranquility, then it is not likely to be the ancestor of Fogelin's neo-Pyrrhonism, nor of Wittgenstein's respect for ordinary language. Fogelin does not advocate detachment from one's beliefs. His Pyrrhonism is primarily epistemological, and he mentions the claim about tranquility only in passing. Yet one would also not wish to say that he should perhaps change his allegiance and declare himself an Academic Skeptic. The skeptical Academy never made use of the Modes of Agrippa—their epistemological arguments were mainly directed at Stoic epistemology, the most influential theory of their day. Their replies to the inactivity argument also stayed within the Stoic framework, and the fallibilism at which they eventually arrived is still a variant of that system.[11] The Modes of Agrippa were introduced only at a time when the Academy had already settled for a modest version of dogmatism. Historically speaking, they were probably inspired by the renewal of interest in Aristotle, who discusses a similar set of arguments in his *Posterior Analytics* (A3). Moreover, the Academics did not advocate a return to everyday practices—if they had anything to say about ordinary people's beliefs, it was presumably that they tended to be rash and ill considered (see, e.g., Cicero, *Ac.* II:108). The idea that everyday practice and ordinary language have a legitimacy that one ought to recognize and respect may be distinctly modern. It looks to me like the move of philosophers who realize that in their attempts at explaining and justifying

knowledge-claims they have somehow lost hold of their explanandum. At any rate, when a modern skeptic tells me that (true) knowledge is impossible or does not exist, I'm inclined to think that if this so, I am not terribly interested in true knowledge. I would rather find out more about the humdrum everyday knowledge of ordinary people and ordinary experts. This may not be all that philosophers have hoped for, but it has the distinct advantage of actually existing.

Fogelin's neo-Pyrrhonism sets aside the curious claims about tranquility, and with it the guru-figure of Pyrrho of Elis. This is surely understandable, not only because one might wonder whether the state of mind ascribed to the Pyrrhonist is psychologically possible or perhaps rather pathological, but also because the tranquility allegedly achieved by indifference and detachment might not look very attractive. After all, if the Pyrrhonist is less liable to worries, he will also have little or nothing to enjoy in life, since that tends to depend on thinking that something is really good. The neo-Pyrrhonian relies on what may well be the strongest epistemological arguments of the ancient Pyrrhonists. The original Ten Modes of Skepticism, probably assembled by Aenesidemus and designed to bring about a situation of equipollence, no longer play a role. On the other hand, adherence to the practices of ordinary life includes adherence to ordinary *epistemic* practices—indeed, in the context of neo-Pyrrhonism, the return to ordinary life is meant to direct us toward a more careful investigation of what we do or do not do in justifying or assessing ordinary claims to knowledge. In other words, the neo-Pyrrhonist is a serious epistemologist, but one who is modest enough not to pretend to dogmatic certainty.

This reformulation of ancient Pyrrhonism seems to me both legitimate and quite possibly typical of the way the history of philosophy has become in recent times a resource for contemporary philosophers. Present-day Kantians, Aristotelians, and Humeans will use those labels because they find that they have learned a lot from those philosophers, and that many of their views are profoundly influenced by them. But they do not feel constrained to stay within the limits of their favorite author's doctrines or subjects of investigation; they feel free to develop an author's view in directions the author might not have envisaged, and to omit things that seem mistaken or no longer relevant. They no longer see themselves as followers of an orthodoxy whose main task is exegetical, presenting their views as interpretations of the Master's thought. This was the method of school philosophers from late antiquity through the Middle Ages; but closer study usually shows that they were in fact often quite original. Modern philosophers do not feel obliged to present their own views as those of

the Master, correctly understood. And that is why, in spite of the differences I have tried to point out, it seems to me that Robert Fogelin is indeed not a Pyrrhonist but a modern-day Pyrrhonian.

Notes

Thanks are due to Mary Mothersill for reading several drafts, insisting on clarifications, and improving—as ever—my English.

1. For readers who are unfamiliar with these ancient figures, here are the most important names and dates:

Pyrrhonists	*Academics*
Pyrrho of Elis, 365–275 B.C.	
	Arcesilaus, 316–241 B.C.
	Carneades, 214–129 B.C.
	(Philo of Larissa, 154–84 B.C.)
Aenesidemus, first century B.C.	
Agrippa, first century A.D.	
Sextus Empiricus, second century A.D.	

2. Sextus's general account of Pyrrhonism is in the first book of his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH*). For a recent annotated translation, see J. Annas and J. Barnes, *Outlines of Scepticism* (1994), rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). This book also contains a helpful bibliography of recent scholarship.

3. *PH* I:164. The name of Agrippa appears only in Diogenes Laertius's *Life of Pyrrho* (DL), 9.88, in *Vitae Philosophorum*, ed. H. S. Long (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

4. For a translation of Cicero's *Academica*, see Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* and *Academica* (*Ac.*), trans. H. Rackham (New York: Putnam, Loeb Classical Library, 1933). For a general account of the skeptical Academy, see M. Schofield's "Academic Epistemology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 323–51.

5. M. Frede, "The Skeptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Possibility of Knowledge" (1984), in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 218.

6. For a discussion of the question of whether and in what sense the Pyrrhonists hold any beliefs, see the essays by M. Burnyeat, J. Barnes, and M. Frede in *The Original Sceptics*, ed. M. F. Burnyeat and M. Frede (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1997).

7. This is a point that was actually suggested by the Academic Carneades in his argument against the Stoics: he suggested that since knowledge in the Stoic sense was impossible, but action (according to the Stoics) required assent, even the

Stoic sage might have to give up his exacting standards and hold mere opinions. For the Stoic-Academic debate about the inactivity argument, see my "Sceptical Strategies" (1980), in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 92–115.

8. Translations from *PH* I are by Annas and Barnes, with occasional slight modifications.

9. Translations from *M* XI are by R. G. Bury (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, trans. R. G. Bury [New York: Putnam, Loeb Classical Library, 1936]).

10. The text of the manuscripts appears to be corrupt here, but I think the sense is clear. For suggestions about the text, see J. Barnes, "Diogenes Laertius IX 61–116: The Philosophy of Pyrrhonism," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Roemischen Welt* II:36.6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 4293, and the note on the passage by Michel Patillon in Diogène Laërce, *Vies et doctrines des philosophes illustres*, ed. M. Patillon et al. (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1999).

11. For the fallibilism of Philo of Larissa, the last head of the skeptical Academy, see my "Academics Fighting Academics" in *Assent and Argument*, ed. B. Inwood and J. Mansfeld (Brill: Leiden, 1997), 257–76.

JANET BROUGHTON

Cartesian Skeptics

In *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*,[1] Robert Fogelin creates a character he calls the "Cartesian skeptic." The "Cartesian" skeptic is a bit player. Like the starring Pyrrhonian skeptic, he raises a question concerning most of what we ordinarily claim to know about the world around us, but his question arises from less interesting sources than the Pyrrhonist's, and this makes him a less appealing, and less important, figure. In what follows, I want to turn to Descartes's *Meditations* to see how its narrator raises the doubts that launch his inquiry, and I want to compare this meditator to Fogelin's "Cartesian" and "Pyrrhonian" skeptics. I will argue that despite some points of similarity with these two figures, Descartes's meditator has a distinctive role to play in the skeptical drama.

Let me begin by sketching the skeptical characters Fogelin introduces. He describes the nature and source of Pyrrhonian skepticism in at least two ways,[2] and in what follows I will distinguish between two Pyrrhonian skeptics. The Doubting Pyrrhonist (as I will call him) thinks that for any claim that a person has knowledge about the world, at a high enough level of scrutiny we can point to considerations that challenge that claim, because we can always identify "uneliminated but eliminable defeaters" (193). Fogelin analyzes knowledge in this way:

> S knows that *p* if and only if S justifiably came to believe that *p* on grounds that establish the truth of *p*. (97)

The Doubting Pyrrhonist thinks of challenges to knowledge-claims as "undercutting possibilities" (91), or "defeaters" (92). There are three categories into which he finds it useful to sort defeaters:

> (A) Hyperbolic Doubts: those that rest on systematically uneliminable possibilities, as generated, for example, by so-called skeptical scenarios. . . .
> (Bi) Eliminable but Impractical Doubts: those that rest on extremely unlikely possibilities that could be eliminated, but for which it would be a mark of obsessiveness to do so. . . .
> (Bii) Eliminable Legitimate Doubts: those that rest on possibilities whose elimination is demanded by the justificatory procedure being employed. . . . (91)

The Doubting Pyrrhonist does not feel a need to pursue the question whether hyperbolic doubts are "legitimate" (92), because he thinks that doubts of type (Bi) are both legitimate and pervasive, and for him this is enough to give rise to extensive doubt. Of course, normally we ignore remote defeaters, and we often ascribe knowledge to people even when they have not eliminated defeaters. While in some "frameworks," or at some "levels of scrutiny" (95), we may withhold an ascription of knowledge to someone who has not eliminated fairly remote defeaters, at other levels of scrutiny we might ascribe knowledge to a person with the same belief who had failed to eliminate those same defeaters. But the Doubting Pyrrhonist distinguishes between the question whether we would *say* that a person knows something and the question whether a person has justifiably arrived at a belief on grounds that establish its truth. He thinks that it may sometimes be appropriate for us to say that somebody knows something, even though we have not settled whether the person has justifiably arrived at his belief on grounds that establish its truth. In fact, although he thinks that it is often appropriate to say that people know things, he also thinks that for *every* specific knowledge-claim of the form "*S* has justifiably come to believe that *p* on grounds that establish the truth of *p*," if the belief that *p* is a belief about the world, then the knowledge-claim faces an eliminable but uneliminated defeater: "Given any empirical assertion, it is always possible—indeed always easy—to point to some uneliminated (though eliminable) possibility that can defeat this claim. Nothing like brains in vats are needed to achieve this purpose. It doesn't even take a great deal of ingenuity to raise these skeptical doubts. A reliance on examples involving papier-mâché will usually be sufficient" (193).

The Doubting Pyrrhonist remains happy to ascribe knowledge to himself and others, conforming his behavior in this regard to whatever is appropriate to the context in which he makes the ascription. At the same time, however, he realizes that "the objective demands of the adequate-grounds clause" are "not relativized to a particular framework" (203). He thus concludes that the never-ending supply of uneliminated defeaters

means that with regard to any claim to empirical knowledge, we have "as robust a skeptical challenge as one would like" (193).

The Agrippan Pyrrhonist (as I will call him) agrees with the Doubting Pyrrhonist that for any "empirical assertion, it is always possible—indeed always easy—to point to some uneliminated (though eliminable) possibility that can defeat this claim" (193), but unlike the Doubting Pyrrhonist, he has decided not to give up trying to answer the robust skeptical challenge and not to "sit down in a forlorn scepticism."[3] Surely we *do* have knowledge of the world around us! This philosopher thus confronts the Agrippan modes of discrepancy and relativity, which reveal "competing claims" (116). Although Fogelin does not say so explicitly, I think the competing claims that concern the Agrippan Pyrrhonist are the claim that we do in fact have knowledge about the world around us and, in competition with that, the claim that we can confront every knowledge-claim with uneliminated defeaters.[4] Now, a person drawn to competing claims may just shrug and pick one, but for someone committed to the principle that it is wrong to believe anything upon insufficient evidence, epistemically responsible belief requires that we have sufficient evidence to believe one of the competing claims rather than another: here, that we somehow have sufficient evidence to support our knowledge-claims in the face of uneliminated defeaters. Because this is an entirely general problem, its solution demands an entirely general theory of justification. In constructing such a theory, we must avoid offering an infinite regress of reasons, and in choosing a place to stop the regress, we must avoid circularity and arbitrariness. But, reflects the Agrippan Pyrrhonist, the coherentist fails to avoid circularity and the foundationalist fails to avoid arbitrariness, and no other theoretical strategies present themselves. Thus he finds that no amount of reflection yields a theory that will rationalize the wish to give preference to the claim that we have knowledge over the claim that we do not. The Agrippan Pyrrhonist may nonetheless prefer the claim that we have knowledge, but if he does, it is without any illusion that this preference can be backed up by rationalizing evidence.

The doubts of Fogelin's "Cartesian" skeptic do not arise from reflection on either the "fragility" (203) of our ordinary epistemic situation or the impossibility of defending a general philosophical theory of justification. Rather, his doubts arise from acceptance of this thesis: "For *S* to be justified in believing that *p*, the grounds that justify this belief must be contents of *S*'s mind" (120). Reflecting on this "ontological internalism" (121), the Cartesian skeptic sees that it is possible that the entire contents of his mind are the product of an evil spirit, or a dream, or a callous

scientist experimenting on his brain, rather than the product of the world he takes himself to know through his experience. When he tries to appeal to his experience-based beliefs in order to rule out these Cartesian skeptical hypotheses, he realizes that his appeal cannot succeed. Suppose that he believes his brain is in his skull, and that he tries to appeal to this belief in order to rule out the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis. His commitment to ontological internalism requires him to locate his justification for this belief in the contents of his mind, but the hypothesis he is trying to rule out is a hypothesis whose scope takes in the entire contents of his mind. His ontological internalism and the scope of his hypothesis leave him unable to rule his hypothesis out by appealing to what he believes about his brain, or about any aspect of the world around him. Like the Agrippan Pyrrhonist, he concludes that we cannot give a theory of justification according to which most of our beliefs will turn out to be justified; unlike the Agrippan Pyrrhonist, he thinks this because he has concluded that, on the only acceptable theory of justification that there is, most of our beliefs turn out to be unjustified.

Why does the Cartesian skeptic embrace ontological internalism? Fogelin suggests that in his underlying motivation, the Cartesian skeptic may be closer to the Agrippan Pyrrhonist than at first he seems to be. Fogelin imagines the Cartesian defending his philosophical dogma by arguing that "only mental contents can provide the immediately accessible evidence needed to provide a secure basis for knowledge" (120), and this sounds as though it is intended to address the Agrippan problem by providing foundations for knowledge. As Fogelin puts it, "One common way of trying to solve the Agrippa problem is to take as a starting place (supposedly) incorrigible beliefs concerning immediate experience" (121). Of course, that is not the only sort of reason a philosopher might have for endorsing ontological internalism, and the Cartesian skeptic may seem to be ruling out coherentist solutions to the Agrippan problem on highly parochial grounds.[5] Still, he is seeking a general, philosophical theory of justification that will withstand the Agrippan challenge; and, like the Agrippan Pyrrhonist, he concludes that there is no such theory.

Unlike the Agrippan Pyrrhonist, however, the Cartesian skeptic is left with a negative philosophical theory of justification, that is, a theory establishing that we are not justified in making claims about the world around us. He is also left, despite his skepticism, clutching philosophical dogmas (about mental contents, immediate access, incorrigibility, and so on) close to his breast. It is easy to see why such a skeptic as this would not occupy center stage: the thesis of ontological internalism is, on the face of

it, an implausible piece of philosophical theorizing, one that cries out for defense even before its negative theoretical consequences emerge. And once those consequences do emerge, we are bound to feel that the Cartesian skeptic ought to let go of ontological internalism and see where that leaves him. Fogelin is naturally far more interested in skeptical questions about knowledge that do not appear to depend upon dogged adherence to "an extended piece of philosophizing" (187).

I agree with Fogelin that the Cartesian skeptic is a familiar figure who should not automatically receive star billing in the skeptical drama. What I want to suggest, though, is that in important ways Descartes himself is not a Cartesian skeptic. More precisely, my suggestion is that Descartes represents his meditator as being importantly different from the Cartesian skeptic who figures in Fogelin's book. It may in the end be that no one could be the meditator as Descartes describes him without also covertly being a Cartesian skeptic, as Fogelin describes *him*. But I believe that it is not easy to say whether this is true, and I believe that if it were true, it would come as unwelcome news to Descartes himself. After I argue for these claims, I will turn to some contrasts between the meditator and the Pyrrhonists who figure in Fogelin's book.

There is one perfectly obvious way in which the meditator is not a Cartesian skeptic: he *ends* his reflections thinking that he has arrived at a *positive* theory of justification, summed up by the claim that he can be absolutely certain of the truth of everything that he perceives clearly and distinctly. Even early on, his interest in radical doubt is of a hopeful and constructive bent; he begins with doubt precisely in order to end with certainty and knowledge. (I will return briefly to this point later.) Still, it is worth asking whether the doubt with which the meditator begins arises in the same way in which the Cartesian skeptic's doubt arises.

In the First Meditation, Descartes does indeed have the meditator raise the skeptical hypotheses of dreaming and the evil spirit, the hypotheses that propel Fogelin's Cartesian philosopher into his negative verdict on our knowledge-claims. But I do not think that Descartes attributes to the meditator the thesis of ontological internalism, and so I think the meditator's *use* of these hypotheses (call them "radical hypotheses") is different from the use the Cartesian skeptic makes of them.

Descartes represents the meditator as a "person who is only just beginning to philosophize"[6] and who is oppressed by the conviction that his beliefs are pervasively riddled with error. (The meditator seems to have in mind something like Descartes's own account of the errors that are inevitable in our cognitive development from early infancy; among them is the error

of attributing colors, sounds, and so on to physical things.) He seeks to reform his beliefs, and given the pervasive distortion to which they are subject, he resolves to adhere to a radical maxim for belief: "I should hold back my assent from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable just as carefully as I do from those which are patently false. So, for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, it will be enough if I find in each of them at least some reason for doubt" (CSM 2:12; AT 7:18). Turning to the beliefs that he bases on his sense experience, he finds that there are obvious reasons for doubting many of them—for example, when the object of his senses is "very small or in the distance" (CSM 2:12; AT 7:18). But there are "many other beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible . . . for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands" (CSM 2:12–13; AT 7:18). Or doubt would be quite impossible were it not for the radical hypotheses—for example, the hypothesis according to which I am just dreaming I am holding a piece of paper. Once these hypotheses occur to the meditator, and once he realizes that the scope of the hypotheses appears to take in anything he might do to rule them out, then his maxim requires him to withhold assent to all of his beliefs about the world around him, even the claim that he is holding a piece of paper.

The meditator has reached doubt about all of his claims to knowledge by using radical hypotheses, but he has not invoked any of the claims associated with the Cartesian skeptic's commitment to ontological internalism. Of course, the meditator *does* come to think that he can be absolutely certain about the thoughts in his own mind, at least when they are understood in a particular way, but he arrives at that position only about halfway through the Second Meditation, after he has begun the constructive phase of his use of doubt. And Descartes represents the considerations that lead the meditator to claim certainty about the thoughts in his own mind as considerations that depend upon his having raised the doubts of the First Meditation. The crux of his reflections comes in this passage from the Second Meditation: "I am now seeing a light, hearing a noise, feeling heat. But I am asleep, so all this is false. Yet I certainly seem to see, to hear, to be warmed. This cannot be false; this is what in me is properly called 'sensing,' and taken thus precisely, it is nothing other than thinking" (CSM 2:19; AT 7:29; trans. altered). (Of course, we may in the end disagree with Descartes that the meditator has a fully coherent line of thought that can take him from radical doubt to certainty about the contents of his own mind.[7] Again, what concerns me here is how Descartes is thinking about this.)

I do not think the meditator's theory of justification says that the ultimate grounds of justification are the contents of his own mind. Rather, his provisional "theory," adopted for the special purposes of his meditative inquiry, is that he is justified in assenting to something only if he has no grounds for doubting it; and his final theory is that he is justified in believing what he can perceive clearly and distinctly. Neither before nor after he argues that he can be certain about the contents of his mind does he say that all justification has its grounds in those contents.

It may nonetheless be true that the meditator's reasoning in the First Meditation relies upon ontological internalism implicitly.[8] If it does, however, this is by no means obvious. The meditator certainly begins by taking it that we come to know of the existence, location, properties, and relations of many things by looking at them, touching them, hearing them, and tasting and smelling them. But this is to say nothing about mental contents to which we have immediate and incorrigible access; it is, I think, only to articulate part of our ordinary conceptions of knowledge and perception. The meditator is also committed to the claim that when I have sense-perceptions—that is, when I look at things, or touch, hear, taste, or smell them—I am having an experience that is indistinguishable by me at the time from some dreams, which are experiences that I have had when I was not having sense-perceptions. The truth of this claim is just a fact of life, and again the claim does not depend upon any special Cartesian doctrines. Yet surely this ordinary claim about dreaming is enough to justify Descartes's claim that dreams are indistinguishable from sense-perception both in what they are about and in how they strike us. And *if* that double indistinguishability is all that Descartes needs to generate a doubt about our ordinary reliance upon perception, then he will have generated a doubt about a very great deal of what we believe without injecting Cartesian assumptions into the meditator's initial way of understanding himself.[9]

What I want to take up now is the question whether Descartes's meditator, if he is not the Cartesian skeptic, might more closely fit the description Fogelin gives of the Doubting Pyrrhonist or the Agrippan Pyrrhonist. I will argue that in most important ways, the meditator is unlike both.

The meditator wants to find beliefs about which he can be unshakably certain; although achieving certainty is different from achieving knowledge (even for Descartes), the Doubting Pyrrhonist makes it easy to find ways in which they may be connected. Like the Doubting Pyrrhonist, Descartes's meditator will not judge that a person is in the cognitive goal-state (of

certainty, rather than knowledge) if he has not eliminated defeating possibilities. And in the First Meditation, the meditator, like the Doubting Pyrrhonist, arrives at the view that for any belief he has about the world around him, there is an uneliminated defeater. These points of similarity suggest that the meditator closely fits the profile of the Doubting Pyrrhonist.

There is one obvious dissimilarity: for the meditator, the uneliminated defeater is a radical hypothesis. The Doubting Pyrrhonist sees such hypotheses as "systematically uneliminable possibilities" (91) and seems sympathetic to the idea that radical doubts are "illegitimate *because* they raise challenges that are systematically uneliminable" (91), but he does not pursue this line of thought, since he thinks eliminable doubts are clearly legitimate and equally devastating. But this is not how the meditator sees things. It is true that in the First Meditation, he finds that his radical hypotheses have a dauntingly wide scope. Their scope is so wide that they seem to provide him with reasons for doubting any belief to which he might appeal in order to eliminate them.[10] Let us call hypotheses with this character "global." So, for example, the dream hypothesis is global: when the meditator tries to appeal to his sense-based beliefs to rule out the possibility that he is dreaming, he finds that those beliefs are themselves within the scope of the dream argument. But Descartes's meditator thinks further and finds that, despite the global character of his doubts, he *can* eliminate them. It may be difficult to understand what method for eliminating these doubts the meditator thought he could draw upon—I will say a little about this presently—but we must keep in mind that for Descartes, the fact that the radical doubts are global does not mean that they are impossible to eliminate. (Of course, that is not to say that the difficulty of eliminating them is a practical difficulty, like the difficulty of ruling out type-(Bi) doubts, those that are "eliminable but impractical" [93].)

There is a second difference between the Doubting Pyrrhonist and the meditator. Any given type-(Bi) defeater may be eliminated, and if it is, a different doubt may be raised simply by providing new content for a skeptical hypothesis of the same general type. For example, if someone claims to know that the animal in that pen is a zebra, a type-(Bi) defeater may be raised: "Perhaps that is a cleverly painted horse." The person who made the knowledge-claim can then defend his claim by eliminating the hypothesis (he gets permission to enter the pen and dab at the stripes with paint remover), but then another type-(Bi) defeater may be raised: "Perhaps that is a cleverly built automaton." And so on, or so Fogelin claims. But for the meditator, there are as it were just two big doubts,[11] instead of an endless supply of small ones. Suppose, for example, that in

some way the meditator manages to eliminate the evil spirit doubt by ascertaining that he has been created by God. Then he will not be able to raise a doubt based on some different hypothesis about the cause that "made me the kind of creature that I am" (CSM 2:14; AT 7:21). That is part of the reason why the meditator can hope that certainty will come from doubt: precisely because the kind of hypothesis he raises is so sweeping and general, once a hypothesis of that kind is defeated, that *kind* of hypothesis *stays* defeated.

Another part of his reason for hope comes from a third way in which he is unlike the Doubting Pyrrhonist. Earlier, I quoted the meditator as saying that there are "many beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible" (CSM 2:12–13; AT 7:18). He will soon discover that he can construct radical hypotheses to call these beliefs into doubt, but what he is claiming here, I think, is that sometimes *there are no (B)-type defeaters* for our claims to knowledge.[12] The piece of paper in his hand is not too small or too far away; he is looking at it carefully, front and back; he is clutching it firmly. He has arrived at his belief justifiably on grounds that have *established* the truth of what he believes—or so it seems until the global hypotheses loom. If he can eliminate those global hypotheses, then he will have eliminated all the reasons for doubt that he could have.[13] In this sense, the meditator's position in the First Meditation does not invite the response to doubt that the Doubting Pyrrhonist has. The meditator has his work cut out for him, but he does not yet have any reason to "sit down in a forlorn skepticism."

This brings me to the last question I want to raise. What is the meditator's relation to the Agrippan Pyrrhonist? Well, both have recognized that it is possible to raise a "robust . . . skeptical challenge" (193) to our claims to have knowledge of the world around us, and both are hopeful at the outset that we can nonetheless claim to have knowledge. Both think that in order to be epistemically responsible in endorsing the claim that we *do* have knowledge, we must be able to give a good reason for endorsing that claim. And I think it is fair to say that the meditator, like the Agrippan Pyrrhonist, will not be satisfied unless the rationale for endorsing that claim meets the conditions of candor and explicitness that Fogelin articulates (118–19) and is independent from the assumption that some such rationale must exist (119).

But the meditator's *skeptical* phase, in the First Meditation, has nothing to do with the Agrippan Pyrrhonist's skepticism, which is the outcome of seeing that no theory of justification is possible. In the First Meditation, the meditator has seen no such thing; he has simply raised the

skeptical challenge that precipitates the search that the Agrippan Pyrrhonist has already attempted and abandoned. And of course Descartes represents the meditator's search as ending happily: he represents the meditator as successfully rationalizing the claim that we have knowledge of the world around us. In these ways, the meditator and the Agrippan Pyrrhonist are entirely unlike.

Still, we might wonder how far the meditator's *search* resembles the Agrippan Pyrrhonist's search. In particular, should we see him as arguing that, after all, some form of foundationalism or coherentism manages to succeed? Some readers of Descartes would say "yes,"[14] but I disagree. I think that Descartes intends for the meditator to arrive at his positive theory of justification through following a distinctive route, one that does not require him to confront the Agrippan modes of regress, circularity, or arbitrariness. Within the scope of this essay, I will not try to lay out the grounds for reading the *Meditations* in this way; my aim instead will be to say enough about this reading to give some content to my claim that we can see the meditator's efforts to establish a theory of justification as being of a radically different kind from the Agrippan Pyrrhonist's.[15]

In the *Search for Truth*, Eudoxus says, "If you simply know *how to make proper use of your own doubt*, you can use it to deduce facts which are known with complete certainty" (CSM 2:415–16; AT 10:522; emphasis added). He is saying that we are somehow to *use* our doubts constructively to identify and establish what we can know with absolute certainty. As we confront competing claims about knowledge, we are to *use* the negative claim in some way that will yield a rationale for accepting the positive claim.

What I believe Descartes aimed to do was to have the meditator establish the absolute certainty of some of his beliefs *by showing that their truth is a condition of his using the method of doubt.* Among these are the beliefs "I exist" and "I have an idea of God." The meditator then argues that those absolutely certain beliefs together entail that he is created by a nondeceiving God, and from that, he claims, it follows that all of his clear and distinct ideas are true. So ultimately the existence of God and the truth of clear and distinct ideas are conditions of his use of the method of doubt. Then from some of his clear and distinct ideas he draws the further conclusion that many of his sense-based beliefs are true, including the general belief that material things exist. Overall, by uncovering the conditions of his doubt, he thinks he can arrive at a positive theory of justification that shows how and why we are correct in claiming to have knowledge of the world around us.

To bring out the difference between the meditator's search for a theory of justification and the Agrippan Pyrrhonist's search, let me say a bit more about the kind of arguments (call them "dependence arguments") that I think Descartes is putting in the meditator's mouth. Suppose I am considering a class of beliefs about which I can have at most only one sort of reason for doubt. Now suppose I somehow managed to show that I could have such a reason for doubting a particular belief—the belief that (B)—only if that very belief were true. Then I would face a happy dilemma: either I concede that I cannot doubt that (B); or I claim to be able to doubt whether (B), but then must grant that (B) is true. By recognizing this dilemma, I am in a position to see that I cannot rationally doubt whether (B) is true: I am able to be absolutely certain about (B). I would face the same happy dilemma if I could show that I could not entertain *any* sort of reason for doubting the particular belief that (B) unless I granted that (B) is true. Again, I would be absolutely certain about (B), because I would have shown that rational doubt about (B) is impossible.

When I succeed in generating a happy dilemma for a claim, I show that it is, in a specific sense, indubitable. By this, I mean first that for some propositions it is impossible *both* that the proposition be false *and* that I am doubting whether it is true. (Of course, it will matter what exactly is to count as "doubting" here.) Second, I mean that if I recognize that a proposition has this feature, then I can see that I cannot rationally doubt whether the proposition is true. That is why my recognizing this about a proposition allows me to achieve absolute certainty about the proposition: I can see that it is impossible for me rationally to doubt whether the proposition is true.

If I want to generate a happy dilemma about a proposition, then the hard work will lie in showing that having a doubt about it is dependent upon its truth. I would have to identify an aspect of raising doubt about a proposition (B) that entailed (B), and of course I would have to make out the entailment relation. The schema for this strategy would look like this:

(1) If I raise a doubt whether (B), I must grant that (A) is true.
(2) But if (A), then (B).
(3) So if I raise a doubt whether (B), I must grant that (B) is true.

I would need to show that granting (A) is essential to raising a doubt about (B), and that the truth of (B) is a necessary condition of (A).

Let me give an example. In the *cogito* reasoning, the meditator says, "But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately

and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me" (CSM 2:17; AT 7:25). I think that what he is doing is pointing out first that any radical skeptical hypothesis will be a story with these elements: the meditator has various beliefs, and he is caused to have those beliefs in such a way as to make them false. Next, the meditator is tying "I exist" to a necessary feature of radical hypotheses: they must describe someone who has been caused to have false beliefs. Thus the meditator finds that he cannot construct a coherent radical hypothesis about his own existence.[16] The hypothesis would have to represent him as existing, because it would have to represent him as having false beliefs, but it would also have to represent him as not existing, because it would have to represent his belief that he exists as false. But if the meditator recognizes that there is no coherent radical hypothesis about "I exist," then he cannot provide himself with a reason for doubting whether he exists, because (he thinks) only such a hypothesis could challenge his claim to know that he exists. (In the Second Meditation passage, Descartes attends only to the deceiving-God hypothesis, but the point holds for all of the hypotheses of the First Meditation.) In the terms of the argument-schema I sketched, the first step zeroes in on an essential aspect of the First Meditation doubt:

(1) If I have a reason to doubt whether I exist, I must grant that while it may be that I believe I exist because it is true, it may instead be that I am caused by a deceiving God to believe that I exist (and I cannot tell which account of my belief is true).

In the next step, we see a condition on the aspect of the doubt that the first step identifies:

(2) If either I believe that I exist because it is true, or I am caused by a deceiving God to believe that I exist, then at least it must be true that I exist.

My certainty that "I exist" is true rests upon the fact that (1) and (2) together entail this:

(3) If I have reason to doubt whether I exist, I must grant that I exist.

This means that I cannot rationally doubt whether "I exist" is true; I can be absolutely certain that I exist.

I believe that Descartes represents the meditator as executing this and closely related strategies in the Second and Third Meditations to achieve certainty about many claims. The meditator is supposed to find among these claims all the materials he needs in order to show that God exists and

is not a deceiver, then that his clear and distinct ideas are true, and finally that his sensations are caused in him by physical objects. I do not for a moment mean to be suggesting that the meditator *succeeds* in this highly ambitious enterprise. I want instead to be explaining something about how, finding himself in an initial position like the Agrippan Pyrrhonist's initial position, the meditator could imagine himself escaping the Agrippan problem. It is crucial to seeing the skeptical problem in the meditator's way that *some* beliefs be ones (a) about which nonradical doubts cannot be raised, and (b) about which the only doubts that *can* be raised are of a type that cannot be re-raised simply by changing the content of the skeptical hypothesis. Because this is how the meditator sees the challenge of skepticism, he can hope to meet the challenge by showing that when a claim can be identified as one whose truth is a condition of radical doubt, then rational doubt about the truth of that claim is not possible.

Notes

1. Robert Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Subsequent references to this book will appear in the body of the essay.

2. In "Contemporary Pyrrhonism" (chap. 9 of this volume), Barry Stroud explores several versions of the Pyrrhonism Fogelin endorses.

3. See Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections*, 115; the reference is to the introduction to Berkeley's *Principles*. Fogelin himself wants to hold back from the natural response to the "robust skeptical challenge" (193). That response would be to say that if there is a defeater a person has not eliminated, then he does not know, and so no one knows, because there is always a never-ending supply of defeaters. This is the "forlorn scepticism" I am ascribing to the Doubting Pyrrhonist. But Fogelin claims that this response rests on the assumption that one "perspective" among many is the best (99). This is the "philosophical" perspective within which "the level of scrutiny has been heightened by reflection alone" (99), so that someone's failure to eliminate remote defeaters results in our denying that he knows. From other perspectives, perhaps we would not insist that a person eliminate remote defeaters in order to know. Fogelin thus envisions the possibility that we take up one perspective or another but "refuse to privilege the philosophical perspective" (99). I am not convinced that this option is open to someone who also says, as Fogelin does, that generating the "robust . . . skeptical challenge" depends not on assuming that this philosophical perspective is the best, but rather on recognizing that "the objective demands of the adequate-grounds clause" are "not relativized to a particular framework" (203). I do not see how that recognition, coupled with the recognition that the supply of defeaters is unlimited, could present us with a robust skeptical challenge, unless we had the further thought that if a person has

not eliminated a defeater, then he does not know. But whether the Doubting Pyrrhonist is the figure who deems no perspective the best, or whether he is the forlorn skeptic, he might entertain hopes of changing his situation by finding a theory of justification on which people do sometimes know even though there are defeaters they have not eliminated. That is, either way he might begin the search that ends in Agrippan Pyrrhonism.

4. These are the competing claims that would, I think, most clearly tie together the two parts of *Pyrrhonian Reflections*. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong has pointed out to me, however, that Fogelin himself describes the competing claims as being "about the nature of the world we perceive" (116). I find this puzzling; on this view, to generate a general problem about justification, we would have to consider competing claims about, say, whether what is before us is a piece of paper, and then find, to our chagrin, that we cannot rationalize our choice between these claims. But Fogelin seems happy, in part 1, to allow that as between "This fruit is orange" and "This fruit is red but someone has put yellow bulbs in my lamp," we can rationalize our choice by (say) checking the bulbs in the lamp. And unlike the Hellenistic Pyrrhonist, Fogelin does not try to argue that appearance is to be opposed to appearance, for example, that the appearance to me of red fruit is to be opposed by the appearance to a tiger of orange fruit. See, e.g., Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R. G. Bury (New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1933), 28–29.

5. See Fogelin's discussion (187) of the Cartesian charge that Davidsonian antiskepticism is question-begging.

6. René Descartes, *Conversation with Burman*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (hereafter, CSM), ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and (vol. 3 only) Anthony Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3:332; *Oeuvres de Descartes* (hereafter, AT), ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 5:146. Subsequent references to Descartes's works will appear in the body of the essay.

7. I argue elsewhere that this line of thought is not fully coherent; see Janet Broughton, *Descartes's Method of Doubt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 134–38.

8. A version of this claim is made by Michael Williams in his stimulating essay "Descartes and the Metaphysics of Doubt," in *Essays on Descartes' "Meditations,"* ed. Amélie O. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 117–39. I take issue with him and develop some of the claims I am making here in *Descartes's Method of Doubt*, chap. 5.

9. This leaves open a very important question, the question whether Descartes departs from ordinary ways of thinking about knowledge and perception in some *other* way. Perhaps this double indistinguishability is *not* all that Descartes needs in order to generate a doubt about our beliefs about the world around us, and perhaps the additional materials he needs are tainted by elements foreign to common sense, either because they are fragments of Cartesian metaphysics or because they represent some departure from the ordinary that is broader in its philosophical appeal.

10. Notice, however, that his having this problem does not depend upon his accepting the dogma of ontological internalism.

11. I have in mind dreaming and the evil spirit. I think that madness is supposed to suggest a radical hypothesis, but that it is structurally just like the dream hypothesis. I also think that the meditator's remarks about fate and chance (CSM 2:14; AT 7:21) are meant to suggest a hypothesis structurally similar to the evil-spirit hypothesis. By "structurally similar," part of what I mean is that a technique for eliminating the one hypothesis will also provide a way of eliminating the other.

12. I don't see any texts to suggest whether Descartes would have said that there are no possibilities compatible with my grounds but incompatible with what I believe, or whether he would simply have said that any such possibilities are not defeaters.

13. He will also be able to articulate an explanation of why there are sometimes no (B)-type defeaters for our knowledge-claims: God has made us so that when we use our senses carefully, we can establish truths. (Of course, we may need to clarify our judgments: this certainly is a piece of paper, but it does not have the yellowish color that it appears to have.)

14. Many readers think of Descartes as being in some broad way a foundationalist. In *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), Harry Frankfurt seems to argue that in a certain way he is a coherentist.

15. I develop this reading of the *Meditations* in part 2 of *Descartes's Method of Doubt*.

16. This is a point that E. M. Curley makes; see *Descartes against the Skeptics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), chaps. 4 and 5.

3

KENNETH P. WINKLER

Berkeley, Pyrrhonism, and the *Theaetetus*

This essay is an attempt to view Berkeley against both ancient and modern backgrounds. Early modern philosophers were very proud of their modernity, but many of them were moved nonetheless to tie even their most modern claims to ancient authority or precedent. Anne Conway, for example, gave her treatise on metaphysics the reverential title "The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy."[1] Not just "ancient" but "most ancient": as far as Conway and many of her contemporaries were concerned, the more ancient the precedent, the better.

The most spectacular example of this backward-looking modernity was Ralph Cudworth's monumental *True Intellectual System of the Universe*.[2] It surprises philosophers unfamiliar with the book to learn that it contains what is in some respects a very up-to-date defense of seventeenth-century corpuscularianism. Cudworth works hard, though, to trace the doctrine back, not just to the ancient Greek atomists, but to Moses, to whom it was revealed, he suggests, by God himself. Even for a philosopher as late as Francis Hutcheson, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, the history of philosophy was largely the history of *ancient* philosophy.[3] The historical survey that opens the logic handbook Hutcheson prepared for his students has page after page on now-obscure ancient figures, but after he reaches the fall of Constantinople, we get just a few lines celebrating the innovations of recent centuries. Hutcheson was deeply impressed with those innovations. If he gives them only passing mention it is not because he denies their value, but because fuller coverage was not, he thought, appropriate to the occasion.

The engraved title page of the *True Intellectual System* is a dramatic illustration of the situation as Cudworth and like-minded moderns (many of them university teachers) saw it. Robed philosophers, in debate, stand on either side of an altar marked "Religion." The "Theists"—Pythagoras, Socrates, and Aristotle—are beneath the flying banner of "Victory." The less confident "Atheists"—Anaximander, Epicurus, and Strato—are beneath a falling banner of "Confusion." Cudworth was perfectly conversant with the latest forms of godless materialism, but he saw his efforts against (say) Hobbes as the reenactment of an ancient battle.

Berkeley is not usually read against the background of ancient philosophy, and there is good reason for this: his most famous books are hardly at all backward-looking.[4] Though there is room for disagreement about which of his early modern predecessors he was most concerned to define himself against—Locke in the opinion of many, Malebranche in the opinion of some, Descartes, perhaps, in the opinion of some others—there is no doubt he was a highly reactive philosopher, and that he was reacting against something he found in his immediate environment. His first book, the *Essay on Vision*, is a narrowly targeted contribution to a specifically modern debate. We are told explicitly that the book's vocabulary is a modern one—"When I speak of tangible ideas," Berkeley writes, probably with Locke in mind, "I take the word idea for any the immediate object of sense or understanding, in which large signification it is commonly used by the moderns" (*Vision* 45)—and Berkeley's many references, more numerous here than in his other early publications, are all, or virtually all, to works published within the prior fifty or one hundred years. (His acknowledged sources include Descartes, Hobbes, Gassendi, Barrow, Wallis, and his countryman William Molyneux, author of the first book in English on the topic of vision, the father of one of Berkeley's Trinity College classmates, and the man whose friendship with Locke and influence on the college were probably responsible for Berkeley's exposure to Locke's *Essay* as a student). Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* has a target no less narrowly defined and no less modern. He seeks, he tells us, to undermine the "vague and indeterminate description of matter or corporeal substance" to which "the *modern* philosophers are run into by their own principles" (*Principles* 11, my emphasis). Considerations of perceptual relativity are, he says, the means by which the "*modern* philosophers" prove that the so-called secondary qualities have no existence without the mind (14, my emphasis again). The distinction between primary and secondary qualities and the relativity considerations alleged to support it were, for many on the scene, characteristic, perhaps

even defining, of "modern philosophy." This was true for Bayle, one of Berkeley's crucial sources, and it was also true for Hume, for whom Berkeley was (in my view anyway) a crucial source in turn.[5]

Relativity considerations were, however, emphatically *not* modern, or not exclusively so. They were the stock in trade of the Pyrrhonists, and this brings us, finally, to the topic of this essay and the theme of this volume. There is no evidence in Berkeley's published writings, or in his notebooks or letters, of a direct engagement with ancient Pyrrhonism—of, say, a reading of Sextus Empiricus. But there is evidence of a sustained engagement, late in his life, with Plato's *Theaetetus*, and with aspects of the dialogue—the relativity considerations used to clarify and amplify the hypothesis that knowledge is perception—that can, with some justice I hope, be described as Pyrrhonian. Such a connection is perhaps made by Sextus himself. Protagoras, he says, "posits only what is apparent to each person, and thus introduces relativity. Hence he is thought to have something in common with the Pyrrhonists."[6] (Sextus replies that Protagoras, because he dogmatizes about the reasons for the appearances, differs from the Pyrrhonists, but he never denies the point of similarity.) I find it hard to believe that the *Theaetetus* was not an influence on Pyrrhonism, though this is an uneducated guess on which my argument does not depend, and one on which I am eager for instruction.[7] Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* served the philosophers who came after him as a kind of encyclopedia of atheistic argument and opinion (the responsible scholar made sure to state those arguments accurately before proceeding to refute them), and it is hard to believe that the *Theaetetus*, including the very vigorous self-defense that Socrates imagines for Protagoras, did not serve subsequent skeptics as a resource of much the same sort. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at any rate, the relationship between the *Theaetetus* and later ancient skepticism was sometimes viewed in very much these terms. Cudworth, for example, presents Protagoras, as portrayed in the *Theaetetus*, as the first in a line of skeptics that culminates in Pyrrho.[8] Bayle, in his article on Zeno of Elea, includes Protagoras in his own history of Pyrrhonism, apparently on the basis of the *Theaetetus*, and ascribes to Protagoras the expressly Pyrrhonian doctrine that "all things in nature are doubtful" (an ascription that is of course at odds with the dogmatism detected in Protagoras by Sextus).[9] This essay on Berkeley and Pyrrhonism, then, is an essay on Berkeley's response to considerations that were, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, associated with ancient Pyrrhonism, though Berkeley knew them directly (or addressed them directly) only as the concerns of Plato.

I said a moment ago that the signs of Berkeley's engagement with the *Theaetetus* came late in his life. It is of course likely that a philosopher so widely read in Greek and Latin gave the dialogue a careful study at an earlier date, and Berkeley does quote from the *Theaetetus* in one of his contributions to the *Guardian*, published in 1713, the same year in which the *Three Dialogues* first appeared.[10] But the only references to the philosophical content of the dialogue come in *Siris*, Berkeley's famous book on tar-water, which was published more than thirty years later.[11] Some of Berkeley's commentators interpret *Siris* as a retreat from the immaterialism of his early years to a more moderate view closer to traditional Platonism. My own view—which I cannot defend here—is that the metaphysics of *Siris* is altogether in accord with the metaphysics of the *Principles* and the *Dialogues*.[12] Whether the epistemologies are consistent is another matter, one I hope to touch on in closing. My main aim in this essay is to show that *Siris* makes use of the earlier metaphysics, and a good deal of the epistemology, to respond, nonskeptically, to the relativity considerations brought forward in Plato's dialogue. I also hope to show that a vital part of Berkeley's response is a commitment—surprising, it may seem, in a so-called empiricist—to the sovereignty of reason over the other intellectual powers of the mind.

The Modern Background

I began by saying that I would try to place Berkeley against *both* ancient and modern backgrounds. I am going to start with the modern, and in particular with Locke. This will allow me to enlarge on the very persuasive interpretation of Berkeley's background in Locke that Robert Fogelin develops in his splendid new book on Berkeley's *Principles*.[13]

Fogelin stresses what he calls the "intuitive basis" of Berkeley's immaterialism. By this he means its foundation in the kind of intuitive reflection that persuades us of geometrical axioms (29). Berkeley's fundamental intuition, according to Fogelin, is that because of the inescapably mental character of sensible qualities, it is a contradiction to suppose that qualities even remotely resembling the sensible could exist in an unthinking substance (48, 49). Intuition, as Fogelin observes, is usually contrasted with demonstration, but Fogelin draws attention to a more instructive contrast with *sensitive knowledge* as it was understood by Locke. "*The notice we have by our Senses, of the existing of Things without* us," Locke writes, "though it be not altogether so certain, as our intuitive Knowledge, or

the Deductions of our Reason," is nevertheless an assurance that "*deserves the name of Knowledge*" (IV.xi.3).[14] It provides us with evidence "that puts us past doubting" (IV.ii.14), though it is an evidence that extends no farther than the present testimony of our senses (IV.xi.9) and its recollection.

To the possibility that we are living in a dream, Locke has, as Fogelin says (23), two basic responses (putting aside some very clever jokes). The first is that if we are living in a dream, reasoning is useless and knowledge beyond our reach. As Fogelin says, this is not a response to skepticism, "it simply is skepticism" (24). Locke's second response is that the pains and pleasures we take to be produced by external objects are "as great as our happiness or misery, beyond which we have no concernment to know or to be" (IV.ii.14). This, Fogelin plausibly objects, is simply unresponsive to the challenge (24). Locke's views on sensitive knowledge were therefore, as Fogelin writes, a tempting "target of opportunity" for skeptical attack (24), and I agree with Fogelin that Berkeley seized the opportunity eagerly.

Fogelin's emphasis on intuition may, however, be unfair to his interpretation as he actually develops it, because as he makes very clear (48–49), Berkeley assembled his intuitions into arguments—that is, into demonstrations. Fogelin does not emphasize Berkeley's claims to demonstrate immaterialism, perhaps because Berkeley was undeniably nervous about making them. In his notebooks Berkeley warns himself not to "promise much of Demonstration." I must, he says, "Cancell all passages that look like that Sort of Pride, that raising of Expectations in my Readers" (858). But Berkeley the published author was never reconciled to his own very prudent advice. In the preface to the *Principles* (which was, I should note, omitted from the second edition), Berkeley takes to task prospective readers who would "*reject a truth, that is capable of demonstration, for no other reason but because it's newly known and contrary to the prejudices of mankind.*" Later he proclaims that the nonexistence of matter has been "demonstrated *a priori*" (*Principles* 21), and asks whether it is necessary to dilate on that "which may be demonstrated with the utmost evidence in a line or two, to anyone that is capable of the least reflexion."[15] These boasts are, I think, no threat to Fogelin's interpretation as he actually develops it. In fact, they serve to confirm it. As Fogelin argues, Berkeley wanted more than Locke's sensitive knowledge. He wanted the high degree of certainty that only intuition or demonstration could provide.

I would like to enlarge on Fogelin's interpretation with three observations. First, the intuition-based immaterialist argument that Fogelin

formulates on Berkeley's behalf is one that Berkeley thought he could extend into an equally secure intuition-based argument for the existence of sensible things (*Works* 2.230). Second, both intuition and demonstration are the work of reason, in one fairly well established early modern sense of that expression. This means that Berkeley's dissatisfaction with Locke's appeal to sensitive knowledge, and his conviction that the existence of body must be intuited or demonstrated, is itself an appeal to the authority of reason. Third, Berkeley's appreciation of skepticism—his high estimation of its undermining power—is another expression of the importance Berkeley assigned to meeting reason's sovereign demands.

There are many texts that illustrate the importance of the Lockean background that I have followed Fogelin in emphasizing—texts that also lend support to my enlarging observations. I will discuss just a few. There is, to begin with, the following very early entry from the notebooks: "I am more certain of ye existence & reality of Bodies than Mr. Locke, since he pretends onely to wt he calls sensitive knowledge, whereas I think I have demonstrative knowledge of their Existence" (80). In a later entry, the knowledge Berkeley boasts of having is said to be intuitive rather than demonstrative, but his stricter-than-Lockean standard of knowledge—knowledge as intuitive or demonstrative—is still in operation: "I am the farthest from Scepticism of any man. I know with an intuitive knowledge the existence of other things as well as my own Soul. this is wt Locke nor Scarce any other Thinking Philosopher will pretend to" (563).

The shift in these two passages from demonstration to intuition is noteworthy, but by the time he came to publish, Berkeley seemed no longer to care about it. At *Principles* 88 he writes that

> so long as we attribute a real existence to unthinking things, distinct from their being perceived, it is not only impossible for us to know with evidence the nature of any real unthinking being, but even that it exists. Hence it is, that we see philosophers distrust their senses, and doubt of the existence of heaven and earth, of every thing they see or feel, even of their own bodies. And after all their labour and struggle of thought, they are forced to own, we cannot attain to any self-evident [by which I take it he means intuitive] or demonstrative knowledge of the existence of sensible things.

What I have been calling the Lockean background is obviously not the only early modern background against which Berkeley should be viewed. For behind Locke stand Descartes and his spectacular failure to demonstrate the existence of bodies. Michelangelo Fardella was one of many modern philosophers struck by that failure. In entry 79 of his notebooks,

Berkeley writes, "I do not fall in with Sceptics Fardella &c, in yt I make bodies to exist certainly, wch they doubt of." Perhaps Berkeley read Fardella, but it is at least as likely that he encountered Fardella in Bayle.[16] Bayle reports that in Fardella's view, God has no obligation to teach us infallibly that bodies exist. "If we have more than a moral certainty of this," Fardella concludes, "it is only by faith that we have obtained it."[17] As Bayle explains, this was also the opinion of Malebranche. Because the existence of bodies is, according to Malebranche, neither intuitively evident nor capable of demonstration, only faith can support our belief in it.[18]

In sections 82–84 of the *Principles*, Berkeley expressly rejects such appeals to faith or revelation. In this respect, he was closer to Locke than to Malebranche. But in seeking intuitive or demonstrative assurance where Locke had been content with sensitive, Berkeley affirms reason's sovereignty over the other intellectual powers: he affirms that reason lays down demands that the mind as a whole must satisfy, that the mind's powers must cooperate to achieve that satisfaction, and that they can do so only under the rule or guidance of reason. Because Berkeley's recognition of reason's sovereignty may come as a surprise, I would like to consider some confirming passages in a neglected portion of the *Principles*.

The Sovereignty of Reason in the Introduction to the *Principles*

That portion of the *Principles* is the first five sections of its introduction. The introduction contains Berkeley's famous attack on abstract ideas, and it is often read as if it is self-contained. The first five sections of the introduction are, however, the introduction to the whole book, and if we begin with them, rather than with section 1 of the body of the book, where Berkeley offers an empiricist's catalogue of the objects of human knowledge ("it is evident to any one who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly ideas formed by help of memory and imagination . . ."), we find ourselves on a very different footing.

Section 1 of the introduction draws a contrast between philosophers and the "bulk of mankind." Ordinary men and women are, Berkeley says, "out of all danger of becoming" skeptics. They "complain not of any want of evidence in their senses," but "walk the high road of plain, common sense, easy and undisturbed." But as soon as we depart from "sense and instinct"

and "follow the light of a *superior* principle" (my emphasis), "to *reason*, meditate, and reflect on the nature of things" (my emphasis again), we find ourselves caught in a labyrinth: "Prejudices and errors of sense do from all parts discover themselves to our view; and endeavouring to correct these by reason we are insensibly drawn into uncouth paradoxes, difficulties, and inconsistencies, which multiply and grow upon us as we advance in speculation; till at length, having wander'd through many intricate mazes, we find ourselves just where we were, or, which is worse, sit down in a forlorn scepticism." Note that reason is identified here as a *superior* principle. The senses are explicitly condemned, and it is strongly suggested that reason's proper role is to regulate or correct them. Reason has, of course, so far failed to discharge that role, but the cause, Berkeley goes on to explain, is not reason itself, but the use we have made of it.

"We may be too partial" to ourselves, Berkeley says in section 3, when we place the fault for our difficulties "originally in our faculties, and not rather in the wrong use we make of them." "It is hard thing to suppose," he continues, "that right deductions from true principles should ever end in consequences which cannot be maintained or made consistent." Though he begins section 3 with an apparent generalization about the originally fault-free character of all human faculties, it is clear from this point on that he is thinking primarily of the fault-free character of reason, the power of mind responsible for deductions from true principles and our founding insights into them. "We should believe," Berkeley continues, "that God has dealt more bountifully with the sons of men, than to give them a strong desire for that knowledge, which He had placed quite out of their reach." "Upon the whole," he concludes, "I am inclined to think that the far greater part, if not all, of those difficulties which have hitherto amused philosophers, and blocked up the way to knowledge, are entirely owing to our selves. That we have first raised a dust, and then complain, we cannot see."

Berkeley expands on this in section 4. The wisest men, he says there, have found our ignorance incurable. This is because of "false principles which have been insisted on, and might have been avoided." Although he stops short of saying so explicitly, it is plain that only reason can discover what those false principles are and put new ones in their place. Berkeley is battling a despair or skepticism of the wise, and his preferred weapon will have to be the same as theirs:

> My purpose therefore is, to try if I can discover what those principles are, which have introduced all that doubtfulness and uncertainty, those

> absurdities and contradictions into the several sects of philosophy; insomuch that the wisest men have thought our ignorance incurable, conceiving it to arise from the natural dullness and imperfection of our faculties. And surely it is a work well deserving our pains, to make a strict inquiry concerning the first principles of *human knowledge*, to sift and examine them on all sides: especially since there may be some grounds to suspect that those lets and difficulties, which stay and embarrass the mind in its search after truth, do not spring from any darkness and intricacy in the objects, or natural defect in the understanding, so much as from false principles which have been insisted on, and might have been avoided.

There is no natural defect, Berkeley says, in the *understanding*. I take this to be one more reference to reason. Understanding or reason has insisted on false principles, and it alone has the power—and the responsibility—to detect those falsehoods and replace them with truths.

The passages I have quoted are evidence not only of Berkeley's recognition of reason's sovereignty, but of the theistic context of that recognition. At this point in the *Principles*, the existence of God is not a conclusion to be proved but a belief to be protected from criticism. In movements powerfully reminiscent of Descartes' Fourth Meditation, Berkeley suggests that errors are not God's fault (as they would be were they inherent in reason) but our own. There is no promise that we will not make mistakes in the future, only an assurance that reason has no *natural*—no innate or built-in—defects, from which Berkeley, it seems, takes it to follow that so long as our faculties unite in recognition of reason's authority, they form a whole or system that is also free from defect, when confined to its proper domain.

Relativity

Thus far I have spoken rather vaguely of "relativity considerations," and it is time to be more precise. A large group of considerations can be grouped together under the heading of "perceptual relativity." I want to present them as sort of progression, the later ones (at least for the most part) responding to or building on the earlier. The earliest or most basic consideration is a simple recognition of the fact of perceptual relativity, here expressed in schematic form:

(i) *x* appears *F* to *y* [or at *t1*, or from vantage point *p1*—the list could be extended] and *x* appears *not-F* to *z* [or at *t2*, or from vantage point *p2* . . .].

A lukewarm bucket of water, for example, appears cold to one hand (which had before been near a flame) and warm to another (which had before been placed in ice). Responding to such considerations, Locke for example had claimed that

(ii) Corpuscularianism provides the most intelligible explanation of the phenomena falling under schema (i).

This is a second, more controversial relativity consideration, one that Berkeley, for example, denied.

Berkeley did, however, accept the following:

(iii) Because every one of the qualities we immediately perceive satisfies schema (i), it can be inferred (with some further work) that we immediately perceive only our own ideas.

Berkeley thought (iii)—or the conclusion urged on us by (iii)—had already been accepted not only by the Cartesians, but by the ancient skeptics.[19] One aim of the First Dialogue is to re-establish (iii); in the *Principles*, that we immediately perceive only our own ideas had simply been taken for granted.[20]

Considerations akin to (iii) can be extracted from the first part of Plato's *Theaetetus:*

(iv) "The instantiation of [a] sensible quality [falling under schema (i)] is private (*idion*) to a single perceiving subject on a single occasion,"

a formulation I have borrowed (with the amendments indicated) from Myles Burnyeat.[21] If *all* sensible qualities turn out to satisfy schema (i), we can then move on from (iv) to

(v) The whole [immediately] sensible realm consists of fleetingly perceived, private occurrences,

which is again borrowed (with some rearrangement and one bracketed addition) from Burnyeat. (v) is (iii) in non-Berkeleyan language, but neither (v), nor (iii), nor (i), no matter how widely it applies, is, according to Berkeley, a good reason for accepting

(vi) There is no extension, figure, or motion, no color, taste, or smell in an outward object.

As we will see in the next section, according to Berkeley's *Principles*, reasoning from relativity cannot get us to (vi). Berkeley accepts (vi), but he does so on other grounds, helpfully surveyed by Fogelin in his book.

According to Berkeley, if we are reasoning from relativity considerations of type (i), we cannot get any farther than

(vii) We do not know by sense which is the true extension or color of an outward object.[22]

Relativity in the *Principles*

I turn now to Berkeley's treatment of relativity in the *Principles*. The sections on relativity follow Berkeley's exposition of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. According to the distinction as Berkeley understands it, ideas of primary qualities, unlike ideas of secondary qualities, are patterns or images of mind-independent things. Berkeley has two main objections to the distinction: first, extension, figure, and motion (primary qualities according to defenders of the distinction) are, themselves, nothing but ideas, as the first eight sections of the body of the *Principles* establish (*Principles* 9); second, because the primary qualities are inconceivable apart from the secondary, it follows that extension, figure, and motion can exist only in the very place where, it is agreed, color, sounds, heat, and cold exist—"in the mind and no where else" (10).

Berkeley's treatment of relativity occupies sections 11 through 15 of the *Principles*.[23] He considers the relativity of size and speed in section 11 and the relativity of number in section 12. (Section 13, on unity, makes no mention of relativity but is a response to an imagined objection against the argument of section 12.) In section 14, Berkeley takes up a long list of qualities, some secondary (heat, cold, and taste), some primary (extension, figure, and motion), his point being that "after the same manner, as modern philosophers prove certain sensible qualities to have no existence in matter, or without the mind, the same thing may be likewise proved of all sensible qualities whatsoever." In the climactic section 15, Berkeley repeats the observation that has since become well-known: that "those arguments, which are thought manifestly to prove that colours and tastes exist only in the mind, . . .may, with equal force, be brought to prove the same thing of extension, figure, and motion." The observation that immediately follows—his denial that (vi) can be inferred from (i)—is less often noticed: "this method of arguing," he warns, does not prove "there is no extension or colour in an outward object."[24]

There are, even prior to section 15, clear signs that Berkeley is often arguing ad hominem: not on his own behalf, but from the premises—or

inferential tendencies—of his opponents. His attempts to signal this are, however, not entirely successful; at times, contrary to what I think is his intention, he seems to endorse as well as expound.[25] Section 11, for example, reads as follows:

> *Great* and *small, swift* and *slow,* are allowed to exist no where without the mind, being entirely relative, and changing as the frame or position of the organs of sense varies. The extension therefore which exists without the mind, is neither great nor small, the motion neither swift nor slow, that is, they are nothing at all. But say you, they are extension in general, and motion in general: thus we see how much the tenet of extended, moveable substances existing without the mind, depends on that strange doctrine of abstract ideas.

In spite of his opening words—great, small, swift, and slow are, he writes, "*allowed* to exist nowhere without the mind" (my emphasis)—in the second sentence Berkeley seems to be arguing, in what is wholly his own voice, that if external extension is neither great nor small, it is nothing at all. This is a very poor argument, because it fails to distinguish between measures of size that are *relative*—such as the ones Berkeley lists—and measures that are at least arguably *absolute*, such as *being more than one yard in length.*[26] The distinction between relative and absolute measures had been made in the *Port-Royal Logic*, and, at least in his later writings, Berkeley seems to be aware of it.[27] I suspect that Berkeley is rushing uncritically through the argument of the second sentence because he is so eager to reach the third: "But say you, they are extension in general, and motion in general: thus we see how much the tenet . . . depends on that . . . doctrine of abstract ideas." Here Berkeley is not only drawing a cherished connection between materialism and abstraction (one first drawn at *Principles* 5) but also exploiting one of his important sources, Bayle's *Dictionary*. There, in his entry on Zeno of Elea (365), Bayle imputes to the materialist the view that although we cannot say in just what way bodies are extended, we can affirm they are extended in general. Bayle mocks the view much as Berkeley does (but without connecting it to the doctrine of abstraction). Berkeley was, I think, so eager to reach this point in the dialectic that he was careless about how he got there.[28]

However we explain his lapses from a strictly ad hominem presentation, it is apparent by section 15 that Berkeley is unwilling to argue from (i) to (vi). Here is section 15 in full:

> In short, let anyone consider those arguments, which are thought manifestly to prove that colours and tastes exist only in the mind, and he shall find they

> may with equal force, be brought to prove the same thing of extension, figure, and motion. Though it must be confessed this method of arguing doth not so much prove that there is no extension or colour in an outward object, as that we do not know by sense which is the true extension or colour of the object. But the arguments foregoing plainly shew it to be impossible that any colour or extension at all, or other sensible quality whatsoever, should exist in an unthinking substance without the mind, or in truth, that there should be any such thing as an outward object.

"The arguments foregoing" are clearly the arguments of *Principles* 1–8: Berkeley is certainly not referring to the relativity arguments of section 14, which, we have just been told, fall short of their intended conclusion, and, in any case, say nothing about the possibility of outward objects. Berkeley's denial that (vi) can be inferred from (i) is, I think, completely clear. But what does he have in mind when he tells us what considerations of type (i) *do* show? What does it mean to say that "we do not know by sense which is the true extension or colour of the object"?

By "the object," Berkeley probably has in mind the outward object mentioned earlier in the sentence. This means that as the sentence ends, Berkeley is drawing a lesson aimed primarily at his materialist opponents. I want to propose that when he says considerations of type (i) establish only that we do not know by sense the true color or extension of an outward object, Berkeley is invoking a contrast between sense and reason and implicitly admitting that qualities such as extension and color may, for all that has been said so far, exist in outward objects and be known by reason.

Berkeley thinks, of course, that the qualities of outward or mind-independent objects cannot be known by reason: so much is argued for in later sections of the *Principles*. But the contrast between sense and reason implicit in section 15 is, in my view, of crucial importance, because when further developed, it offers additional evidence of Berkeley's recognition of reason's sovereignty.

My evidence for thinking that a contrast between sense and reason is implicit in section 15 is of two kinds. The first kind of evidence is contextual: the contrast between sense and reason is prominent in the texts to which *Principles* 15 is responding.[29] In *The Search after Truth*, for example, Malebranche argues that in view of considerations of type (i), "it is clear that we must not rely on the testimony of our eyes to make judgments about size." "It would be better," he advises, "to listen to reason, which proves to us that we do not know how to determine the absolute size of the bodies surrounding us."[30] The authors of the *Port-Royal Logic* declare

that in view of relativity considerations of type (i), "we cannot know with certainty what the true and natural size of each body is."[31] Their language is strikingly close to Berkeley's in *Principles* 15. They refer to the very section of the *Search* from which I quoted a moment ago, offering their observation as confirmation of an insight of St. Augustine: "We must acknowledge that St. Augustine was right to maintain, following Plato, that judging the truth and the rule for discerning it do not belong to the senses at all but to the mind—*Non est judicium veritatis in sensibus* [Judgment about the truth is not in the senses]" (229). What is here called "mind" is reason, as Arnauld and Nicole later indicate: "the senses themselves," they say, depend on "a judgment by reason" (260). Finally, Bayle, though he does not himself contrast sense and reason in his own discussion of (i), quotes copiously from the relevant passages of the *Port-Royal Logic* and directs his readers to relevant passages in the *Search*.

The second kind of evidence comes from Berkeley himself: the contrast between sense and reason was no less important to him than it was to Malebranche or the Port-Royal logicians. For Berkeley, sense and reason are the only faculties of mind even potentially capable of other-than-reflex knowledge.[32] This is clearest, perhaps, in *Principles* 18–20, where Berkeley argues that even if there were external objects, we could never come to know it. "Either we must know it by sense," he explains, "or by reason," and we do not—indeed we cannot—know it in either way. There is a similar passage near the end of the First Dialogue: "PHILONOUS. My aim is only to learn from you, the way to come at the knowledge of *material beings*. Whatever we perceive, is perceived either immediately or mediately: by sense, or by reason and reflexion. But as you have excluded sense, pray shew me what reason you have to believe their existence; or what *medium* you can possibly make use of, to prove it either to mine or your own understanding" (*Works* 2, 205).

All this gives us reason to conclude that the lesson of *Principles* 15, for the materialist, is that in view of considerations of type (i), the true qualities of outward objects, if they can be known at all, can be known only by reason. But is there also a lesson here for Berkeley, who does not believe in outward objects? I believe there is. Berkeley, no less than the materialist, must come to grips with relativity, because the argument from (i) to (vii) does not require the assumption that the objects figuring in (i) are "outward." In view of (i), if there is a truth about the color or extension of an object, then whether or not the object is outward, that truth cannot be arrived at by sense alone: sense cannot select the "true" color or extension from among the many appearances or make true

judgments on the basis of them. If Berkeley, who writes in opposition to the skeptics, accepts a version of (vii) from which the modifier "outward" has been removed—"we do not know by sense which is the true extension or color of an object"—and if, like Malebranche and the Port-Royal logicians, he draws an exhaustive contrast between sense and reason as potential sources of our knowledge of objects, then even he must agree that the truth about objects can be known only by reason (operating, presumably, on the basis of ideas supplied by sense). I now want to show that in *Siris*, Berkeley responds to the relativity considerations of the *Theaetetus* by embracing precisely this conclusion.

Berkeley and the *Theaetetus*

One of the most memorable of Socrates's speeches in the *Theaetetus* divides all philosophers into two parties (152e). Berkeley describes the division in section 348 of *Siris*:

> Socrates, in the *Theaetetus* of Plato, speaketh of two parties of philosophers—. . . the flowing philosophers who held all things to be in a perpetual flux, always generating and never existing, and those others who maintained the universe to be fixed and immovable. The difference seems to have been this, that Heraclitus, Protagoras, Empedocles, and in general those of the former sect, considered things sensible and natural; whereas Parmenides and his party considered [the universe] not as the sensible but as the intelligible world, abstracted from all sensible things.

Berkeley then writes (349) that if by *things* we mean sensible objects, "these, it is evident, are always flowing." When it comes to the sensible world, Berkeley stands firmly with Heraclitus, Protagoras, and Empedocles.

Berkeley's own interpretation of this Heraclitean doctrine is a remarkable blend of material borrowed from Plato with material provided by his own *Principles* and *Dialogues*. For Berkeley, the flux doctrine is, in the first place, an affirmation of relativity (that is, of (i), or of (i)'s satisfaction by all sensible qualities), and, in the second place, an affirmation of (iii). "Nothing is more evident," he writes in *Siris* 304, just after discussing the treatment of flux in the *Theaetetus* at some length, "than that the apparent sizes and shapes, for instance, of things are in constant flux, ever differing as they are viewed at different distances, or with glasses more or less accurate." In section 311 he writes that "in the *Theaetetus*, we are told that if any one saith a thing is, or is made, he must withal say, for

what, or of what, or in respect of what, it is, or is made; for, that any thing should exist in itself or absolutely is absurd. Agreeably to which doctrine it is also farther affirmed by Plato that it is impossible a thing should be sweet and sweet to nobody." "As the Platonic philosophy supposed intellectual notions to be originally inexistent or innate in the soul," he reports in *Siris* 316, "so likewise it supposed sensible qualities to exist (though not originally) in the soul, and there only. Socrates saith to Theaetetus, You must not think the white colour that you see is in any thing without your eyes, or in your eyes, or in any place at all." For Berkeley, the flux doctrine, cashed out in terms we can clearly understand, is immaterialism: the doctrine that the *esse* of bodies is *percipi*. Nature is nothing but a constant flux or succession of ideas.

But this leaves Berkeley with a problem, because, in Plato's opinion at least, a world of constant flux cannot be known.

> There is, according to Plato, properly no knowledge, but only opinion, concerning things sensible and perishing; not because they are naturally abstruse and involved in darkness, but because their nature and existence is uncertain, ever fleeting and changing, or rather, because they do not in strict truth exist at all, being always generating or *in fieri*, that is, in a perpetual flux, without anything stable or permanent in them to constitute an object of real science. The Pythagoreans and Platonics distinguish between *to genomenon* and *to on*, that which is ever generated and that which exists. Sensible things and corporeal forms are perpetually producing and perishing, appearing and disappearing, never resting in one state, but always in motion and change; and therefore, in effect, not one being but a succession of beings: while *to on* is understood to be somewhat of an abstract or spiritual nature, and the proper object of intellectual knowledge. Therefore, as there can be no knowledge of things flowing and unstable, the opinion of Protagoras and Theaetetus that sense was science is absurd. (304)

In another passage, however, Berkeley finds Plato more optimistic:

> As understanding perceiveth not, that is, doth not hear, or see, or feel, so sense knoweth not: and although the mind may use both sense and fancy, as means whereby to arrive at knowledge, yet sense, or soul as far forth as sensitive, knoweth nothing. For, as it is rightly observed in the *Theaetetus* of Plato, science consists not in the passive perceptions, but in the reasoning upon them. (305)

Berkeley develops Plato's suggestion in section 253:

> We know a thing when we understand it; and we understand it when we can interpret or tell what is signifies. Strictly, the sense knows nothing. We

> perceive indeed sounds by hearing, and characters by sight; but we are not therefore said to understand them. After the same manner, the phenomena of nature are alike visible to all; but all have not alike learned the connexion of natural things; or understand what they signify, or know how to vaticinate by them. There is no question, saith Socrates in *Theaeteto*, concerning that which is agreeable to each person, but concerning what will in time to come be agreeable, of which all men are not equally judges. He who foreknoweth what will be in every kind is the wisest. According to Socrates, you and the cook may judge of a dish on the table equally well, but while the dish is making, the cook can better foretell what will ensue from this or that manner of composing it. Nor is this manner of reasoning confined only to morals or politics, but extends also to natural science.

In the following section Berkeley elaborates his ruling metaphor of nature as a language:

> As the natural connexion of signs with the things signified is regular and constant, it forms a sort of rational discourse . . ., and is therefore the immediate effect of an intelligent cause. This is agreeable to the philosophy of Plato, and other ancients. . . . The phenomena of nature, which strike on the senses and are understood by the mind, form not only a magnificent spectacle, but also a most coherent, entertaining, and instructive Discourse; and to effect this, they are conducted, adjusted, and ranged by the greatest wisdom. This Language or Discourse is studied with different attention, and interpreted with different degrees of skill. But so far as men have studied and remarked its rules, and can interpret right, so far they may be said to be knowing in nature. A beast is like a man who hears a strange tongue but understands nothing.

Knowledge is possible, because knowing is not a matter of discerning a correspondence between our fleeting ideas and the originals lying beyond them. It is a matter of knowing what ideas will follow the ones we have. This is Berkeley's answer to the skeptical challenge presented by the relativity considerations. Ideas are relative, but that is no obstacle to knowledge, provided the search for knowledge is understood as the effort to anticipate ideas to come. And the search for knowledge can be so understood only if objects beyond our ideas are repudiated—only if we embrace not only (iii), but also (vi).

This is the conception of natural knowledge elaborated in both the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues*, but the statement in the *Three Dialogues* is especially appropriate here. Philonous explains that when I examine by my other senses something I have seen, "it is not in order to understand better the same object which I had perceived by sight." My aim instead is

> only to know what ideas are connected together; and the more a man knows of the connexion of ideas, the more he is said to know of the nature of things. What therefore if our ideas are variable; what if our senses are not in all circumstances affected with the same appearances? It will not thence follow, that they are not to be trusted, or that they are inconsistent either with themselves or any thing else, except it be with your preconceived notion of (I know not what) single, unchanged, unperceivable, real nature, marked by each name. (*Works* 2.245)

It is only on a view like the one held by Hylas that the relativity considerations of the Pyrrhonians (and of the *Theaetetus*) are any sort of threat. If knowledge is real only insofar as our ideas are the true representations of originals, then, "as our ideas are perpetually varied, without any change in the supposed real things, it necessarily follows, they cannot all be true copies of them: or if some are, and others are not, it is impossible to distinguish the former from the latter. . . . The result of which is, that we are thrown into the most hopeless and abandoned *scepticism*" (246). This passage from the *Dialogues* invites comparison with *Principles* 15. Each passage presents the materialist with a problem of selection: which of the many appearances accurately sets forth the color or extension of the object? In the absence of an answer, from either sense or reason, the materialist is condemned to skepticism. Berkeley himself sidesteps the problem of selection. Knowing the truth about an object's color or extension is not a matter of knowing which appearance sets forth its one true color or extension. It is a matter of knowing how to move "prosperously" (as William James would later say) from idea to idea.[33]

Philonous reinforces the point later in the Third Dialogue:

> Is not that opposition to all science whatsoever, that phrensy of the ancient and modern *sceptics*, built on the same foundation? Or can you produce so much as one argument against the reality of corporeal things, or in behalf of that avowed utter ignorance of their natures, which doth not suppose their reality to consist in an external absolute existence? Upon this supposition indeed, the objections from the change of colours in a pigeon's neck, or the appearances of a broken oar in water, must be allowed to have weight. But those and the like objections vanish, if we do not maintain the being of absolute external originals, but place the reality of things in ideas, fleeting indeed, and changeable; however not changed at random, but according to the fixed order of Nature. For herein consists that constancy and truth of things, which secures all the concerns of life, and distinguishes that which is *real* from the irregular visions of the fancy. (258)

On most readings of Berkeley, he is very tightly placed—wedged, really—in an early modern context. He does fit, but the fit may be too

tight. I have been suggesting in this essay that we loosen things up a bit and view Berkeley in another setting. In the very Cudworthian *Siris*, full of ancient lore and languages, written in deliberately archaic English, an appropriate ancient context is provided by Berkeley himself. Berkeley was responding to skeptics of every age. The skeptics, he thinks, have always been right about relativity—right about (i), about the universal applicability of (i), and right about (iii)—but they have been wrong to suppose that knowledge is therefore beyond our reach. As Hylas observes, Philonous "set out upon the same principles [(iii)] that Academic, Cartesians, and the like sects usually do; and for a long time it looked as if [he was] advancing their philosophical *scepticism*; but in the end [his] conclusions are directly opposite to theirs" (262).

Berkeley, then, is an epistemic optimist. He is promoting the energetic pursuit of knowledge, and in his final reference to the *Theaetetus*, he uses an image from the dialogue to urge us on. "It is Plato's remark, in his *Theaetetus*, that while we sit still we are never the wiser, but going into the river, and moving up and down, is the way to discover its depths and shallows. If we exercise and bestir ourselves, we may even here discover something" (367). I do not think it is far-fetched to suppose that for Berkeley, this river is not just the river of the story to which Plato is alluding—the story of a traveler who asks if a river is deep and is advised that the river will answer once he enters—but the river of the Heracliteans, a metaphor for the whole of the sensible, corporeal world. Berkeley wants us to enter the river and get caught up in its currents. It is not just a stream we go a-fishing in, but the element in which we live our lives. It is, moreover, not incapable of being known, and not unworthy of it.

Some Difficulties

There are some problems facing the interpretation of Berkeley that I have proposed in this essay, and a problem facing Berkeley if I am right about him. I want as I conclude to acknowledge those problems and to suggest some ways in which they might be addressed.

The first problem for my interpretation is that I may be guilty of overreading the passages concerning reason's sovereignty that I have drawn from Berkeley's early writings. Perhaps Berkeley accepted reason's sovereignty by the time he wrote *Siris*—only there, after all, are we told in so many words that the senses do not know (305)—but could he have

done so when, for example, he suggested in the First Dialogue that perception by sense is knowledge?

> PHILONOUS. Do you not perfectly know your own [sensations or] ideas?
> HYLAS. I know them perfectly; since what I do not perceive or know, can be no part of my idea. (*Works* 2.206)

Hylas's implicit equating of perceiving and knowing is, after all, endorsed by Berkeley at *Principles* 6, where he writes that the being of bodies is "to be perceived or known."

I cannot claim to have a solution to this problem that is, as an interpretive claim about Berkeley, fully satisfying. But I do think that Berkeleyan "knowledge by sense" may be something like Russellian knowledge by acquaintance. That is, the senses as Berkeley understands them may be unerring—incapable of falsehood—not because they provide us with knowledge of truths, but simply because they do not judge. For Berkeley, the senses may well be an "animadversive" faculty that brings objects before the mind—a faculty of presentation, if you like—without being capable of forming judgments about them. Even an intuitive knowledge of the sheer presence of those objects (not to mention a knowledge of their status as ideas, or as real things) may call for a kind of reflection or attentive consideration of which the senses themselves are incapable.[34]

The second problem is an intensification of the first. One mark of the senses, Berkeley says even in the *Dialogues*, is that they make no inferences (*Works* 2.174–75). Inference or deduction, Philonous tells Hylas, "entirely relates to reason" (175). But there is an operation—one at the very center of Berkeley's thinking about the mind—that resembles inference in its power to generate new expectations or beliefs. This is what Berkeley calls "suggestion," the operation by which ideas of sight, for example, bring to mind ideas of tangible size and distance. In spite of its resemblance to inference, in many respects suggestion looks very much like sense. It is, for example, passive and prereflective: sheer exposure to the correlations between ideas of sight and ideas of touch leads, Berkeley thinks, to belief—and to belief that is on the whole reliable—about (for example) the distance between us and the tower that we see.

Berkeley was not entirely in control of this discovery. Locke had already spoken of "the association of ideas," but for him it picked out a pathological tendency; Berkeley was among the first to appeal to association to account for a wide range of normal—and laudable—belief. What he was pursuing, I think it is fair to say, was a new understanding of the very nature of belief: he suggests, in effect, that belief can be more

animal than intellectual, more like a Peircean habit or "rule of action" than a free or deliberate act of assent to a proposition. All this of course brings it closer to sense. When he wrote the *Essay on Vision* (1709), Berkeley was, at least at times, inclined to contrast sense with the operation he had discovered. At one point, for example, he implies that suggestion is "rather an act of judgment grounded on experience than [an act] of sense" (3). But in his *Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*, an essay in defense of the theory published more than twenty years later, Berkeley came to see things very differently: "To perceive is one thing; to judge is another. So likewise, to be suggested is one thing, and to be inferred is another. Things are suggested and perceived by sense. We make judgments and inferences by the understanding."[35] The indication here is that suggestion *is* an operation of sense. (This is the suggestion later generalized by Hume.) And now I can state the second problem. If Berkeley accepts the sovereignty of reason, why does he credit sense with an operation that he seems to regard as, even in isolation, importantly productive of knowledge?[36]

The problem can be put another way. On the reading I have defended here, Berkeley, early and late, denies that the unassisted senses are a source of knowledge. They contribute data, but reason has to assess it, and we can be said to know only after that reflective assessment has taken place, and reason's judgment has been rendered. Knowledge, I have been assuming, requires not merely "belief," which can take the animal form I described just a moment ago, but also "judgment," which is the privilege of reason. And it further requires, I seem also to have assumed, a justification that is in the possession of the judging subject. But perhaps Berkeley is not an "internalist rationalist" but an "externalist empiricist," someone who thinks that we can know things by sense, not just because the senses know their immediate objects perfectly (that is the Berkeleyan claim that presents the first of the problems I am facing), but because the senses yield beliefs—not judgments—by a reliable associative mechanism. Thanks to that mechanism, those beliefs count as knowledge, even though the senses, being incapable of inference, cannot begin to provide the kind of justification that internalist accounts of knowledge, rationalistically construed, require.[37]

Berkeley does not speak directly to the issues just raised, and the wisest course is probably to say that he was subject to conflicting tendencies. The tendency I have emphasized in this essay—a tendency to acknowledge reason's sovereignty—seems not to be the only one at work in Berkeley, and it may not even be dominant. But it is hard to deny its presence, even in the early works, which, as I have tried to show, fit remarkably well with the

explicit recognition of reason's sovereignty in *Siris*, and with its response to the relativity considerations of the *Theaetetus*.

The tendency I have emphasized is what creates the last problem I want to consider, a problem for Berkeley. We can get at the problem through an entry in Berkeley's notebooks, where he reminds himself to point out that "many of the Ancient Philosophers run into so great absurditys as even to deny the existence of motion and those other things they perceiv'd actually by their senses. this sprung from their now knowing wt existence was and wherein it consisted this the source of all their Folly, 'tis on the Discovering of the nature & meaning & import of Existence that I chiefly insist. This puts a wide difference betwixt the Sceptics &c and me. This I think wholly new. I am sure 'tis new to me" (491).

What is Berkeley's published doctrine of the nature and meaning and import of sensible existence? It is not quite *esse* is *percipi*, but something more complicated. Ideas of really existing things, he says, exhibit constancy, steadiness, order, and coherence. They constitute a "regular train or series, the admirable connexion whereof sufficiently testifies the wisdom and benevolence of its Author" (*Principles* 30). This makes every existence claim a hostage to fortune. If I see the table in my study now—or if I do even more, and perceive it over several hours "in sundry certain manners" (here I quote from Berkeley's treatment of a similar example in the Third Dialogue, *Works* 2.249)—can I be certain (by which I mean, intuitively or demonstratively certain) that subsequent experience will not reasonably persuade me that the table was not in my study after all? What has become, then, of Berkeley's promise to give us intuitive or demonstrative certainty of the existence of sensible things?

I am not only asking whether Berkeley can be sure God will not change the laws of nature. He openly admits that we cannot be sure of this (*Principles* 107). That is why, on his view, deductions from the laws of nature are never demonstrations: they "depend on a supposition that the Author of Nature always operates uniformly . . ., which we cannot evidently know." I am granting uniformity and asking whether future experience consistent with past regularities might not upset existence claims that we make now. Berkeley held Locke to very demanding standards, and it is at least not clear that Berkeley himself does any better by them. The following passage suggests that Berkeley might at times have been willing to relax those standards (perhaps it is an expression of the externalist empiricism I was imagining a moment ago):

> We may, from the experience we have had of the train and succession of ideas in our minds, often make, I will not say uncertain conjectures, but sure

> and well-grounded predictions, concerning the ideas we shall be affected with, pursuant to a great train of actions, and be enabled to pass a right judgment of what would have appeared to us, in case we were placed in circumstances very different from those we are in at present. Herein consists the knowledge of Nature, which may preserve its use and certainty very consistently with what hath been said. (*Principles* 59)

The certainty he mentions here is not, I take it, either intuitive or demonstrative. It seems to be moral certainty—more than conjecture, and enough perhaps even for knowledge. If I am right, moral certainty may be all that Berkeley can hope for even when it comes to present existence claims, because those claims depend for their truth, according to Berkeley's account of real existence, on the kind of predictions under discussion in the passage.

Conclusion

In *Principles* 87, Berkeley offers the following account of the source of skepticism:

> Colour, figure, motion, extension and the like, considered only as so many *sensations* in the mind, are perfectly known, there being nothing in them which is not perceived. But if they are looked on as notes or images, referred to *things* or *archetypes* existing without the mind, then we are all involved in *scepticism*. We see only the appearances, not the real qualities of things. What may be the extension, figure, or motion of any thing really and absolutely, or in itself, it is impossible for us to know, but only the proportion or the relation they bear to our senses. Things remaining the same, our ideas vary, and which of them or even whether any of them at all represent the true quality really existing in the thing, it is out of our reach to determine. So that, for aught we know, all we see, hear, and feel, may be only phantom and vain chimera, and not at all agree with the real things, existing in *rerum natura*. All this scepticism follows, from our supposing a difference between *things* and *ideas*, and that the former have a subsistence without the mind, or unperceived.

I have suggested in this essay that Berkeley cannot avoid skepticism merely by denying the difference between things and ideas. As *Principles* 87 itself indicates, he needs a way of explaining how ideas in flux can afford us knowledge of real things. I have argued that according to *Siris*, they can do so only if reason is granted sovereignty over the senses, though I have acknowledged a competing tendency in which the work *Siris* assigns to

reason is assigned instead to a power of association akin to sense. Robert Fogelin calls the Pyrrhonists' mode of relativity a "challenging mode," because "it triggers a demand for justification."[38] In *Siris*, I have argued, Berkeley accepts the challenge, but in the end falls prey to some of the remaining modes of the Pyrrhonists—infinite regress, circularity, and arbitrary assumption—used by them to argue that the demand for justification cannot be met.[39]

Notes

An earlier draft of this essay was delivered at a conference honoring Robert J. Fogelin, held at Dartmouth College's Minary Center in October 2001. I am grateful to Bob Fogelin, and to John Greco and Barry Stroud, for comments that led to what I hope are improvements.

1. Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Allison Coudert and Taylor Corse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Conway's book was first published in 1690, eleven years after her death.

2. Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: The first part, wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted, and its impossibility demonstrated* (London: Richard Royston, 1678).

3. See Francis Hutcheson, *Logicae Compendium: Praefixa est dissertatio de philosophiae origine ejusque inventoribus aut excultoribus praecipuis* (Glasgow: R. and A. Foulis, 1756). Thomas Stanley's four-volume *History of Philosophy*, which appeared in many editions beginning in 1655, is another example of this concentration on the ancient heritage of the subject.

4. One notable commentator who has placed Berkeley against an ancient background—against the background of the *Theaetetus*, in fact—is Myles Burnyeat, in a series of essays that includes "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," *Philosophical Review* 91 (1982): 3–40. I am not concerned in this essay with whether Berkeley's reading of Plato is right or wrong, though it is worth observing that Berkeley was not alone in supposing that Plato was receptive to what Cudworth calls the Protagorean "physiology"—a physiology that Plato presents, as Cudworth notes, without criticism. I am more concerned with the fact that the Protagorean epistemology-cum-Heraclitean ontology explored in the *Theaetetus*—whether or not it was accepted by Plato—rules out the existence of matter as the early modern materialists conceived of it, and this Burnyeat seems to admit. Berkeley believes—wrongly—that Plato shared in this repudiation. But he nonetheless recognizes that he disagrees with Plato about many other things. "In the ancient philosophy of Plato and Pythagoras," he writes, "we find distinguished three sorts of objects. In the first place, a form or species that is neither generated or destroyed, unchangeable, invisible, and altogether imperceptible to sense, being only understood by the intellect. A second sort there is, ever fluent and changing,

generating and perishing, appearing and vanishing; this is comprehended by sense and opinion. The third kind is matter, which, as Plato teacheth, being neither an object of understanding nor of sense, is hardly to be made out by a certain spurious way of reasoning" (*Siris* 306). When Berkeley writes that Plato did not admit "an absolute actual existence of sensible or corporeal things" (*Siris* 311), he is closer to the truth than Burnyeat allows. According to *Siris* 306, Plato believed in forms (which are neither sensible nor corporeal), in sensible things (which are not absolute but relative), and in matter (which in Berkeley's view of Plato is not actual, but an unformed sea or chaos of potential). So Plato did not believe in the absolute actual existence of sensible things, at least. Berkeley does believe in an intelligible world (see *Siris* 348–49), but it is a world of mind or spirit, not a world of forms or species. For *Siris*, see volume 5 of A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, eds., *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, 9 vols. (London: Nelson, 1948–57). All quotations from Berkeley are taken from this edition, with the exception of the notebooks, which are quoted as they appear in George H. Thomas, ed., *Philosophical Commentaries* (privately published, 1976). Thomas follows the numbering used by Luce in volume 1 of the *Works*.

5. For Bayle's influence on Berkeley, see Richard Popkin's classic "Berkeley and Pyrrhonism," first published more than fifty years ago, and collected in Myles Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 377–96. I do not mean to deny that Bayle influenced Hume directly.

6. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), II.xxxii, 56.

7. That there was such an influence is suggested by Richard Bett, *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 134 and 138–39. On the evidence of the *Theaetetus*, Plato himself was sometimes viewed as a skeptic, even in the ancient world. See Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 200, on Plato.

8. See Sarah Hutton, ed., *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10–11.

9. Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, trans. Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1991), 351.

10. See *Works* 7.207.

11. As a student and fellow at Trinity College, Berkeley was accorded a number of honors that testify to his mastery of Greek and Latin, as does the large library of Greek and Latin classics that he assembled for his college in Bermuda.

12. For some comments on the relationship of *Siris* to Berkeley's early metaphysics and epistemology, see my *Berkeley: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 232–34.

13. Robert J. Fogelin, *Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2001).

14. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

15. There is another such boast in the *Three Dialogues* (Philonous speaking): "What a jest is it for a philosopher to question the existence of sensible things, till he hath it proved to him from the veracity of God; or to pretend our knowledge in this point falls short of intuition or demonstration? I might as well doubt my own being, as of the being of those things I actually see and feel" (*Works* 2.230).

16. This is Popkin's guess, "Berkeley and Pyrrhonism," 390.

17. Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, 375. Bayle is actually quoting from *Journal des Savans*, July 30, 1696.

18. Ibid., 374.

19. The evidence comes in an exchange at the end of the *Three Dialogues*. Philonous denies that he is an innovator: "My endeavours tend only to unite and place in a clearer light that truth, which was before shared between the vulgar and the philosophers [here, "shared" means distributed]: the former being of opinion, that those things they immediately perceive are the real things; and the latter, that the things immediately perceived, are ideas which exist only in the mind. Which two notions put together, do in effect constitute the substance of what I advance." Hylas then attributes the philosophers' share of the truth to the ancient skeptics, among others: "You set out upon the same principles that Academics, Cartesians, and the like sects, usually do; and for a long time it looked as if you were advancing their philosophical scepticism; but in the end your conclusions are directly opposite to theirs" (262).

20. Berkeley also defends a more limited version of (iii), based on particular instances of (i), in the *Essay on Vision*, section 44.

21. See Burnyeat, "Idealism and Greek Philosophy," 5.

22. Despite his harsh treatment of Berkeley in his essay—subtitled "What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed"—Burnyeat seems to admit that even (vi) can be extracted from the *Theaetetus*.

23. Not all of the relativity that concerns him in this stretch of the *Principles* is perceptual. In sections 12 and 13, he is concerned with a relativity that is fundamentally conceptual: the relativity of number to units of measurement ("the same extension is one or three or thirty six, according as the mind considers it with reference to a yard, a foot, or an inch," section 12) and to the kinds of things being counted ("we say one book, one page, one line; all these are equally units, though some contain several of the others," also in section 12). This conceptual relativity—relativity to the mind's manner of considering a thing—may entail perceptual relativity, but is clearly distinct from it.

24. One commentator who does notice the second observation is Barry Stroud, *The Question of Reality: Subjectivism and the Metaphysics of Color* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 175.

25. I think Berkeley does mean to endorse the arguments of sections 12 and 13, but as I say in the note above, the relativity at work in these passages is conceptual rather than perceptual. They are, as a result, much more persuasive. They convinced Gottlob Frege, among others: see *The Foundations of Arithmetic:*

A Logico-mathematical Inquiry into the Concept of Number, trans. J. L. Austin (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1980), 33, where Frege, summarizing his argument that number is not a property of external objects (precisely Berkeley's conclusion), quotes an earlier version of the argument of *Principles* 12–13 at *Essay on Vision* 109.

26. Could Berkeley have thought that the (conceptual) relativity of number, argued for in section 12, disposed of such absolute measures? Perhaps so, but I am inclined to think not, because any such argument would again be a very poor one. If a quantity (such as *one yard*) includes both a number and a unit of measurement, and if the various schemes of measurement allow for mutual translation, why would a quantity have to inherit the relativity of the number that enters into it?

27. Consider, for example, the following passage from *Siris*: "As for those absolute magnitudes and figures, which certain Cartesians and other moderns suppose to be in things, that must seem a vain supposition to whoever considers it is supported by no argument of reason, and no experiment of sense" (304).

28. There is another possible explanation. Even though the stated concern of *Principles* 11 is *perceptual* relativity (*great* and *small*, he says, are "entirely relative, . . . changing as the frame or position of the organs of sense varies"), he may actually be thinking of something more like conceptual relativity: the relativity of *great* and *small* to the mind's manner of considering a thing (as a member of one or another kind, or in comparison to one or another standard). Another complication: in the *Three Dialogues*, 192, Hylas speaks of *great* and *small* as relative to the parts of our *bodies*.

29. One reason Berkeley's sources are relevant is that he does not present his observation as his own discovery. It is offered as a concession: it must, he writes, be *confessed* that considerations of type (i) do not prove there is no color or extension in an outward object.

30. Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), book 1, chapter 6, section 1, 28.

31. Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic, or the Art of Thinking*, trans. Jill Vance Buroker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229.

32. Berkeley's estimation of the senses is, if anything, more astutely critical than Arnauld and Nicole's. Just before presenting their version of (vi), they say that we *can* know by sense that one thing is larger than another, but it is a lesson of Berkeley's theory of vision that we cannot, at least if what we know "by sense" is what we would could know had the relevant senses been conferred upon us only at that moment. Were we thrown into the world, fully developed but innocent of experience, we could not know that an elephant is larger than the mouse at its side in our visual field, because we could not know how far away each of them was.

33. William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 103.

34. For a suggestion along these lines, see *Essay on Vision*, 130, where Berkeley implies that a kind of reflection on ideas of sense—an act of calm attention—is needed to determine what those ideas contain. Merely having the ideas is not enough.

35. See also *Essay on Vision*, 19, on our reflexive knowledge of the act of judgment. I do not think Berkeley supposes that we always have reflexive knowledge of the expectations we arrive at by suggestion, even if he does insist that the expectations be triggered by ideas of which we *are* conscious.

36. For a passage suggesting that a belief produced by such a process can count as knowledge, see 201 of the *Dialogues*. (Hylas is speaking, but Philonous approves of what he says.) Berkeley never gives the nature of knowledge the kind of attention it receives from contemporary epistemologists. He recognizes that suggestion, even when functioning properly, can lead to false belief (see *Essay on Vision*, 45), but he does not consider the consequences.

37. My understanding of the role that reflection might play in Berkeley has been shaped by my reading of Ernest Sosa, "How to Resolve the Pyrrhonian Problematic: A Lesson from Descartes," *Philosophical Studies* 85 (1997): 229–49.

38. Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 116.

39. See Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections*, 116–17.

DON GARRETT

"A Small Tincture of Pyrrhonism"

Skepticism and Naturalism in Hume's Science of Man

> If any of the learned be inclined, from their natural temper, to haughtiness or obstinacy, a small tincture of Pyrrhonism might abate their pride, by showing them, that the few advantages, which they may have attained over their fellows, are but inconsiderable, if compared with the universal perplexity and confusion, which is inherent in human nature.
>
> —David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

The relation between "Hume's naturalism" and "Hume's skepticism" constitutes one of the most fundamental and controversial issues in the interpretation of his entire philosophy. Some hold that Hume is ultimately a naturalist at the expense of his skepticism, while others hold that he is ultimately a skeptic at the expense of his naturalism. Many hold that he is inconsistently both a naturalist and a skeptic, while still others maintain that skepticism and naturalism are somehow compatible elements in a coherent Humean philosophy.

Commentators on Hume's philosophy do not always specify what they mean by "naturalism," and Hume does not use the term himself;[1] but we may fairly define it for our limited purposes as *the program of providing causal explanations for mental and other phenomena*. As such, it provides the programmatic underpinning for his proposed "science of man." Hume *does* use the term "scepticism," and he applies it to his own philosophy as well as to the philosophies of others.[2] Yet surprisingly few commentators have

tried to state with precision what Hume means by this term or in what his own skepticism consists. This unsettled state of affairs is especially ironic because Hume begins his own discussion of skepticism in section 12 of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by posing the very questions that concern us: "What is meant by a sceptic? And how far is it possible to push these philosophical principles of doubt and uncertainty?"[3]

Among the happy exceptions to the general obscurity that I have described, none is more bracing or more salutary than that provided by the writings of Robert Fogelin, who has discussed no fewer than six different cross-classifying distinctions between or among kinds of skepticism,[4] indicating how he thinks Hume stands with respect to each of them. I propose to employ the tools provided by Fogelin's rich set of distinctions to develop and defend my own account of Hume's skepticism and of its relation to his program of naturalism. First, I will survey Fogelin's distinctions and explain his characterization of Hume's skepticism in relation to these distinctions. Second, I will pose four puzzles that arise from these characterizations of Hume's skepticism. Third, I will examine Hume's own conceptions of skepticism and reason, and I will introduce two further distinctions that will prove useful in light of these conceptions. Fourth, I will use these distinctions to examine more closely the content and character of Hume's conclusions about skeptical topics—focusing (as Fogelin does) on Hume's conclusions about induction, the senses, and reason. Finally, on the basis of this examination of the content and character of Hume's conclusions, I will offer a revised characterization of Hume's skepticism and a solution to the four puzzles posed by Fogelin's original account; and these will allow a clearer understanding of the way in which Hume's naturalism and his skepticism are mutually supporting.

I. Classifications of Skepticism

At various places in his writings on Hume, Fogelin in effect distinguishes possible kinds of skepticism along six different dimensions. We may call these their *domain*, their *character*, their *object*, their *origin*, their *degree*, and their *persistence*.

Domain

Perhaps the most obvious distinction among varieties of skepticism concerns their domain—that is, the sets of propositions toward which

they are directed. The domain of a given instance of skepticism may be either *general* or *limited*. General skepticism concerns all propositions whatsoever; limited skepticism is directed only toward propositions of a particular subject matter or other kind. Hume recognizes many skeptical domains. Among those that Fogelin considers at length are propositions concerning unobserved "matters of fact" affirmed through (what we now call) induction and propositions concerning the existence of bodies (i.e., external physical objects, which Hume also calls "continu'd and distinct existences") accepted through (what Hume calls) "the senses." Fogelin draws special attention, however, to Hume's often-neglected treatment in *Treatise* 1.4.1 ("Of scepticism with regard to reason") and 1.4.7 ("Conclusion of this book") of an argument intended to show that reason operating alone would ultimately subvert itself. This self-subversion would occur, according to Hume, through the repeated application of a process of revising the probability of judgments by consideration of the reliability of the faculties that produce them. Since, according to Hume, this involves a reduction first of "knowledge to probability" and then of probability to "nothing," Fogelin argues that *this* kind of Humean skepticism, at least, "transcends its specific target, reason, and yields a skepticism that is wholly general."[5]

Character

The character of skepticism as Fogelin describes it may be *theoretical*, *prescriptive*, or *practicing*. *Theoretical skepticism* is a positive stance toward the view that there is a lack of "rational grounds, warrant, or justification" for assenting to the propositions of a specified domain. *Prescriptive* skepticism is a positive stance toward the view that one ought not to assent—typically issuing in a recommendation to resist or refrain from assent—to the propositions of a specified domain. *Practicing* skepticism is a stance of actual doubting, or refraining from assent to, the propositions of a specified domain. Of course, theoretical skepticism about a domain can provide one basis for prescriptive skepticism about it; and prescriptive skepticism about a domain, if acted upon, can lead to practicing skepticism about it. Nevertheless, as Fogelin emphasizes, any of these kinds of skepticism may occur without the occurrence of any of the others.[6] As Fogelin sees it, Hume's position embodies theoretical skepticism, prescriptive skepticism, and practicing skepticism, but in importantly different ways.[7]

Object

The object of skepticism may be either *epistemological* or *conceptual*. As Fogelin explains it, *epistemological skepticism* does not concern the intelligibility of a domain of propositions but only the basis for assenting to propositions within it, whereas *conceptual skepticism* concerns the very intelligibility of a domain of propositions. So defined, these both seem to be species of theoretical skepticism—concerned, respectively, with denying grounds for assent *without* questioning intelligibility and denying grounds for assent *by* questioning intelligibility.[8] As Fogelin observes, most of Hume's skepticism—including his skepticism in such domains as induction, the senses, and reason—seems clearly epistemological rather than conceptual, and that is therefore the focus of Fogelin's concern, as it will be of mine.[9]

Origin

The origin of skepticism may be either *antecedent* or *consequent*. The distinction between antecedent and consequent skepticism is one of two distinctions that Hume himself draws and emphasizes in section 12 of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. As Hume explains it, the former is "a species of scepticism, antecedent to all study and philosophy, which . . . recommends an universal doubt, not only of all our former opinions and principles, but also of our very faculties" (*EHU* 12.3). He contrasts this with "another species of scepticism, consequent to science and enquiry, when men are supposed to have discovered either the absolute fallaciousness of their mental faculties or their unfitness to reach any fixed determination in all those curious subjects of speculation, about which they are commonly employed" (*EHU* 12.5).

Fogelin classifies Hume's skepticism concerning the topics of induction and reason's potential self-subversion, among others, as instances of antecedent skepticism,[10] and he also classifies *some* of Hume's skepticism concerning belief in external bodies (specifically, that minimizing or denying the role of reason) as antecedent. In contrast, he classifies much of Hume's account of morals (which displays the workings of moral sentiments) and his positive explanation of belief in bodies (which displays the various fictions and confusions that give rise to the belief in "continu'd and distinct existence") as consequent skepticism.[11]

Degree

The degree of skepticism may be either *unmitigated* or *mitigated*. For example, an unmitigated theoretical skepticism about a domain embodies

the view that assent to any proposition within it is *utterly* without rational ground, warrant, or justification; a mitigated theoretical skepticism embodies only the view that the rational ground, warrant, or justification of assent to such propositions is limited, or minimal, or less than generally supposed, or less than is desirable, or otherwise falls below some specified or implied standard. Similarly, an unmitigated practicing skepticism would consist in a *total* lack of assent, whereas a mitigated practicing skepticism would consist only in *some degree* of uncertainty, caution, or less-than-wholehearted assent. This distinction of degree is central to the second of the two distinctions between kinds of skepticism that Hume draws and emphasizes in section 12 of the *Enquiry*—although he does not use the term "unmitigated," preferring instead the terms "Pyrrhonian" and "excessive." (Fogelin also uses the term "radical.") Hume does use the term "mitigated," however, which he uses interchangeably with "Academic." (Fogelin also uses the phrase "milk and water.") Hume himself distinguishes two ways in which skepticism can be *mitigated* or *Academic*. The first consists in "a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty" and is therefore a limitation of *degree* (*EHU* 12.24). The second, however, consists in "the limitation of our enquiries to such subjects as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding," leaving aside "distant and high enquiries" and "sublime topics" (*EHU* 12.25) and is hence more properly a limitation of *domain*. Despite Hume's broader usage of "mitigated," I will follow Fogelin in using the terms "unmitigated" and "mitigated" to mark only a distinction of degree. Fogelin interprets Hume's treatment of reason's potential for self-subversion through iterated judgments of probability (*THN* 1.4.1) as expressing a general epistemological theoretical skepticism that is wholly unmitigated or "Pyrrhonian"—that is, as expressing the view that all beliefs whatever are utterly without rational warrant. He also judges Hume's discussions of beliefs resulting from induction and the senses to express unmitigated theoretical skepticism about those specific domains. He observes, in contrast, that Hume's recommendation of a "degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty" as the constant accompaniments of "a just reasoner" (*EHU* 12.24) expresses a thoroughly *mitigated* general prescriptive skepticism.

Persistence

Finally, the persistence of skepticism may be either *constant* or *variable*. It is constant if the skeptic maintains the same degree of skepticism through time and reflection; it is variable if the degree of skepticism increases or

decreases with changes in the skeptic's perspective or focus of attention. In his earlier writings (1983 and 1985) on Hume, Fogelin contrasts the apparent constancy of the unmitigated general theoretical epistemological skepticism that he finds in Hume with the apparent variability of Hume's practicing and prescriptive general skepticism. Although Fogelin identifies episodes that he regards as constituting unmitigated practicing and prescriptive skepticism—as well as other episodes in which practicing and prescriptive skepticism are altogether absent—he concludes that for the greater part of his philosophical writing, Hume is a mitigated practicing and prescriptive skeptic,[12] practicing and recommending the same Academic modesty and caution that he describes and praises as "useful and durable" in section 12 of the *Enquiry*.[13]

II. Four Puzzles

As attractive and comprehensive as this characterization of Hume's skepticism and its relation to his naturalism is, it leaves us with at least four puzzles. These concern, respectively, the manner in which Hume *begins* his consideration of skeptical domains, the manner in which he *conducts* his consideration of skeptical domains, the manner in which he *concludes* his consideration of skeptical domains, and the manner in which he *proceeds after* his consideration of skeptical domains.

First Puzzle

The first puzzle concerns the manner in which Hume begins his consideration of skeptical domains. Hume famously concludes in *Treatise* 1.3.6 that the inferences we call "inductive" (and which he designates by a variety of other terms) are "not determin'd by reason." On Fogelin's account—as on many others—this conclusion expresses Hume's unmitigated theoretical skepticism about induction. Yet Hume does not seem to treat this conclusion as expressing skepticism of any kind at all—neither mitigated nor unmitigated, and neither theoretical, nor prescriptive, nor practicing. In arguing for and drawing this conclusion, he expresses no hint of skeptical doubt and neither commends nor even mentions restraint of assent. Nor does he give any indication that his conclusion concerns grounds, warrant, or justification in any way. The conclusion occurs, not as part of an investigation of warrant or justification, but as part of an investigation of one of three psychological elements (namely, "the inference

from the impression to the idea'') in the occurrence of beliefs deriving from the relation of cause and effect; Hume's famous conclusion—namely, ''not reason''—is the negative answer to the same causal question to which ''custom or habit'' proves to be the positive answer. Furthermore, none of the *premises* of Hume's argument are premises about warrant or justification.[14] It is more than a hundred pages after the famous conclusion, in *Treatise* 1.4.7.3, that Hume finally draws *any* connection between it and skepticism,[15] and then his final observation is simply this: induction's dependence (along with the dependence of the senses and memory) upon the ''seemingly trivial'' operation of the enlivening of ideas constitutes ''an infirmity common to human nature.'' Thus, it appears that Hume's manner of drawing his famous conclusion about induction in the *Treatise* is not compatible with interpreting it as an expression of unmitigated theoretical skepticism. Parallel, though not quite identical, remarks apply to Hume's treatment of induction in the *Enquiry*.[16]

Second Puzzle

The second puzzle concerns the manner in which Hume *conducts* his consideration of skeptical domains—specifically, in relation to what we have called the *source* of skepticism. Fogelin (at least in 1985 and 1993a—but see note 11 for an important qualification) classifies most of Hume's important theoretical skepticism as antecedent rather than consequent. Yet in describing the distinction between *antecedent* and *consequent* skepticism in section 12 of the *Enquiry*, Hume himself clearly identifies antecedent skepticism not with his own skepticism but with Descartes' methodological doubt. Hume's complete description of it is as follows:

> There is a species of scepticism, antecedent to all study and philosophy, which is much inculcated by Descartes and others, as a sovereign preservative against error and precipitate judgment. It recommends an universal doubt, not only of all our former opinions and principles, but also of our very faculties; of whose veracity, say they, we must assure ourselves, by a chain of reasoning, deduced from some original principle, which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful. But neither is there any such original principle, which has a prerogative above others, that are self-evident and convincing: Or if there were, could we advance a step beyond it, but by the use of those very faculties, of which we are supposed to be already diffident. The Cartesian doubt, therefore, were it ever possible to be attained by any human creature (as it plainly is not) would be entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject.

> It must, however, be confessed, that this species of scepticism, when more moderate, may be understood in a very reasonable sense, and is a necessary preparative to the study of philosophy, by preserving a proper impartiality in our judgments, and weaning our mind from all those prejudices, which we may have imbibed from education or rash opinion. To begin with clear and self-evident principles, to advance by timorous and sure steps, to review frequently our conclusions, and examine accurately all their consequences; though by these means we shall make both a slow and a short progress in our systems; are the only methods, by which we can ever hope to reach truth, and attain a proper stability and certainty in our determinations. (*EHU* 12.4)

Here Hume clearly rejects all antecedent skepticism other than the moderate or mitigated kind that amounts merely to preparatory caution. He abuses rather than endorses the "Cartesian" view that we must be assured of the veracity of our faculties "by a chain of reasoning, deduced from some original principle, which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful."

Having rejected all but the mildest antecedent skepticism, Hume then goes on to write:

> There is another species of scepticism, consequent to science and enquiry, when men are supposed to have discovered, either the absolute fallaciousness of their mental faculties, or their unfitness to reach any fixed determination in all those curious subjects of speculation, about which they are commonly employed. Even our very senses are brought into dispute, by a certain species of philosophers; and the maxims of common life are subjected to the same doubt as the most profound principles or conclusions of metaphysics and theology. As these paradoxical tenets (if they may be called tenets) are to be met with in some philosophers, and the refutation of them in several, they naturally excite our curiosity, and make us enquire into the arguments, on which they may be founded. (*EHU* 12.5)

This paragraph serves as his immediate introduction to all of the skeptical considerations—including those concerning the senses and the external world, "abstract reasoning," and induction and unobserved matters of fact—that he discusses in the *Enquiry*. Similarly in the *Treatise*, Hume does not even begin to confront skepticism until the end of section 2 of part 4 of book 1, *after* his investigation of the understanding is nearly complete, and each of the skeptical considerations that he then addresses draws crucially on particular results of his investigations concerning the manner of human cognitive functioning. Evidently, then, Hume regards his arguments in *every* skeptical domain as giving rise specifically to consequent skepticism.[17]

Third Puzzle

The third puzzle concerns the manner in which Hume *concludes* his consideration of skeptical domains. In the *Treatise*, he does so by endorsing, at the end of book 1, a normative principle governing the basing of assent on reason that we may call the "Title Principle": "Where reason is lively, and mixes itself with some propensity, it ought to be assented to. Where it does not, it never can have any title to operate upon us" (*THN* 1.4.7.11). Here, Hume tells us that some beliefs are not just permitted but *ought* to be assented to, and assented to because they result from reason as employed under certain specified circumstances. But to say that we *ought* to assent to some judgments because they are deliverances of *reason* seems to entail that belief in these propositions is *rationally warranted*. Thus, Hume's concluding adoption of the Title Principle seems incompatible with his maintaining an unmitigated theoretical skepticism.

Fourth Puzzle

The final puzzle concerns the manner in which Hume *proceeds after* his consideration of skeptical domains. He does not renounce his previous endorsement, in the introduction to the *Treatise*, of "the experimental method" of reasoning, and he continues to evaluate some beliefs as better supported by reasoning than others throughout books 2 and 3, despite his consideration of relevant skeptical domains in book 1. In section 10 of the *Enquiry*, Hume endorses the beliefs of the "wise," who "proportion their belief to the evidence," in contrast to the beliefs of those who accept testimony for the occurrence of miracles—a selective endorsement that appears incompatible, as Fogelin has remarked, with the unmitigated theoretical skepticism about induction that Fogelin and others find in section 4 of the *Enquiry*. How can Hume maintain that some beliefs in a domain are better supported by reasoning or evidence than others, if he is simultaneously an unmitigated theoretical skeptic about that domain?[18]

III. Hume's Conceptions of Skepticism and Reason

In order to resolve these puzzles, we must first understand how Hume conceives of *skepticism* and how he conceives of *reason*. Hume recognizes a variety of what he calls "sceptical topics." The concluding section of book

1 of the *Treatise* offers a series—indeed, a crescendo—of five such topics.[19] The concluding section of the *Enquiry* surveys an overlapping a list of skeptical topics.[20]

Hume's Conception of Skepticism

Hume mentions both "sceptical dispositions"—i.e., dispositions to practicing skepticism[21]—and "sceptical principles." Some of these "sceptical principles" are evidently *practical* principles—i.e., principles of prescriptive skepticism.[22] However, Hume also writes of "*speculative* principles of scepticism."[23] When he suggests what such speculative principles might be, some are formulated in terms of reason's incapacity to accomplish particular tasks,[24] while others are formulated more generally, in terms of the degree of "fallaciousness" or "unfitness" of "our faculties" (*EHU* 12.5).

Hume recognizes two ancient skeptical schools: *Pyrrhonian skepticism* and *Academic skepticism*. As Julia Annas has recently argued, Hume does not exhibit, and evidently did not possess, deep historical knowledge of these two schools.[25] The substantive distinction between them, as he applies it, is limited to one of degree and domain. As we have already observed, he sees Academic skepticism as refraining from enquiry and belief concerning "high and distant" matters beyond human reach, but as otherwise practically accepting and prescriptively recommending some propositions as more probable than others while maintaining and recommending restraint from certainty and dogmatism. In allowing that the Academics treat some propositions as more probable than others, Hume is following a traditional—though disputed—interpretation of Academic skepticism. He sees Pyrrhonian skepticism, in contrast, as prescriptively recommending the *total* suspension of belief and as claiming, in at least some cases, the practical achievement of such total suspension of belief. He does not so much as mention the Pyrrhonian distinction (made by Sextus) between the evident and the non-evident, nor the Pyrrhonian principle of acting in accordance with appearances while suspending judgment. Although Hume recognizes a distinction between *sensory impressions* and *beliefs*, he would surely reject any further distinction within the realm of ideas between (what a Pyrrhonian might call) *motivating cognitive appearances* and *judgments*. *Motivating cognitive appearances*, *judgments*, and *beliefs* are simply the same thing for Hume—namely, lively ideas. Such ideas are always (or practically always) required to direct human beings in acting on their desires or passions. If lively ideas are present, for Hume, then belief is present; if such ideas are absent, then inaction must follow.

Thus, while he denies that Pyrrhonists can achieve general or broad suspension of judgment or belief for more than a few moments of despair or amazement (*EHU* 12.23), he also holds that achieving a durable state of Pyrrhonian doubt, if it were possible, would result in total inaction. Although episodes of practicing Pyrrhonism are necessarily brief, on Hume's view, they can nevertheless be highly salutary, for a "tincture" of such Pyrrhonian doubt—the largest size in which it can be obtained, in fact—is useful for abating the "pride of the learned" (*EHU* 12.24); being "once convinced of the force of the Pyrrhonian doubt" naturally encourages a more useful and durable mitigated practicing skepticism. Hume writes that "the chief and most confounding objection to *excessive* skepticism [is] that no durable good can ever result from it; while it remains in its full force and vigour" (*EHU* 12.23). Presumably Hume means, at least primarily, that this is the chief objection to *practicing* Pyrrhonism.

Although Hume does not recognize a distinction between *belief* and (non-sensory) *cognitive appearance*, he regularly employs a distinction between lower-order states (including beliefs) and higher-order attitudes toward those states. These higher-order attitudes include attitudes of approval and disapproval. When the lower-order states in question are beliefs, these higher-order attitudes include what we may call *acceptance-as-true* and *rejection-as-false*. Because Hume not only *exhibits* but also discusses and *evaluates* species of skepticism—which include states of doubt, prescription, and belief—we must distinguish between the *embodiment* of a species of skepticism and the *endorsement* of a species of skepticism. One *embodies* a species of skepticism whenever one directly instantiates that kind of skepticism—in the case of practical skepticism, for example, by doubting; in the case of prescriptive skepticism, by prescribing or affirming the rightness of doubt; and in the case of theoretical skepticism, by taking up a positive stance (such as belief) toward a view concerning rational grounds, warrant, or justification. One *endorses* a species of skepticism, in contrast, when one takes a higher-order attitude of approval toward the embodiment of that species of skepticism.[26] One obvious application of this distinction is in describing the relation between practicing skepticism and prescriptive skepticism, for the latter is a kind of endorsement (namely, recommendation or affirmation-of-rightness) of the former. However, the full scope of the distinction is broader than this particular application, for one may also endorse or fail to endorse the embodiment of theoretical skepticism, and one may even endorse or fail to endorse the embodiment of prescriptive skepticism (which, as noted, is

itself a kind of endorsement). Endorsement is *considered*, we may say, when it follows and is based on a review of all of the relevant considerations that the endorser is able to discover; endorsement becomes *authorial* when an author promulgates a work with the intention that his or her endorsement be part of what is conveyed to the target audience of the work. Typically, of course, authors of nonfiction works *accept as true* the beliefs that are expressed by the statements they make in a work, and this acceptance-as-true becomes an authorial endorsement when the work is promulgated. However, this is not always the case; for example, a diary may express the *temporary* acceptance-as-true of a belief that is rejected or supplanted later in the work and is therefore not authorially endorsed.

Hume's Conception of Reason

Speculative skeptical principles, as Hume conceives them, concern the capacities or incapacities, the fitness or fallaciousness, of "reason" specifically or "our faculties" more generally. The naturalistic cognitive and conative psychology that constitutes what Hume calls "the science of man" is an investigation of the operations of human faculties, which faculties include (among others) imagination, memory, the senses, the passions, the moral sense—and reason. It is often claimed that Hume uses the term "reason" in many different senses. In fact, however, he consistently uses it in a single sense—as a term in cognitive psychology designating the faculty of making inferences and engaging in argument. As such, it is one faculty among others, although it is a crucial one.[27] He does, however, recognize two distinct operations of reason: demonstrative reasoning and probable reasoning. When Hume writes of what can or cannot be done by reason, he is addressing the specific question of what can or cannot be produced by exercises of our inferential faculty. Thus, for example, he asks concerning inductive inferences "whether we are determined by reason to make the transition, or by a certain association and relation of perceptions" (*THN* 1.3.6.4); he writes that "belief arises [in a particular case] immediately, without any new operation of the reason or imagination" (*THN* 1.3.8.10); he notes the principle that "reason alone can never give rise to any original idea" (*THN* 1.3.14.5); he writes of "the reason of animals" (*THN* 1.3.16); he declares that "our reason must be considered as a kind of cause, of which truth is the natural effect . . . but such a one as may be frequently prevented" (*THN* 1.4.1.1); he asks whether it is "the senses, reason, or the imagination, that produces the opinion of a continued or of a distinct existence" (*THN* 1.4.2.2); he notes that "reason is incapable of dispelling . . . clouds of

philosophical melancholy and delirium'' (*THN* 1.4.7.9); and he argues that ''reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition'' (*THN* 2.3.3.4). While the faculty of reason is one of the chief tools for investigating human nature—and therefore enjoys an obvious provisional authority—describing something as ''produced by reason'' is not primarily to praise it, but to explain it.

In light of the fact that reason is, for Hume, just one of the natural faculties involved in belief, we can and should distinguish among three different properties of beliefs: *production by reason, epistemic merit*, and *rational support*. A belief is *produced by reason* if and only if it results from an operation of the inferential faculty. A belief has *epistemic merit* if and only if it deserves or is worthy of belief or assent. These are different properties: a belief might have epistemic merit even though it was not produced by reason (memories or beliefs about immediate sense experiences are likely examples), and a belief might lack epistemic merit even though it was produced by reason (for example, if the kind of reason involved turned out to be radically defective or untrustworthy). Finally, a belief has *rational support* if and only if it has epistemic merit *because* of the manner in which it is produced by reason. Hence, a belief might be produced by reason *and* have epistemic merit, and yet still lack rational support—because its epistemic merit did not *derive from* its production by reason.

Of course, a belief cannot have rational support if it does not arise through an exercise of the inferential faculty at all—it cannot receive support *through* its origin in reason if it *has* no origin in reason. However, a belief might have epistemic merit without rational support—depending on what kind of features or origin the belief did have (perhaps in relation to other faculties) and on the relation of those features or that origin to the property of epistemic merit. This is the very prospect that Hume raises when he writes, concerning the crucial step in all inductive inferences, that ''if the mind be not engaged by argument [i.e., reason] to make this step, it must be induced by some other principle of equal weight and authority'' (*EHU* 5.2); but it is a prospect that can be obscured by terms such as ''rational grounds,'' ''rational warrant,'' or ''rational justification,'' all of which are potentially ambiguous, as many writers use them, between *epistemic merit* and *rational support*. Given Hume's capacity to distinguish these two properties, we may replace the potentially ambiguous term ''theoretical skepticism'' with two more precise terms: *rational support skepticism*, we may say, is the view that assent to propositions in a given domain will lack rational support; *epistemic merit skepticism*, we may say, is the view that assent to propositions in a given domain will lack epistemic merit.

IV. Hume's Conclusions

With these further distinctions in mind, we are now in a position to examine Hume's conclusions in the primary skeptical domains of induction, the senses, and reason, and to determine what kinds of skepticism they express. I will survey these domains in the order in which they appear in Hume's rehearsal of skeptical topics in the final section of *Treatise*, book 1.

Induction and Beliefs Concerning Unobserved Matters of Fact

We have already noted one of Hume's conclusions concerning induction, which he presents in the *Treatise* as follows: "When the mind, therefore, passes from the idea or impression of one object to the idea or belief of another, it is not determin'd by reason, but by certain principles, which associate together the ideas of these objects, and unite them in the imagination" (*THN* 1.3.6.12).[28] As attention to the argument for this conclusion reveals, and as its location in the text suggests, this conclusion is a causal claim about what reason *does not produce*. Specifically, Hume claims that, in every inductive inference, there is a step taken by the mind in which it moves *from* past experience of a constant conjunction plus an impression of a token of one conjunct-type *to* a belief in the existence of a token of the other conjunct-type. Hume calls this move "the presumption" or "presupposition" that "nature is uniform" or that "the future will resemble the past," and he argues that this move is not itself caused by any further inferential component but rather by the mechanism of custom or habit. This is not to say that inductive inferences are not themselves *instances* of reasoning—he consistently calls them that in the course of the very argument in question—but rather that a key transition in these inferences or reasonings is not *causally mediated by another, component* piece of reasoning. (This is in implicit contrast with Locke's account of demonstrative reason, in which larger demonstrative inferences *are* mediated by simpler component demonstrative inferences.[29])

Although this conclusion is itself a conclusion in cognitive psychology, it also implies rational support skepticism specifically about the "presumption" of the uniformity of nature, since it shows that that presumption is not caused by reasoning at all.[30] (In actual inductive reasoning, Hume holds, we "make" the presumption by engaging in a *movement of thought* rather than by *forming a belief in a proposition*; but we can later formulate

the presumption in the form of a proposition.) However, Hume's conclusion neither expresses nor entails any epistemic merit skepticism. Indeed, it does not even express or by itself entail any rational support skepticism about the *beliefs resulting* from inductive inferences—as contrasted with the *presumption* on which those inferences rest. For Hume consistently holds (and it would be hard to deny) that beliefs attained through inductive inference are themselves produced by operations of probable (i.e., inductive) reason.[31] Nor, it may be added, does his cited conclusion about induction express any prescriptive or practicing skepticism.[32]

Although Hume does not express practicing skepticism about induction when he reaches this conclusion, he does, of course, *ultimately* discuss practicing skepticism about induction—and he does so just where one might reasonably expect, in his rehearsal of skeptical topics at the end of *Treatise* book 1 (where he confronts and undergoes practicing skepticism) and in *Enquiry* section 12 (where he describes practicing skepticism without undergoing it). He holds that practicing skepticism about induction arises naturally from (i) the realization that we cannot "give a reason" for our making the presupposition of the uniformity of nature and (ii) the realization that the presupposition itself depends on custom.[33] In the *Treatise*, Hume expresses—and in the *Enquiry* he discusses—both practicing skepticism and *concern* about the possibility of epistemic merit skepticism, and he does so in a way that is based *in part* on these results about induction. Nothing he says, however, constitutes either an embodiment or an endorsement of either unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism or unmitigated prescriptive skepticism about induction.

The Senses and Belief in Bodies

Concerning belief in an external world of ("continu'd and distinct") bodies perceived by the senses, Hume concludes in the *Treatise* that both vulgar and philosophical beliefs in continued and distinct existences depend on "trivial qualities of the fancy [i.e., of the imagination] . . . conducted by false suppositions" (*THN* 1.4.2.56). He draws similarly negative conclusions in the *Enquiry* (*EHU* 12.7–14). In both cases, the argument depends on an intermediate conclusion: " 'Tis impossible . . . that from the existence of any of the qualities of [perceptions], we can ever form any conclusion concerning the existence of the [continued and distinct bodies beyond our perceptions], or ever satisfy our reason in this particular" (*THN* 1.4.2.47).

Hume does allow in the *Treatise* that the belief in bodies arises, *in part*, from irregular "reasonings" that are "oblique and indirect," and

which require "the cooperation of some other principles" of the imagination (*THN* 1.4.2.20–21). As the quoted passage indicates, however, he holds that demonstrative and probable reasoning from our sensory experiences alone is insufficient to produce the belief, and he also holds that, without the occurrence of confusions made by the imagination, reasoning from our sense experiences would lead us not to accept but to abandon the belief. Hence, this intermediate conclusion strongly suggests an unmitigated rational support skepticism concerning the sense-based belief in the existence of bodies. In the *Treatise*, intense consideration of his main conclusion about the senses and the line of argument leading up to it induces him to write:

> I begun this subject with premising, that we ought to have an implicit faith in our senses. . . . But to be ingenuous, I feel myself *at present* of a quite contrary sentiment, and am more inclin'd to repose no faith at all in my senses, or rather imagination, than to place in it such an implicit confidence. I cannot conceive how such trivial qualities of the fancy, conducted by such false suppositions, can ever lead to any solid and rational system. . . . What then can we look for from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falshood? And how can we justify to ourselves any belief we repose in them? (*THN* 1.4.2.56)

This is a memorable expression of temporary unmitigated practicing skepticism about beliefs in bodies resulting from the senses, and it implies a temporary attraction to unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism about them. It does not go so far as to express an unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism about the senses, however; for even if epistemic merit (and not just rational support) were to *require* a "solid and rational system," the fact still remains that "I cannot conceive how p" does not yet entail "not-p." More importantly, even if the passage did express unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism about the senses, it is clearly identified as a report of temporary sentiments; it is certainly not an authorial endorsement of unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism. Nor does it constitute any attempt on Hume's part to express a considered or authorial endorsement of unmitigated epistemic merit (or prescriptive) skepticism about the senses.[34]

Reason and the Iterated Probability of Causes

Concerning reason's potential to subvert itself through repeated applications of revisionary judgments—"scepticism with regard to reason"—Hume

concludes: "When I reflect on the natural fallibility of my judgment, I have less confidence in my opinions, than when I only consider the objects concerning which I reason; and when I proceed still farther, to turn this scrutiny against every successive estimation I make of my faculties, all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence" (*THN* 1.4.1.6).

This passage, at least, might seem to be an endorsement of unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism and a source of unmitigated prescriptive skepticism. Once its context and terminology are understood, however, we can see that it is not—although it indeed makes a truly remarkable claim. Briefly, Hume's argument is this: because our faculty of reason is a cause that sometimes but not always leads to truth, we can apply to it the kind of probable reasoning that he describes earlier in the *Treatise* as "the probability of causes" (*THN* 1.3.12). This involves revising the level of confidence one feels concerning an original judgment by a consideration of the proportion of cases in which such judgments have been right or wrong in the past. Crucially, but for reasons too complicated to explore here,[35] he claims (i) that the normal operation of the probability of causes in this way would always result in a diminution of the original degree of conviction or assent; (ii) that the same process can be applied again to the new judgment that one's faculties were accurate in assessing the probability that one's faculties were operating accurately in the first judgment, in a way that would ultimately, in accordance with the probability of causes, further reduce the degree of conviction or assent to the original judgment; and (iii) that this process could, in accordance with the probability of causes, be iterated indefinitely until the original judgment lost all conviction or assent. Thus, Hume claims to discover that the very faculty of reason that produces psychological assent would also, unless prevented or deflected, ultimately destroy that same psychological assent through repeated self-application. It is to this causal outcome that Hume is referring when he writes of a "a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence." The term "evidence," in this conclusion, is simply a synonym for "belief"; here, as everywhere else in the *Treatise*, it refers not to epistemic merit, but rather to "evidentness"—that is, a quantity of psychological assent.[36] In saying that "all the rules of logic require" this diminution and extinction, he is referring to his claim that this application of the "probability of causes" is a standard one of the kind described in his "rules for judging of causes and effects"—which he has earlier called "all the LOGIC I think proper to employ in my reasoning" (*THN* 1.3.15.11).

Remarkably, when Hume *first* draws this conclusion about reason's potential self-subversion, it does not even serve as an occasion for *practicing* skepticism. Instead, it serves chiefly as an occasion to investigate *how* reason is prevented from destroying itself through its own operations in this way. His conclusion is that reason is prevented from operating in this way by a "trivial feature of the imagination"—namely, that whereby "after the first and second decision . . . the action of the mind becomes forc'd and unnatural, and the ideas faint and obscure . . . the posture of the mind is uneasy. . .and the spirits are not govern'd in their movements by the same laws, at least not to the same degree, as when they flow in their usual channel" (*THN* 1.4.1.10). When he announces this discovery, he employs it as confirmation of his theory that belief consists in the liveliness or vivacity of ideas.

In the final section of book 1, however, the conclusion *does* contribute to the general practicing skepticism induced by the rehearsal of skeptical topics, and it also becomes the occasion to discover a final skeptical topic: the difficulty of finding a *prescriptive standard* by which to determine *which* operations of reason should be approved. This difficulty leads to what Hume calls "a very dangerous dilemma." He claims to have discovered that it is merely a feature of the imagination that allows us to avoid succumbing to reason's self-destruction, a feature that does so by weakening the efficacy of "refin'd and elaborate" argument. Yet how can we prescribe *accepting* that feature and *rejecting* the refined and elaborate arguments that would subvert reason's operations? First, the feature seems roughly on a par with other features of the imagination that lead to admitted absurdities; second, accepting the feature and rejecting refined and elaborate arguments cuts off much of science, which also contains refined and elaborate arguments; and third, the very argument that we *must* accept the feature and reject refined and elaborate arguments is itself a refined and elaborate argument. Yet we cannot simply reject the feature and accept all refined and elaborate arguments without accepting the view that reason *should* annihilate all belief through iterated self-application.[37] The intense contemplation of this result and the other elements of his skeptical rehearsal elicit from him his most striking expression of unmitigated practicing skepticism—an ideal example of what, in the *Enquiry*, he will call a "tincture of Pyrrhonism": "The *intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion as more probable or likely than another" (*THN* 1.4.7.8). The final phrase of this passage, which concerns how its

author "looks at" the probability of opinions, may well *hint at* a temporary embodiment of unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism. However, it does not *explicitly express* even a temporary embodiment of unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism, for one may find that an opinion *seems* improbable while still judging that it *deserves* to be found more probable. In any case, though, the passage certainly does not imply *any* higher-order attitude of *endorsement* for unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism, let alone a fully considered or authorial endorsement of it, for the passage is labeled as the report *only* of a transitory state of mind, occurring at a certain stage of Hume's investigation.[38] While the practicing skepticism expressed by the passage is undoubtedly intense, the passage also contains no hint of prescriptive skepticism.

Hume describes this state of mind as "philosophical melancholy and delirium." It cannot be sustained, he reports, but instead gives way, first, to an attitude of "indolence and spleen," in which he finds that he must continue to believe and act, but rejects philosophy because of his recollection of the pain that the rehearsal of skeptical topics has caused him and the difficulty of showing that philosophy will lead him to truth. This state of "indolence and spleen," however, gives way in turn to a return to philosophy itself, motivated by two passions—curiosity and ambition—and by the reflection that philosophy is a safer guide than is religion in matters about which we cannot help but speculate. In returning to philosophy, Hume has already found himself attracted to and operating on the prescriptive Title Principle that we noted earlier: "Where reason is lively and mixes itself with some propensity, it ought to be assented to. Where it does not, it never can have any title to operate on us" (*THN* 1.4.7.11). This principle, while originating partly from his passions rather than solely from reason itself, provides a solution to the "dangerous dilemma" of determining which aspects of reasoning and of the imagination to approve: it allows refined and elaborate reasoning that engages us, while allowing us to ignore reason's unengaging potential self-subversion. While still aware of his "skeptical principles"—that is, his discoveries of the "many infirmities" to which human cognitive nature is subject—he also reflects that those very infirmities provide him a reason to be "diffident of his philosophical doubts as well as his philosophical conviction" (*THN* 1.4.7.14). The result is a renewed determination to pursue philosophy in a skeptical spirit—that is, with a mitigated practicing skepticism. At no point has he expressed a fully considered or authorial endorsement of unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism or unmitigated prescriptive skepticism. Instead, he concludes by endorsing the Title Principle, which implies

that some beliefs, at least, do have rational support and should receive our assent. As Annas has remarked, Hume is, by ancient standards, a dogmatist—though, I would add, a mitigated one, just as he is a mitigated skeptic.

Hume's Skepticism and Hume's Naturalism

With this understanding of Hume's conclusions, we are now in a position to recharacterize his skepticism, in accordance with our revised categories of classification.

Hume's Skepticism Recharacterized

Hume's epistemological skepticism concerns many domains. All of it is consequent skepticism—based on his investigations of human cognitive operations—with the exception of a very mitigated preparatory caution that he both practices and recommends. His practicing skepticism is variable: it is unmitigated when he considers skeptical topics intensely, and this temporary unmitigated practicing skepticism is also potentially general. He sometimes reports temporarily losing his practicing skepticism entirely when he views matters in a particularly convincing way (*THN* 1.4.7.15). However, he at least frequently achieves and maintains a mitigated general practicing skepticism. His prescriptive skepticism, which recommends and endorses that achievement, is, at the end of his investigations, constant, general, and mitigated—except for the special domain of "high and distant enquiries," which (according to the *Enquiry*, at least) are to be avoided altogether and hence constitute a domain for unmitigated prescriptive skepticism. Once Hume has completed his investigation of our faculties, his rational support skepticism is constant and unmitigated—but limited in domain primarily to classes of beliefs that he has discovered are not produced by standard reasoning (such as the belief in the continued and distinct existence of bodies) or are not produced by reasoning at all (such as the presupposition of the uniformity of nature). His unmitigated rational support skepticism does not extend to the results of either demonstrative or inductive ("probable") reasoning generally. Intense contemplation of rational support skepticism within its appropriate domains is—along with other skeptical topics that show the "infirmities of human nature"—among the causes of temporary unmitigated practicing skepticism, and it thereby helps to provide a "tincture of Pyrrhonism." Finally,

his consideration of skeptical topics leads Hume to entertain with despair, near the end of book 1 of the *Treatise*, the *prospect* of general unmitigated constant epistemic merit skepticism. Perhaps he even implies, although he does not clearly state, that he has (as the result of the heating of his brain) temporarily *embodied* such skepticism. As author, however, he neither asserts nor endorses it. Instead, he ultimately asserts and authorially endorses the Title Principle, and he accepts a general epistemic merit skepticism that is constant but mitigated.

Solutions to Four Puzzles

With this understanding of Hume's skepticism, we are now in a position to resolve the four puzzles we discovered concerning Fogelin's earlier characterization of Hume's skepticism. The first puzzle was: *If Hume's famous conclusion in* Treatise 1.3.6*—namely, that a key step in inductive inference is "not determin'd by reason"—expresses unmitigated theoretical skepticism about induction, then why does he offer it without any mention or consideration of skepticism?* The solution is that Hume's famous conclusion does not express such skepticism; rather, it is a purely causal claim in cognitive psychology. While the conclusion obviously has implications for rational support skepticism concerning the principle of the uniformity of nature, Hume need not and does not consider those implications until his rehearsal of skeptical topics many pages later, at the end of book 1.

The second puzzle was: *If all of Hume's skepticism concerning induction and reason, as well as much of his skepticism concerning the senses, is antecedent skepticism, then why does Hume seem to reject all antecedent skepticism with the exception of a mild and mitigated preparatory attitude of caution?* The solution is that Hume's skepticism is not antecedent. Rather, he conceives all of his skeptical topics as instances of consequent skepticism, deriving from investigations into the actual operations of human reason and other human faculties. Skepticism results not from a priori considerations of any kind, but arises only insofar as his investigations produce disturbing or disquieting results about the nature of those faculties.

The third puzzle was: *If Hume is a general unmitigated theoretical skeptic, then why does he conclude his discussion of skeptical topics in the* Treatise *by endorsing the Title Principle, which seems incompatible with such skepticism?* The solution is that Hume is not a general unmitigated theoretical skeptic; instead, he accepts the Title Principle because he finds that it provides a prescriptive epistemic principle that he can both follow and approve. His investigations do lead both to unmitigated rational support

skepticism about some propositions (including the uniformity of nature and the existence of bodies) and to a variable practicing skepticism based in part on anxiety about general unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism—but not to a considered or authorial assertion or endorsement of either (i) general unmitigated rational support skepticism or (ii) general unmitigated epistemic merit skepticism.

The fourth puzzle was: *If Hume is a general unmitigated theoretical skeptic, then why does he continue to regard some beliefs as rationally better supported or more deserving of assent than others, even after his consideration of skeptical topics?* The solution, once again, is that he is not a general unmitigated theoretical skeptic, for he is neither a general unmitigated rational support skeptic nor a general unmitigated epistemic merit skeptic. The Title Principle allows for the possibility that some beliefs have epistemic merit and that some of them have this epistemic merit as a result of their production by reason.

Hume's Skepticism and Hume's Naturalism

An appealing and common conception of the relation between Hume's naturalism and his skepticism is as follows. Hume's project is a naturalistic one with two phases—in the negative first phase, Hume gives radical skeptical arguments to show that a class of beliefs lacks something like rational grounds, warrant, or justification in order to "clear the way" for a naturalistic explanation of them; in the positive second phase, Hume provides the naturalistic explanations themselves. Hume's skepticism is therefore simply in the service of his naturalism and is happily limited by it.

Fogelin has argued vigorously over the years that this common conception will not do—on the grounds that, once powerful radical skeptical arguments have been unleashed, they cannot be so easily tamed or neatly limited by naturalism, because, on the contrary, they will inevitably demand to be applied as well to the outcome of naturalism. I agree with Fogelin that the conception he attacks will not do; but I dispute a central part of that conception which he has not questioned: namely, that all or most of the first stage of Hume's strategy constitutes a piece of radical skepticism—drawing, as such skepticism must do in order to constitute a *first* stage, on strong a priori standards about the conditions that legitimate beliefs must meet. As I read Hume, he propounds no such a priori standards; and the initial, "negative" phase of his standard strategy, in which he shows that certain beliefs are not produced by reason, is not itself skeptical, but

naturalistic.[39] Far from employing skepticism *antecedently*, to clear the way for naturalism, Hume's procedure is naturalistic from the start: he begins by determining what natural operations—including but not always limited to reason—do *not* produce a belief or movement of the mind, and then he shows what *does* produce it instead. The *consequent* consideration of skeptical doubts that might result or of skeptical principles that might follow from his conclusions is deferred until the cognitive psychology is nearly concluded; only then does Hume face the question of whether what he has learned about the faculties he has been employing allows him to approve of their continued application. For most of the final section of book 1 of the *Treatise* the answer to that question is in doubt—but the final outcome is a mitigated and limited endorsement of his own reliance on reason and the senses, an endorsement that can withstand his awareness of the many limitations of human cognitive nature just discovered. Thus, naturalism leads naturally to a crisis of unmitigated practicing skeptical doubt, and the psychological defeat of that unmitigated practicing doubt incorporates the adoption of the only principle of epistemic merit that can now sustain a return to naturalism. This return to naturalism can occur, however, only in conjunction with a prescriptive and epistemic merit skepticism that is both constant and general—but mitigated.

Notes

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1. Nor, despite the impression one could easily get from the secondary literature, does he ever use the term "natural belief." Indeed, Hume says of the term "natural" that "there is none more ambiguous and equivocal" (*A Treatise of Human Nature* 3.1.2.7, Oxford Philosophical Texts Series, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000]; this work will henceforth be abbreviated in citations as *THN*, followed by the book number, part number, section number, and paragraph number). It was Norman Kemp Smith who popularized the application of the terms "naturalism" and "natural belief" to Hume's philosophy. See Kemp Smith, "The Naturalism of Hume [I and II]," *Mind* 14 (1905); and *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1941).

2. His first explicit self-identification as a skeptic—clearly foreshadowed, of course, but delayed for rhetorical effect—constitutes much of the dramatic point of the very last sentence of book 1 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in which he declares that his earlier verbal expressions of certainty imply no "dogmatical spirit, nor

conceited idea of my own judgment, which are sentiments that I am sensible can become nobody, and a sceptic still less than any other." In the appendix to the *Treatise*, he "pleads the privilege of a sceptic" in response to newfound problems for his account of personal identity; and in his *Abstract* of the *Treatise*, he remarks, "the reader will easily perceive, that the philosophy contain'd in this book is very skeptical" (paragraph 27, included in Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*). In the *Enquiry*, he coyly avoids applying the label of "sceptic" to himself (describing himself in section 4 as "a philosopher, who has some share of curiosity, I will not say scepticism"); but he provides a "skeptical solution" to his pivotal problem (in section 5), and he endorses (in section 12, part 3) a species of skepticism as "useful and durable."

3. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. The Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), henceforth abbreviated in citations as *EHU*. The numbers that follow *EHU* indicate the section number and the paragraph number. References in the text to "the *Enquiry*" are always to *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* rather than to *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*.

4. His 1994 book *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) draws other useful distinctions as well—such as that between skepticism that does and skepticism that does not accept its own self-refutation—but it addresses Hume's skepticism only in passing. Fogelin expands and revises his earlier treatments of Hume's skepticism in important ways—but without introducing additional distinctions among kinds of skepticism—in his "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy," *Hume Studies* 24 (1998): 161–69.

5. Fogelin goes on to mention one possible exception: beliefs about the immediate contents of one's own current experience. See p. 400 in Fogelin, "The Tendency of Hume's Scepticism," in *The Sceptical Tradition*, ed. Miles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 397–412; and p. 104 in Fogelin, "Hume's Scepticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, ed. David Fate Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 90–116.

6. Prescriptive skepticism may occur without any basis, or with a basis other than a consideration of rational warrant; theoretical skepticism can occur without a view that one should doubt, either through unconcern or as a result of some practical reason not to prescribe doubt; and real practicing doubt may or may not occur, regardless of prescriptions and views about rational warrant. Thus, for example, a faith-based religious position could include both of the following simultaneously: theoretical skepticism without prescriptive skepticism about certain articles of faith allowed to be *rationally unwarranted* but nevertheless thought deserving of assent on the basis of faith, and prescriptive skepticism without theoretical skepticism about certain results of scientific inquiry allowed to be *rationally warranted* but nevertheless deemed heretical. A believer might accept all of these religious commitments and yet find herself (to her possible chagrin) actually

doubting some of the articles of faith but not others, and actually doubting some of the heretical theories but not others.

7. When Hume writes, "All the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence" (*THN* 1.4.1.6), for example, he appears to Fogelin to be expressing theoretical skepticism; when Hume writes, "In general, there is a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty, which, in all kinds of scrutiny and decision, ought for ever to accompany a just reasoner" (*EHU* 12.24), he appears to be expressing prescriptive skepticism; and when Hume writes, "I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion as more probable or likely than another" (*THN* 1.4.7.8), he appears to be expressing a practicing skepticism.

8. However, it would be a simple enough task to extend the epistemological/conceptual distinction into the realm of prescriptive skepticism (by distinguishing *recommendations to doubt while granting intelligibility* from *recommendations to doubt while questioning intelligibility*) and also into the character of practicing skepticism (by distinguishing *doubt while granting intelligibility* from *doubt while questioning intelligibility*).

9. Fogelin argues quite rightly that, while Hume expresses conceptual skepticism about some topics, the extent of Hume's conceptual skepticism has often been overstated, in part as a result of its appropriation by logical empiricists.

10. Fogelin classifies Hume's skepticism concerning natural religion and miracles as antecedent as well. See Fogelin, *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

11. Fogelin (1993) characterizes the *antecedent/consequent* distinction in terms of *argumentative* and *genetic* skeptical *strategies:* "When using the *argumentative* strategy, Hume adopts the common sceptical ploy of presenting sceptical arguments to show that some class of beliefs is not capable of rational justification. . . . What I have called Hume's *genetic* strategy reflects his idea of a scepticism that is consequent upon science and enquiry. A system of beliefs can be discredited by its disreputable provenance" (1993:93). In discussion, however, Fogelin has indicated that he now regards this *argumentative/genetic* distinction as importantly different from Hume's *antecedent/consequent* distinction—especially because antecedent skepticism, for Hume, is methodological rather than strictly argumentative. Hence, Fogelin himself is not now committed to the particular classifications of skeptical topics as antecedent or consequent proposed in *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature.*

12. See Fogelin, "The Tendency of Hume's Scepticism," 399.

13. With these classifications in hand, we can now understand what Fogelin means when he concludes that "Hume's mitigated skepticism is the causal consequence of the influence of two factors: Pyrrhonian doubt on one side and natural instinct on the other" ("The Tendency of Hume's Scepticism," 410; *Hume's Skepticism*, 150). He means that, on Hume's view, a variable but general unmitigated practicing skepticism—which results from attention to (irrefutable) arguments for

unmitigated theoretical skepticism—is weakened by the natural resistance of the strong belief-engendering mechanisms of human nature in such a way as to yield a mitigated practicing skepticism (which may itself contribute causally to a mitigated prescriptive skepticism).

We are also in a position to understand Fogelin's reasons for claiming that there is "mutual support" between Hume's skepticism and Hume's naturalism. On the one hand, Fogelin suggests, Hume's unmitigated theoretical skepticism obliterates all differences of rational warrant among beliefs and hence *permits* the Humean skeptic to hold and express, undogmatically, whatever beliefs are *natural* to him—and, as it happens, the pursuit of a naturalistic program of offering causal explanations of the mind is *natural* to Hume. On the other hand, these natural causal explanations of the mind's operations in turn support and reinforce Hume's skepticism—for these explanations seem to reveal the mind's many cognitive weaknesses and so render his unmitigated theoretical skepticism all the *more* natural. In a final, ironic twist of convergence, Fogelin remarks, Hume's naturalistic explanations of the mind's operations turn out to include causal explanations of the various episodes of skepticism that occur in the course of Hume's own philosophical thinking.

14. To be sure, he does claim that inductive inferences "presuppose that instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same"; and he asserts that this presupposition cannot arise from reasoning. But he does not argue or assert that inductive conclusions could only have "warrant" or "justification" if this presupposition *did* arise from reasoning. He also asks (*THN* 1.3.6.4) at one point whether either demonstrative or probable reasoning can "afford any just conclusion" concerning the uniformity of nature; but by "conclusion," he typically means *act of concluding* (see also note 22), and "just" (as reported by the *Oxford English Dictionary*) had eighteenth-century meanings of *appropriate*, *suitable*, *proper*, or *regular*.

15. Hume does not so much as mention the *topic* of skepticism in the body of the *Treatise* until seven sections (over thirty-five pages) after his famous conclusion about induction—and then the reference is a passing one unrelated to the famous conclusion (*THN* 1.3.13.12, where the topic is "general rules").

16. The topic of skepticism is introduced at the outset of section 5 of the *Enquiry*, immediately following the discussion of inductive inference in section 4; but it is quickly dismissed with the observation that, if inductive inference is not produced by reasoning, then it must be produced by another principle of "equal weight and authority." The systematic discussion of skepticism is reserved for the final section, section 12. However, some of the terminology of *Enquiry* IV (especially the prominent uses of "begging the question," rather than the *Treatise's* more straightforwardly causal locutions, and "founded on," which is potentially ambiguous between causal and justificatory senses) seems intended to prepare the way for the subsequent consideration of skeptical applications.

17. As indicated in note 11, Fogelin has more recently rejected the identification of antecedent skepticism with what he calls "argumentative skepticism," while continuing to characterize "genetic skepticism" in terms that match Hume's characterization of consequent skepticism. Hence, one might consider a tripartite distinction of skepticism into antecedent, argumentative, and consequent/genetic. But the fact that Hume clearly regards *all* of his skeptical considerations in the *Enquiry* as instances of consequent skepticism strongly suggests that he does not see himself as proposing *any* of what Fogelin has called "argumentative skepticism"—unless, that is, it is simply as *part* of a strategy of genetic, or consequent, skepticism. Indeed, since (as we shall see) *all* of Hume's skepticism depends on arguments about the causal origins of beliefs, it might be best to characterize all of his skepticism as both argumentative *and* genetic. For this reason, I have not tried to introduce the argumentative/genetic distinction into the main text.

18. One approach to resolving this apparent contradiction would be to deny that Hume's supposed unmitigated theoretical skepticism involves any *belief in* the view that assent to propositions is rationally unwarranted. Thus, one might follow the lead of Fogelin's interpretation of historical Pyrrhonism in his *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* and propose that Hume's unmitigated theoretical skepticism consists not in *believing* but instead simply in *stating, putting forward*, or *arguing for* the conclusion that all beliefs, or all beliefs in a domain, are rationally unwarranted. (In effect, this would constitute drawing a seventh distinction among kinds of skepticism: a distinction among *stances* with which skepticism is held or embodied.) Although such an interpretation might leave contradictions in Hume's *pronouncements*, it would remove them from his *beliefs*. Another approach to avoiding this apparent contradiction would be to limit unmitigated theoretical skepticism to the *highest* levels of Hume's belief system. That is, one could (i) interpret Hume as sometimes holding higher-order beliefs to the effect that lower-order beliefs are rationally warranted, but (ii) insist that, for any such higher-order belief in warrant, Hume always holds a *still-higher*-order view that the belief in the warrant of that belief is itself unwarranted. This would, however, render the domain of Hume's supposed unmitigated theoretical skepticism unexpectedly *limited* and, indeed, constantly subject to change.

In fact, however, in his later writings (e.g., *Pyrrhonian Reflections*, "Garrett on the Consistency of Hume's Philosophy"), Fogelin does not adopt either of these alternatives. Instead, he proposes a "perspectival" interpretation of Hume, according to which Hume writes from at least three different perspectives—one "gentlemanly," one "wise," and one "Pyrrhonian"—that are in undeniable conflict with one another. The wise Hume, according to this interpretation, judges some beliefs more favorably than others, while the Pyrrhonian Hume makes an unmitigatedly negative epistemic assessment of all beliefs. According to Fogelin, none of these three Humes is any more the "real" Hume than any other. Each perspective is said to be governed by these two principles: "What a person believes and the degree to which he believes it is a function of the light in which he surveys

the subject at that particular time"; "When we survey something in a particular light, we will think it *fitting and proper* to assign the degree of belief to it that we do" ("Garrett on the Consistency," 164). Fogelin characterizes these judgments of "fittingness and propriety" of belief as "epistemic evaluations," so it seems that they constitute judgments of rational grounds, warrant, and/or justification. But if this is correct, then Hume's unmitigated theoretical skepticism will not be constant after all, but variable—indeed, only occasional. While there will admittedly be diachronic contradictions in Hume's position, at least there need be no synchronic ones—or none, anyway, beyond the Pyrrhonian Hume's occasional judgment that it is epistemically "fitting and proper" to believe the defining claim of an unmitigated theoretical skepticism that presumably falls within its own scope. Note, however, that while Hume's presumed general unmitigated theoretical skepticism may retain some relations of *support* with his naturalism, on this interpretation, it will also be in direct *conflict* with his naturalism (contrary to Fogelin, *Hume's Skepticism*; see note 12), since the naturalistic program as now understood will include the endorsement of naturalism's own results as rationally warranted (i.e., as "fitting and proper"), a positive judgment that an unmitigated general theoretical skepticism must deny. Intriguing as it is, this "three-Hume" interpretation also raises the question of which Hume it was who sent the manuscripts of the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* to the publisher—and why, when he did so, he did not first delete those passages written by the other Humes with which he disagreed.

19. Specifically, these are (in order) (i) the dependence of inductive reasoning, the senses, and memory on the psychological process of the "enlivening of ideas" in the absence of convincing arguments to show that this process is an epistemically reliable one; (ii) the "contradiction of the modern philosophy," which offers a causal argument to show that secondary qualities such as color and heat are not in bodies themselves, thereby robbing us of the capacity to conceive distinctly of how bodies exist, since primary qualities cannot exist alone; (iii) the inconceivability of necessary causal connections in the objects themselves; (iv) reason's potential to subvert itself through repeated application of iterated revisionary judgments of probability concerning the reliability of our faculties; and (v) a "very dangerous dilemma" that results from seeing that reason fails to subvert itself only through a seemingly "trivial" feature of the imagination, whereby it cannot sustain the power of the iterated reflections that would be required—the dilemma results when reason cannot by itself find and defend a principle for determining which features of the imagination to accept and which to reject. For a fuller presentation of each of these topics, see Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), chap. 10.

20. The skeptical topics of the *Enquiry* are organized around three domains (in the following order): (i) the senses, (ii) demonstrative or abstract reasoning, and (iii) probable reasoning. Concerning the senses, he offers three topics: the "trite" and popular one that our senses sometimes deceive us; the more "profound"

argument that external bodies cannot (as the vulgar suppose) be our perceptions and cannot be inferred to exist by reasoning from our perceptions; and the "profound" argument concerning "the contradiction of the modern philosophy" (see note 19). Concerning abstract or demonstrative reasoning, he offers just one topic—the paradoxes of infinite divisibility into which abstract reasoning seems to lead us—and he "hints" at a Humean solution in a footnote. Concerning probable reasoning, he offers two topics: the "popular" one that disagreement about matters of fact is prevalent, and the more "philosophical" one that inductive inference rests on "custom or a certain instinct of our nature; which . . . like other instincts, may be fallacious and deceitful" (*EHU* 12.22). Notable by their absence from the *Enquiry* are reason's potential self-subversion by repeated applications of probability and the "very dangerous dilemma" that results from it.

21. Hume often uses the term "sceptical doubts" for practicing skepticism, but he sometimes uses just "scepticism"—as when he writes of falling "back into diffidence and scepticism" (*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals. The Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, vol. 4 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 9:13), and when he describes "Academic scepticism" as "a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty" (*EHU* 12.24).

22. For example, he writes of "the sceptic who [holds] that no system ought ever to be embraced with regard to such subjects" in Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 8:186, and of Academic skepticism's "talk of . . . renouncing all speculations which lie not within the limits of common life and practice" (*EHU* 5.1).

23. See Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 1:139, italics added.

24. Thus, "the sceptic continues to reason and believe, even though he asserts that he cannot defend his reason by reason" (*THN* 1.4.2.1).

25. See Annas, "Hume and Ancient Skepticism," *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 66 (2000): 271–85.

26. Thus, there may be as many specific *kinds* of endorsement as there are specific kinds of attitudes of approval and disapproval.

27. Some have supposed that Hume must reject faculties, but he refers to them and invokes them almost constantly. He treats "S has a faculty for doing A" as equivalent to "S has a power to do A," and he treats both as trivial consequences of "S does A." It is not surprising that Hume makes such ready use of faculties, as he understands them, for their existence is entailed by his fourth and fifth "rules for judging of causes and effects" (*THN* 1.3.15.6), which require that sameness of effects must always be the result of some commonality in the causes. Wherever we find a certain kind of mental effect, there must be a commonality of cause, which we may therefore invoke by ascribing a mental "faculty" for producing that effect. He does think, however, that the ancient philosophers and their followers have abused the notion of "faculty" (*THN* 1.4.3.10) by supposing that one can informatively *explain* the occurrence of A-ing simply by citing the existence of a faculty of A-ing without explaining the nature and manner of operation of that faculty.

28. The *Enquiry* version reads, "Even after we have experience of the operations of cause and effect, our conclusions from that experience are not founded on reasoning, or any process of the understanding" (*EHU* 4.15).

29. See Don Garrett, "Ideas, Reason, and Skepticism," *Hume Studies* 24.1 (1998): 171–94; and Garrett, "Reply to My Critics" [symposium with David Owen and Charlotte Brown on *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*], *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61 (2001), 205–15.

30. This implication for rational support skepticism is particularly suggested by the *Enquiry* version of the conclusion—for although "founded on" is typically a causal locution for Hume, and is one here, it also naturally suggests (epistemic) support.

31. When Hume writes of "our conclusions from experience" as not being "founded on reasoning" in the *Enquiry*, he is quite clearly referring to our *acts of concluding* rather than to the *beliefs* that result from these acts—as can be seen from attention to the locutions that he treats as synonymous (see also note 13). It is worth noting that the presumption of the uniformity of nature can be given a kind of *secondary sustenance* by reason, even though it cannot be *produced by* reason: for once the presumption has been made and many inductive arguments have occurred, one might then generalize back to the uniformity of nature from the collected conclusions of these many individual inferences.

32. As we have seen, the *Treatise* version entirely avoids the topic of skepticism, while Hume begins the section of the *Enquiry* that follows the corresponding conclusion (section 5) by reassuring his readers that the key movement of the mind is caused, if not by reason, then by something "of equal weight and authority."

33. In the *Treatise*, the emphasis is on the claim that the enlivening of ideas by custom is a seemingly trivial property of the imagination. In the *Enquiry*, Hume argues that custom is an instinct that, like other instincts, *may* (by an inductive argument!) "be fallacious."

34. Concerning what Hume calls a "contradiction of the modern philosophy" on the topic of secondary qualities, he concludes: "There is a direct and total opposition between our reason and our senses; or more properly speaking, betwixt those conclusions we form from cause and effect [about secondary qualities], and those that persuade us of the continu'd and independent existence of body" (*THN* 1.4.2.15). This conclusion provides an additional basis for rational support skepticism about the belief in bodies and another cause for practicing skepticism about both the senses and inductive reasoning, practicing skepticism that he expresses in a series of rhetorical questions (*THN* 1.4.7.4). However, the conclusion does not constitute an endorsement of unmitigated merit or prescriptive skepticism.

Concerning the illusion that we are aware of and can conceive necessary causal connections between causes and effect themselves, Hume concludes: "When we trace up the human understanding to its first principles, we find it to lead us into such sentiments, as seem to turn to ridicule all our past pains and industry, and to discourage us from future enquiries" (*THN* 1.4.7.5). While Hume's description of

his sentiments about how things "seem" constitutes a clear expression of practicing skepticism, it is, again, far from an endorsement—and even farther from a considered or authorial endorsement—of either epistemic merit skepticism or prescriptive skepticism.

35. See Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*, chap. 10.

36. For a discussion of passages supporting this interpretation, see ibid., p. 228. The *Oxford English Dictionary* confirms that this is a standard eighteenth-century meaning of "evidence." The *Enquiry* also uses the term "evidence" in the sense of *material evidence*—i.e., as a term for features of the world that support inference.

37. For this reason, Hume writes that we are thus left with no choice but "betwixt a false reason and none at all" because "very refined reflections have little or no influence upon us, and yet we cannot establish it for a rule, that they ought not to have any influence, which implies a manifest contradiction" (*THN* 1.4.7.7).

38. In *A Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh*, Hume complains about the fact that his opponents had quoted this passage to characterize his skepticism despite his plainly labeling it a few pages later as merely the transitory product of "melancholy and delirium." See David Hume, *A Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh: Containing Some Observations on A Specimen of the Principles concerning Religion and Morality, said to be maintain'd in a Book lately publish'd, intituled, A Treatise of Human Nature* (Edinburgh, 1745). Janet Broughton has pointed out to me that this passage from the *Treatise* resembles many of Hume's other remarks about skepticism and belief in its reference to physiological causes (in this case, heating of the brain).

39. After all, Hume holds that *some* of our affirmations—in the domain of mathematics, to take an uncontroversial example—*are* produced by demonstrative reasoning; but this is not in any way a local *failure* of his naturalism. Conversely, he and Locke agree that "intuitive" knowledge (i.e., immediate apprehension of relations of ideas) is *not* itself produced by any reasoning or inference, but Hume does not consider that fact to constitute any kind of skeptical challenge to it.

5

HANS SLUGA

Wittgenstein and Pyrrhonism

There are two varieties of skepticism, we have been told. The first sees itself as competing with other philosophical views over the question of what can be known. Skepticism, thus understood, offers an account of the possibility and limits of human knowledge. Where other epistemological theories claim that such-and-such constitutes knowledge because . . . , skeptical theory argues that what is thought to be knowledge is, in fact, not because. . . . This theoretical skepticism can be more or less global. It may hold that everything we consider knowledge is, in fact, not so. But such a global claim runs immediately into the trouble of having to exempt itself from its own strictures, hence the attraction of skeptical theories concerning this or that part of human knowledge. Theoretical skepticism then becomes a local skepticism about something—as, for instance, skepticism about the external world or about the existence of other minds. As such it is immune to the self-defeating character of the global variety.

There is, however, as Robert Fogelin has pointed out, in addition to all these varieties of theoretical skepticism, a wholly different type, one that is skeptical about philosophical theorizing. We might think, at first sight, that this is, in reality, just one further variant of the local skepticism already considered—one in which the object of the skeptical theory is philosophical theorizing rather than, say, the belief in other minds. But how could there be a legitimate philosophical theory that denies the possibility of philosophical theorizing? Skepticism about philosophy must, so it seems, be considered to be something entirely different from all variants

of theoretical skepticism. This new type has, in fact, its own global and local variants. It can be skeptical about all philosophical theorizing or it can, more cautiously, be skeptical about particular kinds of philosophical theorizing, such as theorizing in metaphysics, ethics, or even logic. Robert Fogelin has taught us to call all the variants of the first type of skepticism "philosophical" and all the variants of the second type "skepticism about philosophy." He has also reminded us that some thinkers use self-refuting philosophical arguments to support their skepticism about philosophy. He calls these thinkers "Pyrrhonian skeptics." We may as well follow him in that.[1]

To set up these general classifications is, however, easier than to say where any particular thinker falls into them. We are conscious, for instance, of Wittgenstein's dismissal of skepticism as "nonsensical" in the *Tractatus* (6.51) and his apparently equally sharp hostility to it in *On Certainty*.[2] In consequence, we might take him to be an antiskeptical thinker. But he also writes much of the time in a strikingly skeptical tone of voice. His *Tractatus* proposes, for instance, to show us that metaphysical claims are strictly senseless. And what are we to say of his "skeptical" considerations concerning the supposed necessity governing the application of rules? And what about his "skeptical" arguments against the possibility of an essentially private language? Do these not amount to a philosophical skepticism? Or, at least, to a partial theoretical skepticism concerning necessity and private experience?

Robert Fogelin has argued that we can reconcile most of these features of Wittgenstein's thought by classifying him as a Pyrrhonian thinker. In support of this characterization he can draw on the Tractarian claim that the problems of philosophy rest entirely on a misunderstanding of the logic of our language. He can equally find support in the *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein writes: "If one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (127). By this he seems to be saying two things: that he himself does not intend to advance any philosophical theses and that it would, in fact, be futile to do so, since such theses would be unable to convey a substantive and disputable content. But Fogelin is forced to admit that there are also passages in Wittgenstein's work that do not easily fit the characterization of him as a Pyrrhonian thinker. He takes these to be occasions of backsliding from the purity of Wittgenstein's Pyrrhonian stand. We may, on the other hand, wonder whether the evidence does not point in a somewhat different direction. We may ask: does the evidence show that our distinction of varieties of skepticism is as yet incomplete

and insufficiently refined to capture Wittgenstein's thought? Is it possible that Wittgensteinian skepticism is of a different and as yet unspecified sort?

Fogelin's characterization of Wittgenstein as a Pyrrhonian skeptic can certainly draw on a wide range of evidence. It can draw, for instance, on Wittgenstein's remark in the *Philosophical Investigations* that the usual epistemological disputes are nothing but a form of shadowboxing: "For this is what disputes between Idealists, Solipsists and Realists look like. The one party attacks the normal form of expression as if they were attacking a statement; the others defend it, as if they were stating facts recognized by every reasonable human being" (402). Wittgenstein had written fifteen years earlier in *The Blue Book* in a similar tone of voice that the commonsense man—the figure he evidently identifies with—"is as far from realism as from idealism" and stands, as such, apart from Moore's commonsense realist (48). And this remark, in turn, reflects a yet earlier statement in the *Tractatus* that "solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with realism" (5.64). The latter is usually thought to imply something quite different, namely that Wittgenstein considered solipsism and realism equally true. He does, indeed, say that "what the solipsist means is quite correct; only it cannot be said, but makes itself manifest" (5.62), and he also declares that "solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism" (5.64). But how could both views, understood metaphysically, be literally true? We must apply to them, rather, what Wittgenstein says at the end of the *Tractatus*, namely that whenever someone wants to say something metaphysical, we can show that he has failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his proposition (6.53). If we take this seriously, we must infer that what manifests itself in the solipsist's and the realist's words is not the metaphysical truth of these doctrines. It is, rather, that the solipsist and the realist form of speech come effectively to the same thing. The difference between them is not one of a factual disagreement. It does not lie in the content of their beliefs but in differing attitudes to what they believe. We may compare this to what Wittgenstein says elsewhere in the *Tractatus* about the difference between the happy and the unhappy man. The two men live, of course, in the most straightforward sense in the same world, but their attitude toward that world is so utterly different that we are justified in concluding that "the world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man" (6.43). What separates the solipsist and the realist is, similarly, not a metaphysical difference but one that concerns their relation to the world. What Wittgenstein thinks of solipsism and

realism in the *Tractatus* may, for that reason, not be that far removed from the views of *The Blue Book* and *The Philosophical Investigations*. If this is right, we have reasons to say that certainly with respect to the claims of solipsism and realism Wittgenstein was a Pyrrhonian skeptic from the time of the *Tractatus* onward.[3]

Pyrrhonian skepticism was, in fact, familiar to him already at this early point from his reading of Fritz Mauthner's *Contributions to a Critique of Language*. In that book Mauthner was explicit about his commitment to a nontheoretical, Pyrrhonian style of skepticism. He wrote accordingly that "it is language which seduces plain skeptics and doubters to take the feeling of not knowing once again for a kind of knowledge" (1.699).[4] Language, in other words, has a tendency to turn the Pyrrhonian skeptic into a philosophical one. But this must be considered a seduction we should learn to resist. Mauthner also wrote that skeptics have, in their fight with philosophical dogmatism, "again and again become negative dogmatists even though they wanted to remain critics." And he sought to explain in this way skepticism's failure to prevail in philosophy. For the antiskeptical theorist, he thought, has an easy game against the skeptical dogmatist. His old and established set of beliefs will always appear "more attractive than an incomplete new faith that presents itself in an equally tyrannical fashion" (3.617).

Mauthner's book had made an impression in Vienna when it was originally published in 1903. Its author, who was born in Prague and eventually moved on to Berlin, had spent his formative years in that city and his book appeared to give voice to attitudes and ideas that were widely current in the culture of the slowly dissolving Austro-Hungarian Empire. Its ultimate inspirations were Arthur Schopenhauer and Ernst Mach, two philosophers who set the tone of Viennese thought in these decades. Schopenhauer's pessimism, in particular, seemed attuned to the mood of an empire in decline, and everyone from Mauthner through Weininger to the young Wittgenstein was conversant with *The World as Will and Representation*. All first-rate minds, Mauthner writes in his book, from Homer to Schopenhauer have seen through the misery and terror of life and have learned to combine suffering from the world with detached equanimity. And they have been able to do so because they have all seen through the deceptions of language. Schopenhauer, for one, understood that language fails to reveal to us the inner nature of the world. Hence his wariness toward all theorizing, whether scientific or philosophical. Mauthner stressed, in particular, that Schopenhauer had concluded his book with the insight that we must ultimately transcend philosophical thought into silence (1.88).

Schopenhauer's pessimism was, thus, in Mauthner's eyes, a skepticism that seeks to overcome philosophical theorizing; Schopenhauer was for him, in other words, in essence a Pyrrhonian skeptic.

The other great influence on Mauthner was Ernst Mach, himself an avid reader of Schopenhauer. Mauthner had been Mach's student in Prague and remained devoted to his teacher and his thought for the rest of his life. Shortly before the appearance of his *Critique of Language* he wrote, indeed, to Mach: "When my epistemological investigations are ready, . . . you will see that I have gratefully used your deep-reaching work." Mach would then recognize that Mauthner shared his goal "to eliminate the latent metaphysical elements from science."[5] What he shared with Mach was the conviction that theories cannot provide a faithful picture of the world—that they are, rather, arrangements of data according to practical need, made with the help of invented categories. And while this is as yet no Pyrrhonian skepticism, it is still an attitude that makes such a Pyrrhonianism possible and attractive.

Schopenhauer and Mach together led Mauthner, in any case, to be wary of all philosophical theorizing. At the center of his thinking and, indeed, his book stands the conviction that language is an ultimately unsatisfactory tool for philosophical thought. The final goal for philosophy must, therefore, be a freeing from the word, from linguistic superstition, from the tyranny of language. "The critique of language," he ends the first volume of the *Critique of Language*, "must teach liberation from language as the highest goal of self-liberation" (1.713). And this goal had been on his mind from the very first page of his book: "If I want to rise up in the critique of language, which is the most important business of thinking mankind, I must destroy language step by step behind me, before me, and within me, I must break the rungs of the ladder as I step on them" (1.1). That metaphor had first been suggested by Sextus Empiricus, the great exponent of Pyrrhonian skepticism. Ernst Mach had borrowed it from him for his own ends. Mauthner in turn had borrowed it from Mach and the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, so it seems, borrowed it once again from Mauthner. We must turn to Mauthner, then, if we are to understand the roots of Wittgenstein's own skepticism and if we are to understand the nature and extent of his skepticism.

Mauthner's importance for Wittgenstein has still not been fully understood for many reasons. Mauthner is not someone today who is likely to attract contemporary philosophical readers, due in part to his style of writing. For Mauthner certainly did not mean to write for professional philosophers. He made his living, rather, from writing for a general, educated public. His production included stories, critical reviews, a four-volume

history of atheism, a dictionary of philosophy, a little book simply titled *Language*, and an equally small book on Spinoza, in addition to the three hefty volumes of his *Contributions to a Critique of Language*. For years he worked as a renowned and fierce theater critic in Berlin whose mere presence in the audience would almost guarantee the failure of the performance. To anyone used to the austerities of Wittgenstein's style, Mauthner may appear unbearably garrulous. But this does not mean that we can ignore him when we reflect on Wittgenstein's thought. For we must not forget Wittgenstein's attraction to philosophical outsiders from Augustine to Spengler and, in particular, his attraction to controversial (and philosophically marginal) figures in Vienna's cultural life, from Weininger to Kraus. Like all those who have come under the sway of Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein distrusted professional philosophers and was willing to look for genius in out-of-the-way places. His picture of them as rebels against the established order may have motivated even his admiration for Frege and Russell.

From the single reference to Mauthner in the *Tractatus* the unwary reader may, however, conclude that Wittgenstein was set to dismiss him with one single stroke. At 4.0031 Wittgenstein writes: "All philosophy is a 'critique of language' (though not in Mauthner's sense)." But the first thing to remember here is that Wittgenstein has carefully sifted the names of those he mentions in the *Tractatus* and that, besides Mauthner, there are only a few others he acknowledges, among them Frege, Russell, Moore, and Heinrich Hertz. In order to assess what Mauthner meant to him, we must keep in mind that Wittgenstein attaches a special and, I think, positive significance to each of the others he names. But we must also observe that, in each case, Wittgenstein does not appropriate the ideas of these figures wholesale; he reads each of them, rather, selectively and critically, picking up concepts and conceptions along the way. And he never spares the rod of his criticism from those he admires. Thus, he expresses gratitude "to Frege's magnificent works and to the writings of my friend Bertrand Russell for much of the stimulation of my thoughts" in the preface of the *Tractatus*. But Frege's theory of meaning, we also read, is "based on confusion" (5.02). Russell's view of the self exemplifies "the superficial psychology of the present day" (5.5421). Frege's and Russell's laws of inference have "no sense" and are "superfluous" (5.132). Their understanding of general propositions is "incorrect" and "contains a vicious circle" (4.273). We must conclude from all this that Wittgenstein's critical reference to Mauthner's critique of language is not necessarily meant to be dismissive. And Mauthner indeed makes a distinctive contribution to Wittgenstein's thinking at this moment.

What he brings to it is the realization of the decisive importance of everyday language for philosophical thinking. The Tractarian Wittgenstein declares, in agreement with Mauthner's assessment, that "everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it" (4.002) and that "in fact, all the propositions of our everyday language just as they stand, are in perfect logical order" (5.5563). Someone who was merely a disciple of Frege or Russell could not have written these sentences. That is evident from Russell's blithe and wrong assumption in his introduction to the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein has constructed a theory of symbolism "concerned with the conditions which have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language" (ix). It is Mauthner's shadow that lingers here over Wittgenstein's formulations; he is, for that reason, the one most responsible for the linguistic turn in Wittgenstein's thinking and thereby indirectly also for the whole linguistic turn in twentieth-century analytic philosophy.

But if Wittgenstein is receptive to Mauthner's idea that everyday language is of crucial concern to philosophy, he does not subscribe to Mauthner's conception of language itself. That, too, is clear from the reference in the *Tractatus*. For one thing, Mauthner has no regard for the newly developing algebra of logic. He argues rather that every kind of symbolic notation will ultimately have to be justified and explained in terms of the words of everyday language. The logical symbolism is for him thus dependent on everyday language, not the other way around. As for logic more generally, Mauthner agrees once again with Mach, for whom "the demands of economy go further than those of logic."[6] Logic, Mauthner asserts, is a mere house of cards erected on the ground of everyday language; it is not the granite foundation of human thought and understanding. Admittedly, logic obligates thought, but only because it already "sits in our judgments, inferences, and methods" (1.34). We are reminded here of Wittgenstein's later observation that logic depends on our agreement not only in definitions but also in judgments (*PI*, 242). But such formulations have, of course, no place in the *Tractatus*. If this separates Mauthner from the early Wittgenstein, there is another point on which they agree, for both take logical truths to be tautologies (3.317ff.). In this they depart radically from Frege's and Russell's substantive conception of logical truth. But Mauthner draws from this belief, once again, a different conclusion from Wittgenstein. He concludes that logic can tell us nothing about language; if logical truths are mere tautologies, logic must be a feature of language and not its foundation. He writes that common opinion may think that logic deals with the forms of reality, but "the whole of logic

is, in fact, hidden in our language'' (2.14). And if logic is grounded in language, he concludes further, there must ultimately be as many logics as there are languages (2.64). In his little 1907 book *Language*, Mauthner writes: ''Language in itself with its vocabulary and grammar embodies reason, logic, and a worldview for the speech community—absolute reason, absolute logic—for such a community knows no other reason and no other logic and cannot know any other.''[7] Such a relativism must sound offensive to the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, though it will come to look natural to him by the time he writes *On Certainty*.

What connects the Tractarian Wittgenstein with Mauthner is, above all, the conviction that the proper end of philosophy is a critique of language. The term, as Mauthner makes clear, must be taken in analogy to Kant's concept of a critique of reason. Mauthner's critique of language is thus meant to be concerned with the determining the power and limits of language, with what can and cannot be said. The Tractarian Wittgenstein can certainly agree with this characterization of the role of philosophy. He agrees moreover with Mauthner that ''what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense'' (*TLP*, preface). And on the other side of the limit lies for both the whole wealth of traditional philosophical theorizing, the doctrines of realism and idealism, as well as all the variants of theoretical skepticism and theoretical antiskepticism. That Mauthner and Wittgenstein agree on this point deserves notice. For one thing, it means that Wittgenstein, following in Mauthner's footsteps, understands the goal of philosophy entirely differently from Frege and Russell. The former, we know, saw himself above all as philosophically engaged in a fight against the radical empiricism of a John Stuart Mill and Hermann von Helmholtz and, like the neo-Kantians, sought to show that empirical knowledge must assume a priori foundations. Russell, by contrast, was forever obsessed with overcoming his own early idealist past. Through numerous twists and turns, he fought against a monistic idealism that reality consists of a multiplicity of ultimate components and he sought such a pluralist ontology by means of a philosophical theory of logical atomism. For Mauthner and Wittgenstein, on the other hand, the goal of the critique of language is the resolution of all philosophical problems by seeing that ''the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood'' (*TLP*, preface). The entire body of epistemological and ontological doctrines is, in other words, to be dissolved, including those doctrines to which Frege and Russell attach so much importance. Realism, idealism, and solipsism are all to be brought to reveal themselves as houses of cards.

The goal of a critique of language may be shared by Mauthner and Wittgenstein, but their specific views on language differ radically. Wittgenstein wants to conduct this critique with the help of Russell's insight that "the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one" (4.0031). Language may disguise thought, but there is a form of thought to be uncovered, a logical structure that is singular and fixed. All this is clearly alien to Mauthner's thinking. His views on language approximate rather those of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. We are, thus, justified in the conclusion that in rejecting Mauthner's terms for the critique of language in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein is, in effect, engaged in a preemptive strike against his own later views. Not only is Mauthner suspicious of any attempt to understand language in terms of the idealizing assumptions of logic, but like the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* he also rejects the idea that language is primarily a means of representation. He rejects altogether the idea that language can be understood in terms of the "logic of depiction" so central to the *Tractatus*. He holds instead that all representation depends on convention. Pictorial symbols have, therefore, to become conventionalized before they can serve the purpose of communication (2.538). Pictorial representation has, in other words, to be understood on the model of language, not the other way around. For Mauthner language is not primarily a means of representation, but one of communication. As such it exists only between human beings, as a social reality. Formulaically expressed, "language is common property," as Mauthner puts it (1.27). And for that reason he feels justified in concluding that "a single human who speaks a language among humans without language is inconceivable" (1.17). Strictly speaking, there is, as far as he is concerned, no such thing as language. Even the concept of an individual language is only a metaphor. What we think of as language is really nothing else but linguistic use and custom, *Sprachgebrauch* (1.24). And in such use language is constructed piecemeal "like a big city. Room by room, window by window, dwelling by dwelling, house by house, street by street, quarter by quarter, and all this boxed in together, linked together, smeared together" (1.27). The multitude of speech acts that make up language serve, moreover, the most diverse functions, and these are not to be explained in terms of something else, such as the nature of human thought or the rules of grammar. Mauthner writes that what we call "language" will for the most part turn out to be an empty abstraction. "Where we discover nevertheless similarities between individual languages, which are strictly themselves abstractions, where 'language,' in other words, becomes for us a term for a genuine kind of

human action, we will not find it necessary to go back to thought, language, or grammar as its origin'' (1.11). We will certainly not assume that language is determined by a fixed set of logical or grammatical rules. ''In this lies hidden the eternal presumptuousness of abstraction, which always seeks to dominate what is actually the effrontery of the rule that wants to be more than the individual cases it organizes.'' Hence, Mauthner's unwavering conclusion that ''a rule is nothing but a short expression for the use of language'' (3.71). Such formulations evidently anticipate Wittgenstein's thoughts about language, logic, rules, and privacy in the *Philosophical Investigations*. To observe this is not to deny the originality of Wittgenstein's treatment of these ideas. For that treatment differs, indeed, radically from Mauthner's. Where Mauthner scatters his insights loosely through the enormous corpus of his text, where he writes in an episodic and associative manner, Wittgenstein sets out to provide them with philosophical elucidation. His is the task of sustained clarification.[8]

In trying to understand the relations between Wittgenstein and Mauthner, we must pay attention to both what brings them together and what separates them. The picture that emerges in this way is as follows: If anyone appears to be a thoroughgoing Pyrrhonian skeptic, it is Mauthner, not the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. But it is from him that the Tractarian Wittgenstein has acquired elements of the Pyrrhonian style of thinking. Mauthner maintains his Pyrrhonian stance, however, with greater consistency than the early Wittgenstein and he is thereby led to a very different understanding of language. Eventually, Wittgenstein catches up with Mauthner's Pyrrhonian conception of language; the result is reflected in the *Philosophical Investigations*. But even here Wittgenstein remains more philosophical, more argument-oriented, more structured, and to that extent perhaps less Pyrrhonian. This shows itself not least in the different styles of writing that Mauthner and Wittgenstein pursue. For Mauthner is a Pyrrhonian not only in his attitude toward philosophical theorizing but also in his manner and writing style, whereas Wittgenstein remains committed to at least some features of the traditional philosophical practice. Hence the peculiar tension between some of the things he says about language, meaning, and mind and some of the things he says about saying things about language, meaning, and mind. We note, in any case, that his reflections on philosophy do not always seem to match the actual philosophical investigations.

It is, of course, one thing to think of oneself as a skeptic about philosophical theorizing and another to be one. In sharp contrast to Mauthner, Wittgenstein is at all times aware of the pull that philosophical theories

exert and he seeks to understand where that pull comes from. It is not obvious to him that it has only one source. In *The Blue Book* we are told, for instance, that the bewilderment that generates philosophical theories may stem from a tendency to treat all words as names for something (such as, in particular, the words we use to speak of our own experiences and thoughts) but that it may also stem from our inclination to look to scientific theorizing as a model for philosophical thinking, and finally that it may be due to the overextensions of analogies that may in some contexts be useful. These are distinct diagnoses even though they are evidently connected (thus, our treatment of names may be seen as the overextending of an analogy). It follows, in any case, that wholesale diagnoses of what is wrong with philosophical theorizing will not do. We cannot, so to say, give the fly a one-size-fits-all instruction on how to escape from the fly-bottle. We have to show it, rather, the various shapes such bottles may have, the different kinds of bait they use, and the different ways one gets into and out of these bottles. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein asks in precisely this spirit: "But is it an adequate answer to the skepticism of the idealists or the assurances of the realists to say that 'There are physical objects' is nonsense?" The Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* may have thought this sufficient. But the mature Wittgenstein realizes that this reply will not achieve its end, because the proposition "There are physical objects" will appear not as nonsense to either idealists or realists but as a positive claim that is either true or false and hence certainly disputable. We must show these philosophers in a more specific manner how this assertion is a "misdirected attempt to express what can't be expressed in that way." And this will by no means be easy, for we must convince our metaphysicians "that what offers itself as a first expression of a difficulty or of its resolution may as yet be a completely wrong expression." And, indeed, in diagnosing their plight we ourselves must come to understand this point. For even if we are right in objecting to their claims, we may not yet be in a position to say what has gone wrong in their thinking, "just as someone who rightly criticizes a picture often applies the criticism first to where it does not apply, and it needs an investigation to find the right point of attack for the criticism."[9] Unlike Mauthner, Wittgenstein sees himself thus forced to take philosophical theories seriously. He seeks, therefore, to understand their fascination. Their analysis requires careful attention. Detailed philosophical investigation proves inevitable.

But in the course of such an investigation it may turn out that one has got engaged in actual philosophical theorizing despite one's initial intention to resist it. Is this not what has happened to Wittgenstein himself? Is it

not correct to say that his fascination with philosophical theorizing is also a form of dependence? That is, indeed, what some interpreters suspect. Crispin Wright notes that "it is difficult to reconcile Wittgenstein's pronouncements about the kind of thing which he thinks he ought to be doing with what he actually seems to do." He detects, thus, two voices in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. I quote this remark from Fogelin's essay on "Two Wittgensteins" included in his *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. Fogelin expresses agreement there with Wright's suggestion of two Wittgensteins. He grants that there is "much in Wittgenstein's later writings that is at least alien to, if not incompatible with, [his] neo-Pyrrhonian standpoint." But where Wright wants to ignore Wittgenstein's antitheoretical statements and concentrate on his substantive contributions to philosophical theorizing, Fogelin concludes: "We simply admire different, seemingly competing, aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy" (*PRKJ*, 221ff.). He wants to understand the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* as mainly a skeptic about philosophical theorizing (that is, as a neo-Pyrrhonian thinker) and takes for that reason the programmatic declarations of the *Philosophical Investigations* most seriously. What Wittgenstein says in that text about rule-following and private language, he thinks, must therefore be interpreted in the light of these declarations.

But Fogelin also thinks that this does not prevent a certain amount of backsliding on Wittgenstein's part. Such backsliding is particularly evident, as far as Fogelin is concerned, in Wittgenstein's last writings, specifically in *On Certainty*. There are, Fogelin writes, motifs in these writings that suggest Wittgenstein has adopted a holist or coherentist theory of knowledge. "For want of a better name," Fogelin adds, "I shall call this second strain the non-Pyrrhonian side of Wittgenstein's later philosophy" (*PRKJ*, 205). This side of Wittgenstein's later philosophy has, according to Fogelin's reading, a counterpart in the equally non-Pyrrhonian assumptions of the *Tractatus*. For Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is for him "a typically Cartesian text," a piece of foundationalist theorizing which favors "atomism over holism, privacy over publicity, thinking over doing" (*PRKJ*, 206). The neo-Pyrrhonian Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* is thus, for Fogelin, framed by the symmetrically opposed non-Pyrrhonian Wittgensteins of the *Tractatus* and *On Certainty*. Even in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein may at times be in danger of slipping away from the properly neo-Pyrrhonian stance, but at the still point in the transition from the non-Pyrrhonian *Tractatus* to the equally non-Pyrrhonian *On Certainty*, he succeeds more fully and more easily in maintaining the antitheoretical stance. There emerges thus from

Fogelin's account a transparent architectonic in Wittgenstein's development. Its outlines may be appealing, but the aesthetic simplicity of the story may also generate in us a note of caution. Ever since Kant's architectonic of the formal concepts of the understanding has come under fire, we have learned to be wary of the power of architectonically pleasing pictures. Fogelin's architectonic of the development of Wittgenstein's thinking has its attractions, but the question is whether it fits the facts.

In trying to modify Fogelin's picture, I will concentrate for the rest of my argument on the Tractarian Wittgenstein and ignore the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty*. What generates doubt about Fogelin's characterization of the early Wittgenstein as an anti-Pyrrhonian thinker is first of all the observation that the programmatic remarks of the *Philosophical Investigations* which are so central to his whole reading are, in fact, reformulations of propositions that occur already in the *Tractatus*, where they echo Mauthner's Pyrrhonian mode of thinking. So the question arises: If the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* is mainly a neo-Pyrrhonian, why is the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* not? Is it that the early Wittgenstein has the same programmatic ideas as the *Investigations* but does not yet know how to apply them? The alternatives would seem to be either to dismiss the neo-Pyrrhonian rhetoric in both cases or to take it seriously in both. In either case, Fogelin's finely constructed architectonic would seem to break down. I turn here to Cora Diamond, who is ready to take the challenge and accept the neo-Pyrrhonian declarations of the *Tractatus* at face value. Her Wittgenstein really throws the ladder away on which he has climbed up to the last propositions of his book. Her Wittgenstein "does not chicken out," as she puts it so memorably. For her "it is not, not really, his view that there are features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves."[10] Her Wittgenstein holds, rather, that it may be "useful or even for a time essential" to use certain words, but in the end we will have to let them go as real, plain nonsense which in no way corresponds to an ineffable truth. Such a reading certainly has the virtue of consistency. It fits Wittgenstein's insistence in the *Tractatus* that "philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity," that it "does not result in 'philosophical propositions,' but rather in the clarification of propositions" (4.112). And we must grant Diamond that these statements are certainly no casual asides, for they occur in a passage that seeks to define the proper task of philosophy—a lengthy and carefully crafted section in which Wittgenstein also endorses Mauthner's project of a critique of language. If we take such remarks as seriously as Diamond does, we can no longer treat the early Wittgenstein as a Cartesian committed to atomism, privacy, and thinking.

But Diamond's insistence on the complete consistency of Wittgenstein's practice with the announced methodology of his *Tractatus* generates its own dilemmas. How can the words of that book be useful and even for a while essential, if they are just real, plain nonsense? Why does Wittgenstein present us such nonsense with a straight face? Consider the start of the book: "The world is all that is the case. The world is the totality of facts, not of things. . . . What is the case—a fact—is the existence of states of affairs. A state of affairs (or things) is a combination of objects (things)" (1–2.01). Such remarks do not sound like real, plain nonsense and Wittgenstein certainly does not mark them as such in the text. He does not begin, for instance, with the words: "The following is the kind of nonsense philosophers often produce. . . ." But that is what, according to Diamond, Wittgenstein actually intends to say. Or take this sentence: "Like Frege and Russell I construe a proposition as a function of the expressions contained in it" (3.318). If this should turn out to be, in the end, a piece of plain nonsense, we must charge Wittgenstein with using patently misleading words. We must go still one step further. For the propositions that there are no philosophical propositions and the claim that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are nonsensical are themselves part of the book. And if all the propositions of the *Tractatus* are strictly nonsensical, then these, too, must be thrown away. If we take Diamond at her word, then the strictly neo-Pyrrhonian Wittgenstein should never have written a book at all. Her deflationary reading of Wittgenstein's text is, in fact, forced to accept that some of the propositions of the *Tractatus* are perfectly meaningful—such as, in particular, the one that declares the others nonsensical. Like most readers, Diamond is, in effect, forced to draw a line between what on Wittgenstein's final accounting is meant to have sense and what is meant to be nonsensical. She takes it for granted that Wittgenstein's most general and most philosophical statements are, in fact, true and literally so, such as for instance the claim that metaphysical propositions contain signs to which we have failed to give a meaning. The more concrete propositions of the *Tractatus*, on the other hand, such as the initial claim that the world is everything that is the case are for her strictly nonsensical. If she were not to make such a distinction, both Wittgenstein's book and her interpretation of it would collapse upon her.

One might counter that the neo-Pyrrhonian must first always tell us the nonsense that others produce and it may even be that he needs to show us also the attractions of this kind of nonsensical talking in order then to wield his axe more effectively. On this interpretation we must read the *Tractatus* as if it really began with the words: "Some people would say, and

I myself might have said at some point that . . . and only if you have felt the temptation to speak in this way will you really understand the proper way of going about things." But this is not what Wittgenstein says. It is here where it proves useful to pay attention to Mauthner and what the *Tractatus* says about him. The text says that philosophy is, indeed, the critique of language, but not in Mauthner's sense—we have to begin instead from Russell's assumption of a distinction between the external appearance of a proposition and its logical form. It is, of course, precisely this belief in logical form that underlies the dogmatic assertions and the atomistic metaphysics, if you will, of the *Tractatus*. It is obvious, then, that the *Tractatus* is trying to weld together two very different things: namely, Mauthner's neo-Pyrrhonism and Russell's belief in logical form. When we look at Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* we can, moreover, trace a development from the latter to the former. The *Tractatus*, in fact, retells that development in a stylized form. It consists, despite its appearance, not of a set of timeless propositions, but is in a sense a diary, the story of an intellectual life. And the point of telling that story, like the point of any diary or biography, does not simply lie in its end. Its point is, rather, to hold beginning and end together. That can certainly not be done in a consistent set of propositions. The problem of the *Tractatus* is perhaps not that it tries to do that but that it tries to give the appearance of doing that.

We know that Wittgenstein thought of the *Tractatus* as being, among other things, a literary achievement. And we know what model he took for the literary form of the work: Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* and, perhaps, behind them Leibniz's *Monadology* and Spinoza's *Ethics*. But were these really appropriate for communicating what he had to say? In hindsight it may seem to us that the most appropriate models for the *Tractatus* are not the numbered propositions of *Principia*, or the *Monadology*, or the *Ethics*, but rather Wittgenstein's own *Notebooks*, from which he excerpted the *Tractatus*. For in these notes we see him going back and forth between a variety of philosophical views concerning every possible subject from the logical structure of the world to questions of ultimate good and evil, and we see him above all going back and forth in all these considerations between constructive and skeptical ideas.

With this in mind we can move from the *Tractatus* to Wittgenstein's later writings. They are characterized by two things: the first is his abandonment of the Russellian notion of logical form and of the whole metaphysics that goes with it and his adoption, instead, of Mauthner's neo-Pyrrhonian view of language. The second is his abandonment of the dogmatic style of writing he had favored in the *Tractatus* and his adoption,

instead, of the inner dialog in which contrasting voices can be heard. And now we must recall that he writes in the preface to the *Investigations*: "Four years ago I had occasion to read my first book (the *Tractatus* Logico-Philosophicus) and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old ways of thinking" (x). And what he suggests here for the relations between those two texts may hold just as well for the propositions of the *Tractatus*.

Our conclusion, reached somewhat haphazardly, turns out to be this: Fogelin is certainly right in thinking that the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* is more consistently neo-Pyrrhonian than the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, but he seriously underestimates the neo-Pyrrhonian elements in the earlier work. Here Cora Diamond's radical reading of the *Tractatus* can provide a counterbalance to Fogelin's view of the early Wittgenstein as a Cartesian foundationalist. We might resolve the dilemma they pose together by arguing that Wittgenstein is really at all times and quite intentionally only a local skeptic, that his Pyrrhonian skepticism is meant to apply to only some philosophical theorizing. But that is too simple. Fogelin and Diamond seem both to miss out on something essential. Both consider the possible coexistence of two Wittgensteins, one a Pyrrhonian skeptic and the other constructively engaged with philosophical concepts and theories, to be a serious flaw. Diamond seeks to explain that flaw away. Against all appearances, her Wittgenstein, even the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, is a dedicated and consistent Pyrrhonian. Fogelin understands that this cannot be; he acknowledges the coexistence of two Wittgensteins, but he wishes it were otherwise. In this way, both he and Diamond fail to appreciate a distinctive characteristic of Wittgenstein's philosophizing: his willingness to move back and forth between different and opposing ideas. In *On Certainty* we read: "I do philosophy now like an old woman who is always missing something and having to look for it again: now her spectacles, now her keys" (532). It would be easy to read this simply as a complaint about age. But Wittgenstein is speaking here, in effect, of his whole style of thinking from his earliest efforts onward. When Friedrich Waismann, in the 1930s, sought to compose a compendium of Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas, he discovered that Wittgenstein would, from meeting to meeting, change his mind on the matters they were discussing. To Schlick he wrote in exasperation that Wittgenstein "has the marvelous gift of always seeing everything as if for the first time. But I think it's obvious how difficult any collaboration is, since he always

follows the inspiration of the moment and demolishes what he has previously planned."[11]

I conclude that this form of thinking is neither Pyrrhonian nor non-Pyrrhonian but rather a type of philosophizing—and, indeed, a type of skepticism—all of its own. Its closest equivalent is, perhaps, to be found in Nietzsche's characterization of his own thought as embodying "a profound aversion to reposing once and for all in any one total view of the world. Fascination of the opposing view: refusal to be deprived of the stimulus of the enigmatic."[12] Nietzsche certainly understood that this philosophical attitude differed sharply from the Pyrrhonian one. Pyrrho, the historical figure, was for him "a Buddhist for Greece," someone moved by "weariness against the zeal of the dialecticians," and as such, like Epicurus, an embodiment of Greek decadence: "Epicurus more naïve, idyllic, grateful; Pyrrho more traveled, experienced, nihilistic."[13] Would Wittgenstein have agreed with these evaluations? Presumably not. His thinking leans surely more to the quietist side than Nietzsche's and lacks altogether Nietzsche's inflammatory rhetoric. He writes in the *Philosophical Investigations*: "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping the pursuit of philosophy when I want to.—The one that brings philosophy to quiet" (133).[14] It appears that neither Nietzsche nor Wittgenstein can be called a straightforward Pyrrhonist, but it is also evident that their forms of "skepticism" still differ significantly from each other. We are forced to conclude at this point that there are possibly as many distinct kinds of skepticism as there are creative skeptical thinkers, and that the attempt to tabulate the forms of skeptical thought in advance and to divide them neatly into philosophical and Pyrrhonian can have only a limited and didactic function.

Notes

1. Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3. I refer to this text hereafter as *PRKJ*.

2. I follow established practice and cite the *Tractatus*, the *Philosophical Investigations*, and *On Certainty* by reference to their numbered propositions and remarks. In the case of *The Blue Book* I cite page numbers from the standard edition of that text. In almost all contexts it will be sufficient to refer to these numbers. In the few places where this is necessary, I identify the *Tractatus* as *TLP*, the *Philosophical Investigations* as *PI*, and *On Certainty* as *OC*.

3. This claim goes beyond Fogelin's characterization, as we shall see shortly. For Fogelin, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* is a Cartesian atomist rather than a Pyrrhonist. But by pointing out the Pyrrhonian character of the Tractarian views

and by insisting thus on greater continuity between the early and the later Wittgenstein, I believe I am actually strengthening Fogelin's case.

4. References of this form all refer to Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*. The first number in the parenthesis indicates in each case the volume of this three-volume work, the second the page number. Vol. 1 is cited from the third edition, *Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachf* (Berlin: Stuttgart, 1921), an unaltered reprint of the second edition of 1906; vols. 2 and 3 are cited from the second edition, *Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachf* (Berlin: Stuttgart, 1912–13).

5. Joachim Kühn, *Gescheiterte Sprachkritik: Fritz Mauthner, Leben und Werk* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 113.

6. Ernst Mach "Über das psychologische und logische Moment im naturwissenschaftlichen Unterricht," *Zeitschrift für den physikalischen und chemischen Unterricht* 4 (1890): 5.

7. Fritz Mauthner, *Die Sprache* (Frankfurt: Ruetten and Loening), 86. I translate Mauthner's term "Volk" here as "speech community," since that is how he himself defines the term in his book.

8. In 1931 Wittgenstein writes: "I don't believe I have ever invented a line of thinking, I have always taken one over from someone else. I have simply straightaway seized on it with enthusiasm for my work of clarification. . . . What I do think essential is carrying out the work of clarification with COURAGE: otherwise it becomes just a clever game." (*Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright, trans. Peter Winch [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], 19). The remark is revealing but needs to be taken with caution. Wittgenstein wrote it at a time of despondency when the *Tractatus* views had dissolved in his hands but no firm alternative had as yet appeared to him. He also felt at that time particularly disturbed by his own Jewishness. He thus associated his supposed lack of inventiveness with a passivity in the Jewish mind that Weininger had diagnosed, a lack of genius and a possession of mere talent. Nevertheless, the remark may be considered to contain a kernel of truth in that it draws our attention to Wittgenstein's receptiveness to a manifold of influences that he sought to work through in a process of philosophical clarification. It should be noted also that in the list of those who have influenced him he mentions both Jewish and non-Jewish sources; the list is, however, by no means complete and fails to mention Mauthner as well as such indisputable sources of Wittgenstein's inspiration as Tolstoy, Augustine, and Freud.

9. *OC*, 37. I have found it necessary to modify the translation. The bearing of this passage on both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* has not so far been sufficiently appreciated.

10. Cora Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*," in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 181.

11. Friedrich Waismann, *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann*, ed. Brian McGuinness, trans. Joachim Schulte and Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 26.

12. Friedrich Nietzsche, The *Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), section 470.

13. Ibid., 437.

14. I have here modified Elisabeth Anscombe's translation. Her text speaks of giving philosophy peace, something corresponding more to her own moral and political sensibility than to Wittgenstein's, whose language implies rest and quiet.

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PART II

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6

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

The Agrippan Argument and Two Forms of Skepticism

1. The Agrippan Problem

The Five Modes of Agrippa (as reported by Sextus Empiricus) lie at the heart of Pyrrhonian skepticism. The Five Modes are Discrepancy, Relativity, Infinity, Assumption, and Circularity. Some writers think that each Mode represents a self-contained strategy for inducing skeptical suspension of judgment. But I agree with Robert Fogelin that the Modes are better seen as components of a single skeptical argument of great intuitive power. We can call it the Agrippan argument.

As I understand him, Fogelin thinks that the Agrippan argument cannot be decisively defeated. He writes that, as far as he can see, "the challenge of Pyrrhonian skepticism, once accepted, is unanswerable," a conclusion he equates with the view that "an adequate response to the Agrippa problem . . . is not possible."[1] He takes this "neo-Pyrrhonian" outlook to accord with at least some central themes in Wittgenstein's last writings.[2]

Does Fogelin endorse skepticism? The answer is not clear. It is true that Fogelin thinks of his conclusion as "strongly skeptical" (*PR*, 11). On the other hand, Fogelin's understanding of the character of Pyrrhonian skepticism is nuanced and his attitude toward the skeptical outlook complex. The same is true of Wittgenstein.

I shall return to the question of whether Fogelin (or Wittgenstein) is a skeptic in the conclusion of this essay. For now, let me just say that I agree with Fogelin that Agrippan skepticism cannot be defeated by the more familiar kinds of positive epistemological theory. However—and here I am perhaps more optimistic—I think that if we take a more roundabout, diagnostic approach, we can make real headway. It may be that the challenge of Pyrrhonian skepticism, once accepted, is unanswerable. The question, however, is whether that challenge may be reasonably declined. I think that a proper diagnosis shows that it can be. More than that, I think that Fogelin himself provides insights that point the way toward the diagnosis we need.

Fogelin divides the Agrippan Modes into two groups: the "Challenging Modes" (Discrepancy and Relativity) and the "Dialectical Modes" (Infinity, Assumption, and Circularity). The Mode of Discrepancy suggests that any opinion can be (and probably has been) controverted. That of Relativity suggests that any opinion can—perhaps should—be qualified with the rider "according to you" (you personally, your school of thought, your culture generally, your species). The point of the Challenging Modes is to suggest that anyone who represents his opinion as more than just his opinion—that is, as expressing knowledge of how things really are—can reasonably be asked to explain how he knows. Knowledge differs from mere opinion by being based on appropriate grounds. Accordingly, if I represent a belief of mine as amounting to knowledge, I imply that it rests on such grounds. The skeptic just wants to know what they are.

If I accept the skeptic's invitation to explain myself (and how can I decline it, since I am the one laying claim to knowledge?), the Dialectical Modes make their presence felt. For as soon as I make the grounds for my opinion explicit, the skeptic will want to know whether I am just putting forward another opinion. If I say that I am not, he will want to know the grounds for this new piece of purported knowledge. But any response I make will invite yet another challenge. So, in the face of these constantly renewable challenges, what can I do? There seem to be three possibilities.

1. I can keep trying to think of something new to say.
2. I can, at some point, refuse to answer.
3. I can repeat something I have already said.

But if this list of options is exhaustive, knowledge seems impossible. Option 1 falls to the Mode of Infinity. The skeptic's point is not merely that claims advanced in support of a claim to knowledge *can* always be questioned further, should we find reason to question them, but that no

claim is *ever* justified unless, *per impossibile*, we first run through an infinite series of prior justifications. That is to say, option 1 leads us into a vicious infinite regress. Option 2 falls foul of the Mode of Assumption. Surely, the skeptic will say, no opinion can enjoy a *higher* status than the grounds it rests on, in which case we cannot base knowledge on mere assumptions. Finally, option 3 falls to the Mode of Circularity. In recurring to a claim already entered, I am reasoning in a circle, a paradigmatically poor sort of reasoning. How, the skeptic will ask, can a statement support *itself*? According to Sextus, supposing that it can involves a kind of pragmatic inconsistency, treating the same belief as both needing support and able to provide it (hence as already in order). Regress, assumption, and circularity: this is the seemingly fatal trilemma at the heart of the Agrippan argument.

It is often taken for granted that the Agrippan *argument* presents us with a skeptical *problem*. But it is worth asking why this is so. I suggest that, to present a problem that calls for a serious response, whether theoretical or diagnostic, the argument must meet (or at least prima facie appear to meet) two conditions. The first is that its conclusion must be *intolerable*. The second is that the reasoning it presents must be *intuitive*. Let me elaborate.

The conclusion to which the Agrippan argument points is intolerable because it is both general and radical.

First, the generality of the skeptic's conclusion. It is no surprise to be told that there are many matters that we are fated to remain quite ignorant about. In matters of history, documentary and other evidence is often fragmentary or nonexistent, such that the gaps in the record may never be repaired; physics tells us that there are events so distant in space and time that signals from them can never reach us; and so on. But the skeptic is not reminding us that there is much we do not know, or even that there is much we will never know. His claim is that knowledge is impossible, always and everywhere. There are principled problems in the very fact of aspiring to *knowledge*.

Second is his conclusion's radical character. It is possible to set very high standards for knowledge. For much of its history, our epistemological tradition tended to insist that knowledge properly so-called requires absolute certainty. If, in claiming that knowledge is impossible, the skeptic means only that absolute certainty is impossible, we might be inclined to accept this conclusion, or even to welcome it. And I think that (in fact) a salutary fallibilism has been one of the skeptical tradition's great contributions to philosophy. But if the Agrippan argument is to constitute a problem today, it must point toward something other than fallibilism.

I think it does. Although the argument may have first been formulated against the background of a very demanding conception of knowledge, it does not seem tied to that conception. It seems to apply to any attempt to give a belief positive epistemic status, however far short of certainty that status may fall. The argument points toward *radical* skepticism, the thesis that, epistemologically speaking, all opinions are on a par: they are all *mere* opinions. Indeed, in the case of Agrippan skepticism, the radical character of the skepticism flows from its generality. Because the Agrippan problem arises for any and every belief we might hold, it leaves us without a leg to stand on. We have no basis on which to argue that some beliefs are more likely to be true than others.

Putting these points together, the Agrippan argument implies that *no* belief is justifiable, *even to the slightest degree*. Accordingly, the argument threatens to wipe out all epistemological distinctions. This is why Agrippan skepticism is intolerable.

The requirement that the argument be intuitive is absolutely crucial, but less easy to state precisely. Naturally, the argument must not commit any obvious mistakes. But this is not enough. A person can argue for anything if he is free to help himself to whatever premises he needs. So, the skeptic's premises must have a special character. They must derive from intuitions about knowledge and justification that are deeply held and not easily abandoned. If they do, skepticism will appear a shocking paradox implicit in our most everyday average ways of thinking. The skeptical conclusion will seem both intolerable and inevitable.

Is the Agrippan argument intuitive? At first sight, it seems so. All the skeptic seems to need is for us to concede that knowledge differs from mere opinion by having some kind of backup or grounding. The skeptic need not take a stand on what grounding consists in. It might involve my having appropriate evidence: it might involve my having been reached my belief by some reliable method. But something of the sort is required to distinguish knowledge from mere opinion. It is hard to see how we could abandon this intuition without giving up on the concept of knowledge altogether. All the skeptic wants me to do is to make explicit what this something amounts to. This is enough to present us with a problem.

So much for the problem. What would a solution look like?

There are two ways of approaching the Agrippan argument, direct and diagnostic. A direct approach takes the argument more or less at face value, accepting the skeptic's options while trying to put a better face on one of them. Assuming that an infinite regress of justification is intolerable, we are left with two ways to go. One is to identify beliefs that can

bring requests for justification to a halt but which are not mere assumptions: that is, beliefs that are justifiably held without requiring backup from further beliefs. The quest for such "basic beliefs" is characteristic of *foundational* theories of knowledge and justification. The other strategy is to argue that our beliefs about the world constitute an extensive and complicated *system*, and the members of such a system can give each other a kind of *mutual* support that is not to be equated with crude circularity. This is the fundamental idea behind *coherence* theories of knowledge and justification. Fogelin argues that neither way of dealing with Agrippan skepticism has been convincingly worked out. I agree, hence the need for an indirect approach.

The most promising indirect strategy involves what I call "theoretical diagnosis." The aim of theoretical diagnosis is to dispel the skeptical argument's air of intuitiveness. The crucial idea behind this approach is that, to be genuinely intuitive, the skeptical argument must not trade on what are obviously contentious theoretical ideas about knowledge and justification. If it can be shown to trade on such ideas, we can take the skeptical outcome of those ideas to reflect badly on them, rather than on our everyday epistemic assessments. The task of theoretical diagnosis, then, is to show that the skeptic's argument is much less simple than it seems to be. The idea is to show that the argument does not fall naturally out of everyday ideas about knowledge and justification, but rather trades on unacknowledged and problematic theoretical preconceptions.

Revealing the skeptic's unacknowledged presuppositions is only the first step. We need to be clear that those presuppositions really are optional, and the best way to do this is to show that there are other ways of thinking about knowledge and justification: ideally, ways that are much more in tune with everyday epistemic procedures. Also, we need to take account of the fact that skeptical arguments often *seem* intuitive, even if they are not. Now, it is not altogether clear how seriously this fact should be taken. Perhaps certain philosophical ideas, optional in themselves, are so deeply embedded in our culture as to seem part of common sense. Perhaps we are all under the spell of long-dead philosophers, as Keynes said politicians are in thrall to long-dead economists, to the extent that we no longer know where common sense ends and philosophy begins. However, it would be more satisfying if we could show that the ideas that lead to skepticism, while not wholly commonsensical, are not wholly unintuitive either. Perhaps skepticism seems to be intuitive because it derives from epistemological ideas that are genuinely anchored in aspects of everyday epistemic procedures, but which present those aspects in an exaggerated or otherwise distorted way.

A full response to the Agrippan argument, then, would accomplish three tasks: identify the argument's tacit theoretical presuppositions; show how they can be avoided (or better still, why they ought to be avoided); and explain why the argument, though not genuinely intuitive, can nevertheless easily seem to be so, ideally by revealing it as trading on certain distortions of everyday practice. A complete treatment of these issues would take a book. What I can do here is to sketch some basic ideas.

2. A Diagnosis

As I suggested, although he is himself sympathetic to skepticism, Fogelin provides us with some essential tools of diagnostic investigation.

Fogelin contrasts philosophical skepticism with skepticism about philosophy. The target of philosophical skepticism is our capacity for knowledge (or justified belief); and the basis of philosophical skepticism is some kind of philosophical reasoning, such as the Agrippan argument. In the case of skepticism about philosophy, the target of the skepticism is philosophy itself (*PR*, 3).

I can use this distinction to further explain why I think that the question of whether philosophical skepticism is genuinely intuitive is so important. If skeptical reasoning depends essentially on contentious theoretical presuppositions, and if those presuppositions have no clear basis in everyday epistemic practices but are rather required by the quest for a certain kind of distinctively philosophical understanding of knowledge, then the apparent irrefutability of skeptical argument may lead to skepticism about (a certain kind) of philosophy. It will not lead to philosophical skepticism.

We can begin our investigation of whether the Agrippan argument rests on contentious presuppositions by noting another distinction favored by Fogelin.

This is between two ways in which a belief can be said to be "justified." One way of looking at justification focuses on whether a belief has been responsibly formed or is responsibly held. For example, we can ask whether, in forming a certain belief, I have negligently ignored important counterevidence. Viewed from this angle, justified belief is what we get by epistemically responsible behavior. We can call this "personal justification." But a belief of mine can also be said to be justified when the way it was formed (my epistemic procedure) was *in fact* (sufficiently) reliable. We can call this impersonal kind of justification "adequate grounding"

("grounding" for short). In brief, personal justification is a matter of *responsibility*, but grounding is a matter of *reliability*.

Fogelin is led to distinguish personal justification from adequate grounding not through a consideration of Agrippan skepticism but by way of a diagnosis of Gettier's apparent demonstration that the traditional "justified, true belief" analysis fails to state a sufficient condition for knowledge. In a typical Gettier counterexample to the traditional analysis, a person forms a true belief on the basis of good evidence. However, we can see something that the believer cannot: namely, that the reasoning that leads him to his belief goes through a false lemma so that, relative to his reasons for holding it, his belief is only accidentally true. Because of this, we are reluctant to credit him with knowledge, even though his belief is both justified and true. However, according to Fogelin, such supposed counterexamples to the traditional analysis trade on the double-aspect character of justification. We take the examples to involve justified true belief because the imagined person forms his belief in an epistemically responsible way: he is personally justified. But at the same time, we imagine ourselves privy to extra information that reveals to us something that he (as the example is described) cannot be faulted for not realizing: that his reasoning is *in fact* defective. This is why we are unwilling to credit him with knowledge. The lesson of Gettier's problem is thus that knowledge requires justification along both dimensions: epistemic responsibility and adequate grounding.

Fogelin argues that, for knowledge properly so-called, grounds are adequate only if they "establish the truth" of the belief that depends on them. However, the importance of his point about the two aspects of justification goes far beyond its application to Gettier's problem of stating necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of "S knows that P." Grounding is an important aspect of justification even in connection with procedures that fall short of establishing the truth of our beliefs.

Following Robert Brandom, I suggest that we think of "being justified" in one's beliefs as enjoying a certain normative status in "the game of giving and asking for reasons." Roughly, to be justified in holding a particular belief is to be entitled to use that belief in inference (including practical inference). However, I want to insist that the entitlement I am concerned to explicate is genuinely epistemic and not, as the skeptic might say, merely practical. Further, picking up on Fogelin's response to Gettier's problem, we must recognize that epistemic entitlement is conditioned by two factors: whether a person has been responsible in executing an epistemic procedure (that is, responsible in forming and maintaining a belief)

and whether his procedure was in fact reliable (that is, whether his belief is well grounded). In the right circumstances, a person may be responsible in holding a poorly grounded belief; or he may be irresponsible in holding (what we can see is) one that is well grounded. As Fogelin argues, knowledge requires both responsibility and reliability. But I think that the same goes for justification. When we say someone is justified tout court—not justified in one way, though perhaps not in another—we imply that the epistemic procedure underlying his belief was both responsibly executed and sufficiently reliable, though its reliability may fall short of establishing his belief's truth.

These two ways of being justified—being personally justified and having adequate grounds—are not unrelated. We value epistemic responsibility because it reduces the risk of error. This makes epistemically responsible behavior itself a kind of grounding. Epistemically responsible behavior increases the likelihood that the beliefs I form will be true. Indeed, all I can do to ensure that my beliefs are well grounded is to be as procedurally scrupulous as possible. But this does not make the distinction between responsibility and grounding pointless, as we see when we shift to the third-person standpoint. In assessing someone else's views, I may know things that he does not, and so may be able to see that his beliefs are not well grounded, even though they are responsibly held. Similarly, I can take a third-person perspective on my own former beliefs. I may come to recognize *now* that my beliefs were poorly grounded *then*, though perhaps nonculpably.

Fogelin understands the idea of "grounding" very liberally. Sometimes, one's grounds involve evidence from which one reaches a belief (more or less self-consciously) by inference. But often one's grounds involve no more than the unselfconscious exercise of basic cognitive capacities. Thus, for Fogelin, grounding can often be understood in the way typical of "externalist" or "reliabilist" epistemologies. However, as Fogelin points out, philosophers have traditionally tended to be much less liberal than he would recommend. The less-liberal approach view is summed up in W. K. Clifford's dictum, famously criticized by William James, that it is irresponsible—always, everywhere, and for everyone—to hold a belief on less-than-adequate evidence. Fogelin calls this view "Cliffordism." I like to call it the "Prior Grounding" conception of justification, because it subjects epistemic justification to what I call the "Prior Grounding Requirement."

Whatever we call it, the Cliffordian view of justification has two critical features: it makes epistemic responsibility depend on adequate grounding, and it makes grounding depend on the possession (and proper

use) of evidence, in the sense of citable reasons. We can see right away that someone inclined toward Cliffordism would not make much of the distinction between responsibility and grounding. One can't have one without the other; and grounding (understood along Cliffordian lines) is theoretically fundamental. But are we compelled to see things this way?

In answering this question, the first step is to acquire a finer-grained conception of the Prior Grounding Requirement. I suggest that we analyze it into four subprinciples:

(PG1) *No Unearned Entitlements Principle.* Epistemic entitlement does not just accrue to us: it must be earned by epistemically responsible behavior.
(PG2) *Priority Principle.* It is never epistemically responsible to believe a proposition true when one's grounds for believing it true are less than adequate.
(PG3) *Evidence Principle.* Grounds are evidence: propositions that count in favor of the truth of the proposition believed.
(PG4) *Possession Principle.* For a person's belief to be adequately grounded, it is not sufficient merely for there to be appropriate evidence for it. Rather, the believer himself or herself must possess (and make proper use of) evidence that makes the proposition believed (very) likely to be true.

(PG1) and (PG2) imply that personal justification depends on proper grounding. By (PG2), believing on less than adequate grounds is always irresponsible and hence, by (PG1), never justified. Call this the "Dependence Thesis." (PG3) and (PG4) add to this a strongly *internalist* account of grounding: a person's grounds must be evidence in the strong sense of further beliefs—or if not beliefs, some other personal cognitive state—in virtue of which he holds the belief in question and to which he has immediate cognitive access.

This point deserves emphasis. Suppose that a belief has been formed by a method that is in fact reliable, perhaps to the point of ensuring that the belief is true. Many philosophers today think that this is all a belief needs in order to amount to knowledge. But such an *externalist* form of grounding, where the subject is not necessarily aware of the factors that make his belief truth-reliable, is just what (PG3) and (PG4) are meant to exclude. This may seem dogmatic. However, if we are sympathetic to the Dependence Thesis, this exclusion will seem natural. As something that "just happens," externalist grounding will fail to provide the kind of earned entitlement that epistemic justification requires.

I can now state my central claim: that the Prior Grounding or Cliffordian conception of justification must be presupposed by the

Agrippan argument, *if it is to amount to an argument for radical and general skepticism*. I will not be able to fully explain the significance of this qualification until I suggest an alternative way of thinking about knowledge and justification. But let me begin by justifying my claim in a provisional way.

We are treating Agrippan skepticism as radical: as precluding the possibility of justified belief. What kind of justification is at issue here?

According to the skeptic, any attempt to justify a belief must open a vicious regress, end with a brute assumption, or go in a circle. He concludes that no one is ever justified in believing one thing rather than another. Skeptical argument, he claims, leads him to suspend judgment. Since he has to survive, even a skeptic will retain various everyday opinions. But he will not see those opinions as held on the basis of the responsible exercise of his epistemic capacities. He will not see his opinions as reflecting any kind of considered judgment. To the contrary, the skeptic's everyday believing will be habitual and unreflective, so that questions of epistemic responsibility will not arise. Philosophical theories of knowledge attempt to show that something better than everyday unreflective believing is available to us. But the Agrippan argument shows that such attempts repeatedly fail, by the philosophers' own standards.

The Agrippan skeptic's conclusion concerns epistemic entitlement. The skeptic can concede that we are in a sense "entitled" to our everyday opinions. We need them for practical purposes, so that we have a kind of practical entitlement. Or perhaps there are beliefs that we cannot help holding—they just come to us passively—so we cannot be faulted for holding them. But in neither of these cases is our entitlement properly epistemic. We may bow to practical exigency or to psychological necessity, but epistemic justification demands something quite different: epistemically responsible regulation of assent ("judgment"). From a strictly epistemic standpoint, the skeptic suggests, we have no particular entitlements. We just go by how things happen to strike us, by how we find ourselves inclined to think. The skeptic calls this living by "appearances."

Accounts of skeptical assent always stress its passive character, the point being to set aside all questions of epistemic responsibility, hence all questions of epistemic justification. However, while the skeptic's conclusion concerns entitlement and responsibility, his argument establishes at most that there are limits to our capacity to *give reasons or cite evidence*. To get from this lemma to his desired conclusion, the skeptic must make a crucial assumption, either on his own part or on behalf of the philosopher who takes the idea of epistemic justification seriously. This assumption,

generally tacit, is that no belief is responsibly held (and the responsibility at issue here is epistemic responsibility) unless it rests on adequate and citable evidence. In other words, he must impose the Prior Grounding Requirement as a condition on epistemic justification. With the Dependence Thesis to link responsibility with grounding, and internalism to identify grounding with the possession of evidence, he can go from an inability to cite evidence to a failure of epistemic responsibility to a lack of justification. Without the Prior Grounding Requirement, it is not clear that he can go anywhere.

3. Another Model

The Cliffordian or Prior Grounding conception of knowledge and justification involves several distinct commitments. Accordingly, there are various ways to meet Agrippan skepticism, depending on which of the skeptic's more fine-grained presuppositions we decide to reject.

Radical externalists reject them all. For them, knowledge has no connection with responsiveness to reasons. Questions of earning epistemic entitlements by relating to reasons in an epistemically responsible way do not arise.

I think that a more nuanced approach is preferable. Pace radical externalists, knowledge cannot be completely detached from justification. This is because it cannot be detached from epistemic responsibility. For example, we do not attribute knowledge to a person who forms a belief by a method which, though it is in fact reliable, he has every reason to judge unreliable. At the very least, a radically externalist conception of knowledge would be seriously revisionary.

Fogelin rejects radical externalism for the reason just given (*PR*, chap. 3). But is this reason sufficient? If our ordinary concept of knowledge encourages skepticism, perhaps it should be revised. Or perhaps we could say that radical externalism gives an account of a certain primitive kind of knowledge, common to animals and small children, leaving open the question of whether we need to recognize knowledge of a more sophisticated kind, perhaps at the risk of courting skepticism.

I do not think that we should concede even this much. As Brandom, following Sellars, has emphasized, radical externalism's attempt to set aside all questions of responsibility and justification leads to problems with the notion of *belief*. Beliefs are essentially the sort of things for which reasons can be demanded or given. Beings that are completely unresponsive to

reasons cannot be thought of as even having beliefs, whether or not those beliefs amount to knowledge. This is because responsiveness to reasons—a central component in epistemic responsibility—is what distinguishes conceptual from nonconceptual activity. The key question to ask is how the human being who says "That's green" when shown a green card differs from the parrot trained to utter the same vocables in response to the same stimulus? According to Sellars, the difference lies in the fact that the human, unlike the parrot, has the concept "green." Thus the human speaker understands what he is saying, in a way that the vocalizing parrot does not. This understanding consists in the human ability to use observation reports as evidence for further claims, as well as in his grasp of when such reports are and are not properly (i.e., justifiably) made. If this is right, a mere conditioned response does not even express a belief. The only way to avoid this conclusion would be to develop a concept of conceptual content that detached such content from the role of beliefs in inference. Of course, this is what externalists have tried to do, but without much success.

We can avoid all these problems if we can find a way of preserving the links between knowledge and justification, and between justification and reason-giving, that does not impose the Prior Grounding Requirement. Again, we can take our cue from Sellars. (Similar ideas can be found in Austin.)[3] The way forward is to see justification as exhibiting what Brandom calls a "default and challenge structure." To get a feel for the difference between the "prior grounding" and "default and challenge" conceptions of justification, consider two types of legal systems. One treats the accused as guilty unless proved innocent; the other grants presumptive innocence and throws the burden of proof on the accuser. The prior grounding conception corresponds to the first model: a belief is not responsibly held unless the believer can establish its credentials according to rather rigorous standards. The default and challenge conception takes the second approach: a person is entitled to a belief in the absence of appropriate "defeaters": i.e., reasons to think that he is *not* so entitled. This is what it means to say that epistemic entitlement—responsibly held belief—can be the default status of a person's beliefs and assertions.

The Prior Grounding and Default and Challenge conception of knowledge and justification are alike in seeing knowledge and justification as essentially connected with the ability to give reasons. Where they differ is with respect to (a) *when* epistemically responsible behavior requires being able to give reasons and (b) how the burden of justification (by reason-giving) is distributed. On the Prior Grounding model, the requirement to be able to justify by reasons is activated by the mere making of a knowledge

claim. Any claimant, as such, acquires an unrestricted obligation to provide explicit backup for whatever he represents himself as knowing. In effect, this licenses the skeptic to issue *brute challenges*. (You say you know, so tell us how.) By contrast, on the Default and Challenge conception, the justificatory burden shouldered by claimants (with respect to reason-giving) may amount to no more than a Defense Commitment: i.e., an obligation to respond to reasonable challenges, if any should arise. Notice that in the absence of such challenges, and in the context of otherwise epistemically responsible behavior, an "externalist" grounding may be sufficient for a belief's amounting to knowledge. (Of course, to say this is to concede nothing to radical externalism.)

It is absolutely crucial that default and challenge conception be interpreted so as to place justificatory burdens on both claimants and challengers. There is no universal default entitlement to enter a challenge: depending on the circumstances, challenges (as much as claims) may need to be explained or justified. If there were such an entitlement, brute challenges would be entirely in order and the Default and Challenge model would not be an alternative to the Prior Grounding Requirement. If there were brute challenges, or a universal right to challenge, there would be no default entitlements.

The Default and Challenge conception accords well with ordinary practice. If I think you might be making a mistake, that you have not shown proper epistemic responsibility, or that your epistemic procedure may have been flawed, I ought to be able to say how and why. Groundless, free-floating suspicion is not ordinarily considered a basis for a reasonable challenge.

Not only does the Default and Challenge model fit well with ordinary practice, it does so in a way that brings out problems in the skeptic's procedure. If I suggest that you might be making a mistake, you can reasonably ask me what I have in mind. If I say that I have nothing particular in mind—just that your belief might be false—then at best I am articulating a generalized fallibilism. What I have not yet done is to give grounds for doubt. Accordingly, I have not taken a step toward skepticism, let alone a form of skepticism that is either radical or general. Nor is it clear how such a step could be taken.

We can now see why the skeptic is so committed to the Prior Grounding Requirement: alternatively, why the Default and Challenge conception is so hostile to philosophical skepticism. The Default and Challenge conception embodies what can be called a "contextualist" model of justification. The model is contextualist in the sense that, because

claimants and challengers share justificatory burdens, epistemic questions *always* arise in a rich informational context. This context will be constituted by background beliefs that are currently not up for grabs, some of which will have the status of default entitlements. Fallibilism may still hold. That is, it may be that, given the right stage setting, any belief can be challenged. However, there will be no question of challenging our beliefs all at once, hence no question of general skepticism.[4]

Go back to Fogelin's useful division of the Modes into "Challenging" and "Dialectical." The question is, Why should we concede that the Challenging Modes always apply? Is the mere fact that some other people do not (or might not) share some view of mine always sufficient to place a severe justificatory burden on me? It is hard to see why it should be. But the skeptic will say: it is sufficient *whenever I lay claim to knowledge*, thereby representing my opinions as properly grounded. In his own eyes, the skeptic does not *impose* the burden of justification on me. Rather, by laying claim to knowledge, I *assume* it. In a way, he is right: in laying claim to knowledge I do assume some kind of justificatory burden. But the question is, What kind exactly? If the skeptic is presupposing that the justificatory burden implicit in any claim to knowledge involves an unrestricted obligation to give reasons, even in the absence of concrete challenges, he is relying on the Prior Grounding Requirement. But without this unrestricted commitment to giving reasons, the Dialectical Modes no longer come automatically into play.

To sum up, by placing the justificatory burdens exclusively on claimants, while relieving skeptical challengers of all such obligations, the Prior Grounding Requirement makes space for questioning all our knowledge, all at once. It does so as follows. The requirement allows the skeptic to enter brute challenges: challenges that are apparently presuppositionless (setting aside the theoretical presuppositions embodied in the Prior Grounding Requirement itself, presuppositions that are passed off as lowest-common-denominator ideas about knowledge). Since, by their very nature, presuppositionless challenges can be entered anywhere and everywhere, without contextual restriction, the impossibility of meeting them shows something about the epistemic standards of all our beliefs. Any knowledge-claim becomes representative of all knowledge-claims. On the other hand, if we reject the Prior Grounding Requirement in favor of a Default and Challenge/Contextualist conception of knowledge and justification, there will be no such thing as a representative knowledge-claim, only particular claims and particular challenges entered in particular situations. The threat of radical, general skepticism will no longer be on the table.

4. Why Skepticism Seems Intuitive (Maybe)

I have argued that skepticism is not "intuitive" but rather depends on a highly theorized conception of justification: the Prior Grounding conception. This conception of justification cannot be read off ordinary epistemic procedures. It has nothing to do with ordinary doubts of justifications, which are always in various ways restricted. Rather, its function is to make room for an extraordinary, unrestricted kind of doubt: general (hence radical) skepticism.

This line of argument provokes resistance. To many philosophers, the skeptic's questions seem (or can be presented so as to seem) simple and natural. For example, they are easily explained to beginning students of philosophy, who often find them compelling. How then can those questions be an artifact of a contentious piece of philosophical theorizing?

I have a certain limited sympathy with this objection. Theoretical diagnosis is more convincing when extended to include an explanation of why skepticism seems intuitive, even if it isn't.

Let us return to the Prior Grounding requirement, which I analyzed into four subprinciples. To recapitulate, these were:

(PG1) *No Unearned Entitlements Principle.* Epistemic entitlement does not just accrue to us: it must be earned by epistemically responsible behavior.

(PG2) *Priority Principle.* It is never epistemically responsible to believe a proposition true when one's grounds for believing it true are less than adequate.

(PG3) *Evidence Principle.* Grounds are evidence: propositions that count in favor of the truth of the proposition believed.

(PG4) *Possession Principle.* For a person's belief to be adequately grounded, it is not sufficient merely for there to be appropriate evidence for it. Rather, the believer himself or herself must possess (and make proper use of) evidence that makes the proposition believed (very) likely to be true.

I think that each of these principles answers to some important feature of justification, as we ordinarily understand it. This is why skepticism can continue to seem intuitive, even when its dependence on the Prior Grounding Requirement is pointed. However, none of them should be understood the way the skeptic needs it to be.

(PG1) says that there are no unearned entitlements. There is something right about this. To be capable of epistemic entitlements, one must be an epistemic subject: an accredited player of what Sellars calls "the game of giving and asking for reasons." This means that the status of epistemic

subject must be earned. It does not come with mere sentience but is rather gained through training and education. However, the skeptic gives the principle of no unearned entitlements a much stronger reading. Because the skeptic does not recognize that earning the status of epistemic subject means acquiring the capacity for (well-grounded) default entitlements, he takes the principle to require that entitlement to any and every belief be earned by taking *specific positive steps*. On the skeptic's view, one cannot be justified unless one has gone through some process of justifying. There is no reason to accede to this requirement, which is designed to be unsatisfiable.

(PG2) also responds to some real features or everyday epistemic practices, but in a confused way. To see this, we need to return to the duality in our everyday notion of justification: responsibility versus reliability (grounding). There is a way in which we are not unqualifiedly justified in a belief if that belief is not adequately grounded. (PG2) trades on this. However, this epistemic defect need not involve a failure of epistemic responsibility: it is possible to be nonculpable in one's use of a de facto unreliable procedure. Keeping track of the distinction between responsibility and grounding allows us to see what is right about (PG2), thus why the principle is appealing, without being nudged in the skeptic's direction.

(PG3) identifies grounds with evidence. The Default and Challenge conception of justification carries no such *general* commitment. Bearing in mind the duality in the concept of justification, we can allow that the grounding required by knowledge can be understood, in appropriate cases, in the way that externalists recommend. On the Default and Challenge conception of knowledge, I would have to defend the adequacy of my (hitherto externalist) grounding only if some appropriate doubt were raised. At the same time, if a belief of mine were not well grounded, it would not amount to knowledge, no matter how responsibly held (though I would think that it did). Thus, while we do not have an unrestricted commitment to give grounds, our commitment to adequate grounding is always a potential entry point for criticism.

The Possession Principle, (PG4), equates being justified with being equipped always and everywhere with a rationale for what one believes, with being able to give grounds. Justification often does demand just this but, pace the skeptic, not always. A responsible believer's commitment to providing grounds is not *unrestricted*. Rather, a claim to knowledge involves a commitment to respond to whatever appropriate challenges emerge, and to withdraw the claim should no effective defense be available. In claiming knowledge, I commit myself to my belief's *being* adequately grounded—formed by a reliable method—but not to my having *already*

established its well-groundedness. This sort of defense is necessary only given an appropriate challenge: a positive reason to think that I reached my belief in some unreliable manner.

If we *do* overgeneralize—taking controversial claims to be representative of claims at large—we will overlook the connection between the obligation to produce evidence and the existence of properly motivated challenges. And if we overlook this connection, we transform the ever-present possibility of a contextually appropriate challenge, which we may not be able to meet, into an unrestricted demand for evidence, which we definitely cannot meet. That is to say, we will take the fatal step from fallibilism to radical, general skepticism. But this is not a step that we are obliged to take.

So why are (PG3) and (PG4) appealing? For two reasons. First, the evidentialist/internalist conception of grounding that they captured is the appropriate conception for situations where, in order to maintain entitlement, I have to meet a challenge. And second, these are just the contexts that we are most likely to think of when we think about knowledge and justification. This is because we do not go around stating the obvious and so do not generally have to wait for challenges to *emerge*. Claims worth making are often *not* justified by default: that is why they are worth making. Interesting claims are often claims in the face of standing objections, or are such that questions come quickly to mind, so that the Defense Commitment is automatically triggered. By contrast, default entitlements typically (and quite literally) go without saying. But we should not overgeneralize from interesting cases. Not everything we accept is subject to well-motivated challenges. Indeed, with respect to much of what we accept, we have no very clear idea what it would be either to entertain a doubt or to mount a defense. (This point is emphasized by Wittgenstein.) Sellars hits the nail on the head. Discussing "the metaphor of 'foundation and superstructure,'" which is closely connected with the desire to respond to the threat of general skepticism, Sellars says that this metaphor is "a false extrapolation . . . from specific 'problematic situations' with respect to which it *is* appropriate."[5] This is exactly what we should say about the conception of justification articulated by the Prior Grounding Requirement. And it explains why the skeptic's doubts can *seem* intuitive, even though they aren't.

5. Two Forms of Skepticism

Fogelin distinguishes two forms of skepticism: philosophical skepticism and skepticism about philosophy. I think that these two forms of skepticism

are related in what is perhaps a surprising way. Traditionally, philosophical theories of knowledge try to meet the skeptic on his own ground. That is, they try to show that our beliefs can be justified within the constraints set by the Prior Grounding Requirement. These generalized (i.e., decontextualized) legitimations of our beliefs are the mirror image of the skeptic's decontextualized doubts. If we abandon the Prior Grounding Requirement, both the skeptic's doubts and the philosopher's reassurances go by the board. Skepticism about philosophy is thus not a particular application of philosophical skepticism. Rather, skepticism about philosophy is the answer to philosophical skepticism. I take this to be Wittgenstein's position in *On Certainty*.

The Prior Grounding conception of knowledge and justification makes room for brute challenges, which then open the way to general skepticism. But do we really understand general skepticism? Wittgenstein suggests that we do not. According to Wittgenstein, if you tried to doubt everything, you would not get as far as doubting anything. This is because holding many true beliefs, or not being subject to certain kinds of error, is necessary for being able to make judgments or raise questions at all. Unless we routinely get lots of things right, it is not clear what we are talking or thinking *about*, if anything. Wittgenstein asks: "Suppose a man could not remember whether he had always had five fingers or two hands? Should we understand him? Could we be certain of understanding him?" (*OC*, 157). The answer is that we could not be certain. At some point, "mistakes" shade off into unintelligibility. If I routinely get the simplest calculations wrong, or repeatedly miscount small collections of familiar object, I am not making arithmetical mistakes. Rather, I have not mastered my numbers. Wittgenstein says: "The *truth* of my statements is the test of my *understanding* of these statements. . . . That is to say: if I make certain false statements, it becomes uncertain whether I understand them" (80, 81). Default entitlements—accepted propositions that (at least temporarily) "lie apart from the route travelled by inquiry" (88)—are a precondition of making sense. But if we can't make sense, we can't entertain doubts. Default entitlements are thus a precondition of doubting.

We should not read too much into Wittgenstein's occasional claims not to understand the skeptic. What Wittgenstein wants, I think, is to warn us against assuming too quickly that we do understand him. He wants to give us a sense of just how *extra*ordinary the skeptic's doubts are. He wants us to see that nothing in our ordinary epistemic practices, taken at face value, equips us to understand what the skeptic is up to. Seeing this, we will appreciate the need for a diagnostic investigation to find "the right

point of attack" (*OC*, 37).[6] To the extent that we can come to understand how the skeptic thinks, we will be able to make a certain amount of sense of his questions, though in the end we may still find his presuppositions less than fully coherent.

On my reading, Wittgenstein's diagnostic investigations lead to a kind of contextualism. But contextualism in the style of Wittgenstein (and myself) is not altogether happily seen as a "theory of knowledge" along the lines of traditional foundationalism or the coherence. Formally, contextualism looks like a variant of foundationalism, since it teaches that doubts, justification, knowledge-claims, and so on are always entered in a rich context of background presuppositions. However, whereas traditional foundationalists think that "basic beliefs" can be theoretically categorized, Wittgenstein is at pains to point out that we are quite unable to specify what, in a particular context of inquiry, can or cannot reasonably or even intelligibly be doubted. No bright lines separate mistakes from mental disturbances from flat-out nonsense. So, for example, the "situation is . . . not the same for a proposition like 'At this distance from the sun there is a planet' and 'Here is a hand' (namely my own hand). The second can't be called a hypothesis. But there isn't a sharp boundary between them" (*OC*, 52). This lack of sharp boundaries means that there is no rule by which we can identify propositions that (in some particular context of inquiry) need to "stand fast." For a contextualist, knowledge and justification are not objects of theory, at least not to the extent that traditional epistemologists have supposed.

Consider traditional foundationalism. The traditional foundationalist wants to set up broad categories of judgments because he thinks that those categories can be arranged in some order of "epistemological priority." The idea is that, in the last analysis, judgments belonging to a "higher level" must find their grounds in judgments that are "epistemologically prior." Judgments to which no judgments are epistemologically prior are then epistemologically basic. Wittgenstein's doubts about the possibility of surveying or categorizing contextually relevant stand-fast propositions goes naturally with doubts about the whole idea of such a "natural order of reasons." There is no saying, outside of all particular contexts of inquiry or justification, what may be invoked in defense of what.[7]

This point has profound implications for the Agrippan problem. Recall that the skeptic's apparently unrestricted entitlement to demand grounds for claims threatens to open a vicious regress of justification. However, in practice, the threat of regress, or even of an extended sequence of claims and challenges, is slight to nonexistent. Faced with ever

renewed demands for grounds, we soon find ourselves with nothing very specific to add. Asked to "justify" some crashingly obvious claim, we are likely to say something like "I can just see what's happening" or "It stands to reason." This is just what the skeptic wants. Under the influence of the Prior Grounding Requirement, he will take responses like this, not as (quite possibly reasonable) rejections of his question, but as attempts to answer him by raising the discussion to the epistemological level: in effect, by our identifying (however crudely) an ultimate and highly generic source of knowledge (the Senses, Reason). He will then argue that no such source of knowledge can have its reliability validated in a noncircular way. This is why the so-called Problem of the Criterion (the problem of identifying and validating some ultimate source of knowledge) lies at the heart of Agrippan skepticism. Here, in his criticisms of contemporary theories of justification, Fogelin is a true Agrippan skeptic. His view is that the skeptic sets the agenda for philosophical theorizing about justification, with the result that no theory of justification succeeds.[8]

I agree. However, the only skepticism implied by this view is skepticism about philosophy (or a certain genre of philosophy). And, as we should expect, this skepticism is reinforced by Wittgenstein's contextualist suspicion of knowledge as an object of theory. In particular, Wittgenstein's suspicion of the whole idea of context-independent relations of epistemic priority between broad classes of beliefs challenges the skeptic's tacit assumption that highly generalized presuppositions concerning the reliability of this or that faculty or source of knowledge must always be there to underwrite quotidian certainties, if such certainties are to enjoy any genuine positive epistemic status. This in turn calls in question the epistemologist's goal of mounting a general defense of our reliability with respect to this or that kind of judgment.

Wittgenstein makes the point by calling our attention to the ways in which we do and do not entertain doubts about the reliability of calculations: "What sort of proposition is this: 'We cannot have miscalculated in $12 \times 12 = 144$'? It must surely be a proposition of logic.—But now, is it not the same, or doesn't it come to the same as the statement $12 \times 12 = 144$? . . . If you demand a rule from which it follows that there can't have been a miscalculation here, the answer is that we did not learn this through a rule, but by learning to calculate" (*OC*, 43, 44). Of course, there are cases in which we check calculations, and in a rough-and-ready way we can point to what they are: the calculation was long or complex, we performed it when we were tired or under stress, and so on. We can also describe how checking proceeds. We might add up the columns again,

making sure we haven't mixed up digits from different columns. We might do this two or three times (but not a hundred times), and so on. But in neither case can we give a description that is either exhaustive or particularly precise. There is no getting rid of phrases like "... and so on." Wittgenstein again: "But can't it be described how we satisfy ourselves of the reliability of a calculation? O yes! Yet no rule emerges when we do so.—But the most important thing is: The rule is not needed. Nothing is lacking. We do calculate according to a rule, and that is enough" (46). This is the crucial point: "Nothing is lacking." A philosophical foundation would not make ordinary certainties more certain, and the absence of such a foundation does not make them any less so. The idea of a philosophical theory of knowledge or justification, as an antidote to skepticism, is the source of the disease for which such theories present themselves as the cure.

I would like to think that Fogelin and I are of one mind here. But I don't think that we are. Fogelin is more sympathetic than I am to philosophical skepticism, and I think I know why.

The pivotal question is the one that has occupied us throughout this essay: whether philosophical skepticism is natural or intuitive. I have been arguing that, perhaps contrary to widespread first impressions, philosophical skepticism does not grow naturally out of reflection on ordinary epistemic practices—practices of expressing doubts, giving reasons, claiming knowledge, and so on. Rather, skepticism is an artifact of a wholly optional (indeed implausible and confused) theorization of such practices. The chief corollary of this conclusion is that skepticism about (that genre) of philosophy is the cure for philosophical skepticism.

Fogelin and I differ in that he is much more sympathetic than I am to the skeptic's claim to be simply exploiting aspects of everyday epistemic practices that are already in place. Thus Fogelin writes, "We can see how demands for philosophical modes of justification can spring quite naturally from our ordinary concept of knowledge. It takes nothing more than reflection on our ordinary modes of justification to feel the need for something more" (*PR*, 203). Now we might think that, in suggesting that demands for philosophical theories of justification spring naturally from reflection on our ordinary concept of knowledge, Fogelin is overhastily acceding to the thought that the mere fact that our ordinary concept of knowledge connects knowledge with justification is sufficient to bring us face to face with the Agrippan problem. But in fact, he has something much subtler in mind, a point that one might derive from Wittgenstein.

Recall that Fogelin holds that there are two kinds of justification—responsibility and grounding—and that knowledge demands both. To

know that p, I must come responsibly to believe that p on grounds that establish the truth of p (*PR*, 28). Grounds "establish the truth" of p by eliminating various error-possibilities or "defeaters" for p. However, in ordinary circumstances, the defeaters that we feel called upon to eliminate fall far short of all the defeaters there are or could be. There are all kinds of possibilities, remote and not so remote, that we feel able simply to ignore. We simply trust that such things aren't in the cards. We have no alternative: life is too short to worry about every possible way of going wrong. Nevertheless, there are no guarantees. Our ordinary justificatory procedures are inherently incomplete and thus risky. To be sure, we often get away with the risks we take. Even so, as Wittgenstein remarks, "It is always by grace of Nature that one knows something" (*OC*, 505; cf. *PR*, 92).

According to Fogelin, the incompleteness of ordinary epistemic procedures contains a standing invitation to raise the "level of scrutiny" to which a claim may be subjected by bringing up uneliminated error-possibilities. Thus, reflection on our ordinary modes of justification shows that everyday knowledge is "fragile": liable to undermining by raising the level of scrutiny to the point at which our justificatory procedure is manifestly inadequate. The skeptic simply exploits this invitation in a no-holds-barred way. He insists on *unrestricted* scrutiny, with no error-possibilities off-limits. But once we see that justification fails at the highest level of scrutiny, we are led to wonder whether our ordinary procedures were ever any good. The only way to meet the skeptic, it now seems, is with a general theory of knowledge, a theory that vouchsafes the reliability of our basic cognitive faculties and continues to do so at the highest level of scrutiny. Such a theory will perforce have to live up to Cliffordian standards. But no theory can, or at least none has: the Agrippan problem sees to that. Fogelin reaches a dual conclusion: "First, Pyrrhonian doubts are the natural and intelligible result of the unrestricted examination of our epistemic practices. Second, Pyrrhonian doubts, once raised, seem incapable of resolution" (*PR*, 203). In my terms, skeptical doubts are natural doubts. But skeptical doubts call for a theoretical response, and none is forthcoming. Accordingly, skepticism about philosophy reinforces philosophical skepticism, the very opposite of what I have claimed.

Fogelin's argument here raises all kinds of interesting questions, which I do not have the space to pursue.[9] However, I think that it is clear where I must claim he goes wrong. Fogelin talks of "raising the level of scrutiny," as though skepticism results from a standing invitation (contained in our ordinary justificatory procedures) to judge everyday knowledge claims by ever more exacting standards. On the view I have been

defending, it doesn't. The problem with the skeptic is not the *severity* of his standards but the *generality* of his doubt.

Fogelin rejects contextualism because he takes contextualism to imply that justification is always relativized to a context or "framework." This simply misrepresents our ordinary way of understanding knowledge and justification. In Fogelin's words, "Although knowledge-claims are always made within restricted frameworks, they are not relativized to these frameworks" (*PR*, 203). Such relativization compromises the objectivity of justification, particularly justification as grounding. But it is precisely because knowledge requires objectively adequate grounding that a knowledge claim embodies a standing invitation to raise the level of scrutiny, and why failure at higher levels reflects badly on knowledge claims entered in "restricted" frameworks.

I think that Fogelin overreaches here. With respect to something we think we know, there is always the *possibility* that the level of scrutiny will need to be raised. But there is no *standing invitation* to raise it. We will need to raise it if we find reason to think that the epistemic procedure we have been relying on is somehow defective. Otherwise we can stand pat. If we do not insist on this distinction, we will make the disastrous move from a salutary fallibilism (we may have to admit error) to radical, general skepticism (we never have any reason to suppose we have got anything right).

I think that this is just what Fogelin does. While we must insist that justification always takes place in a context, we should resist relativizing it to that context. We should do this because we should be fallibilists. Relativizing justification is a kind of insulating strategy, designed to limit the possibilities of reasonable criticism, and Fogelin is therefore right to reject it. However, to agree that knowledge is not relativized to a framework, hence fragile, is *only* to acknowledge that we are fallible: that, as we learn more, we may come to see a particular item of putative knowledge as less securely grounded than we thought. We can admit the fragility of knowledge without taking a step toward philosophical skepticism.

So why does Fogelin slide from fallibilism to skepticism? All the work is done by his notion of "unrestricted" scrutiny. Certainly, there is an ordinary practice of raising the level of scrutiny to which we think an erstwhile knowledge claim should be subjected. And there is no clear theoretical limit to how severe the standards we apply can become. In this sense, scrutiny is potentially "unrestricted." Nevertheless, raising the level of scrutiny is always something we do in a definite informational context or, as Fogelin likes to say, a "restricted" framework. We see immediately

that the skeptic's idea of "unrestricted" scrutiny has nothing to do with increasing the severity of our epistemic standards (within an informational context) and everything to do with raising questions about knowledge in general. The skeptic's "unrestricted scrutiny" is really a license to treat every logically possible way of going wrong as a defeater that needs to be eliminated. This is a license to enter challenges outside any particular informational context: challenges that are unrestricted in the sense of presuppositionless, decontextualized, and hence standing in no need of justification. Unrestricted scrutiny turns out to be another form of the skeptic's supposed license to enter completely unmotivated challenges, but on condition that failure to respond to them indicates, not just fallibilism, but radical skepticism. As I have argued, there is a lacuna in this argument that only the Prior Grounding Requirement can fill.

There is no reason to think that such decontextualized doubts are a natural extension of ordinary doubting. Skeptical doubts are not natural doubts. This is why skepticism about philosophy is the cure for philosophical skepticism, not its final vindication.

Notes

Bob Fogelin was my colleague when I was a beginning assistant professor. His friendship and encouragement helped me survive what proved to be a difficult time. I have learned as much from Bob as from anyone. I owe him a lot. More than a lot.

1. Robert Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflection on Knowledge and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 194–95. Subsequent references are given by *PR* and page number.

2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969). References to this work are given by *OC* and paragraph number.

3. See J. L. Austin, "Other Minds," in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). However, I am inclined to think that this conception of justification is very ancient, originating in Academic theories of "skeptical assent," particularly Carneades's doctrine of the "tested impression." I find it suggestive that Sextus Empiricus, who takes Pyrrhonian skepticism to be more thoroughgoing than its Academic rival, feels compelled to take issue with Carneades over just this doctrine.

4. Fogelin takes contextualism to hold that all justification is justification relative to a framework. This leads him to reject contextualism on the grounds that it improperly exempts beliefs from criticism. I may agree that a person is justified in holding a belief relative to the framework he is operating in but deny that he is justified *simpliciter* because I reject his framework: for example, I may reject the

most meticulously worked-out astrological prediction (see *PR*, 95–96). But contextualism, as I understand it, is not committed to a sharp distinction between framework propositions (taken to be beyond justification) and propositions justifiable or questionable within a framework. With appropriate recontextualization, erstwhile framework propositions can become the objects of critical scrutiny. Contextualism is hostile not to fallibilism but only to general skepticism.

5. Wilfrid Sellars, "Epistemic Principles," in *Action, Knowledge, and Reality*, ed. H. Castaneda (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), 332–49. Reprinted in Ernest Sosa and Jaegwon Kim, eds., *Epistemology: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 125–33. Quotation from Sosa and Kim, 132.

6. This important passage suggests that readers of Wittgenstein should hesitate to claim that he is simply intent on convicting the skeptic or traditional philosopher of talking nonsense.

7. The idea of a natural order of reasons is the dominant form of the doctrine I call "epistemological realism." For more on epistemological realism and its relation to skepticism, particularly Cartesian skepticism, see my *Unnatural Doubts* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992; reprint, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also my *Problems of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

8. This is the burden of part 2 of *PR*.

9. For more on the differences between Fogelin and me, see my "Fogelin's Neo-Pyrrhonism," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7.2 (1999): 141–58.

ERNEST SOSA

Two False Dichotomies

Foundationalism/Coherentism and Internalism/Externalism

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. . . .

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

—T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*

Two leading ideas will guide us, each simple and obvious, even trivial. First, knowledge is a matter of degree, in respect both of how sure one is and of how well justified. Second, among intellectual values two stand out: the truth of our beliefs and the coherence of our minds, which if constituted by interbelief explanatory relations is of a piece with the value of understanding. We want our beliefs to be true, reasonably enough, and so integrated as to enable answers for our many and varied whys.[1]

Guided by these twin ideas, we will consider two seemingly trivial principles, which together hold surprising consequences. Drawing and assessing these will be our main project.

A. Some Consequences of Two Principles

First the principles:

Ascent (principle of epistemic ascent):

> If one really knows that p and one considers whether one does, then one must be justified in thinking that one does.[2]

Closure (principle of the closure of epistemic justification under justifiedly believed entailment):

> If one is justified in believing X and in believing that for X to be the case Y must also be the case, then one must also be justified in believing Y.

These principles both concern the fully conscious contents of a mind in a single specious present. Ascent, for example, when spelled out more fully, reads thus:

> If in a single specious present one occurrently knows that p and consciously considers whether one knows it, then one really does know it only if one is justified in then consciously affirming that one does.

Why should we believe this? Suppose, first, one consciously and occurrently believes that p, and, in that same specious present, second, one consciously and occurrently considers whether one not only believes but knows that p. Exactly three options open up: one might say either (a) "No, I don't know that," or (b) "Who knows whether I know it or not; maybe I do, maybe I don't," or (c) "Yes, that is something I do know." One is better off, surely, if able to give the latter answers: better off with the second answer than with the first, and better off yet with the third. Answer a, and even answer b, would reveal a certain lack of integration in that stretch of consciousness; only answer c, of the three, entirely avoids disharmony within that consciousness in that specious present. If one has to give answer a, or even answer b, one thereby falls short, and one's belief that p itself falls short. That belief is then not all that it could be. One is not as well justified as one might be, epistemically. You are best justified in consciously believing that p in that specious present if you can answer in the affirmative your own conscious question whether in so believing you thereby know. You are better justified in so believing if able to answer thus affirmatively than if forced to consciously withhold judgment; what is more, you are especially better justified in so believing if able to answer thus affirmatively than if led to consciously *deny* that you do know.[3]

Suppose the knowledge at issue in the antecedent of Ascent to be knowledge of our coherence-requiring high quality. A belief would not qualify as a case of such knowledge if enmeshed in a debilitating incoherence—as when one has to accompany one's belief, in that same specious present, with a conscious denial that it is knowledge, or even with a conscious suspension of judgment on that question. If it is knowledge of that high level that is involved in our principle, then the combination of the two conjuncts in its antecedent would require the truth of its consequent. One does not attain high-level knowledge, when one consciously wonders whether one does know, unless one is able to say yes. What is more, to say yes arbitrarily would not do. One's belief amounts to reflective knowledge only if one can say that one does know, not just arbitrarily, but with adequate justification.

Our principle of Closure, too, concerns the fully conscious contents of a mind in a single specious present, so that, when spelled out more fully, it reads like this:

> If in a single specious present one both occurrently believes that p, and occurrently believes that, by logical necessity, if p then q, then one is really well justified in these two conscious beliefs only if one is also justified in then consciously affirming that q.

Suppose, again, one consciously and occurrently believes that p, and, in that same specious present, second, one consciously and occurrently believes that, by logical necessity, if p then q. Exactly three options open up on the proposition that q: either (a) one might deny it, assenting consciously to its very negation, or (b) one might consciously withhold judgment on it, thinking consciously: who knows, maybe it's true, maybe it's false, or (c) one might consciously affirm that q. One is better off, surely, if able to give the latter answers: better off with the second answer than with the first, and better off yet with the third. Answer a, and even answer b, would reveal a certain lack of integration; only answer c, of the three, avoids disharmony. If one has to give answer a, or even answer b, one falls short, and either one's belief that p or one's belief that, necessarily, if p then q, itself falls short. At least one of these beliefs is then not all that it could be. One is not as well justified as one might be, epistemically. One is best justified in consciously believing both that p and that, necessarily, if p then q, in that specious present, if one can then also give one's conscious assent to the proposition that q. One is better justified in so believing, anyhow, if one can answer thus affirmatively than if one has to consciously withhold judgment on whether it is so that q. And one is

especially better justified in so believing if one can thus affirm that q than if one has to consciously *deny* it.

Suppose the justification at issue in the antecedent of Closure is justification of our coherence-requiring high quality, so that beliefs would not qualify as thus justified if enmeshed in a debilitating incoherence—as when one believes that p and that, necessarily, if p then q, and one has to accompany one's beliefs, in that same specious present, with a conscious denial that q, or even with a conscious suspension of judgment on that proposition. If so, if it is justification of that coherence-requiring level that is involved in our principle, then the combination of the two conjuncts in its antecedent requires the truth of its consequent. One does not attain the epistemic heights required for high-level conscious justification—both that p and that, necessarily, if p then q—in a single specious present, unless one also consciously assents to the proposition that q; and assents not just arbitrarily but with adequate justification.[4]

From these two principles—Ascent and Closure—we may already derive a principle with a substantial role in recent and not-so-recent epistemology:

Exclusion (principle of exclusion):

> IF one really knows that p and considers whether one does, AND one then justifiedly believes that for one to really know that p it must also be so that q, THEN one must also be justified in believing that q.[5]

This follows straightforwardly. Via Ascent, the first two conjuncts of the antecedent of Exclusion entail that one is justified in believing oneself to know that p. And this, in combination with the third conjunct, via Closure in turn yields that one is justified in believing that q. Putting all this together, we see Exclusion entailed by Ascent and Closure. Of course, our focus is still a single specious present when someone consciously believes and considers the relevant items. So the knowing, considering, and justified believing that Exclusion concerns is all to take place in a single consciousness in a single specious present.

Exclusion implies that if one is really to know something P which one consciously believes at a given time, then if at that time one consciously considers whether one knows P while also justifiedly and occurrently believing that one's knowing P necessarily requires that Q be the case, then one must believe oneself to satisfy that requirement and must be justified in so believing. Exclusion thus implies that in order really to know something, one must be able to "defend it in the arena of reflection": one

must be able to view oneself as meeting every condition that one recognizes as required in order then really to know; or, alternatively and to the same effect, one must be able to exclude justifiedly any possibility one thinks incompatible with one's then knowing.

Exclusion is a powerful principle in the skeptic's hands, once we are persuaded to grant the following:

> Here is something that most or all of us justifiedly believe: That, unless the sources of one's belief that p are at least minimally reliable, one's belief cannot then amount to knowledge.[6]

This fact in combination with Exclusion entails a "principle of the criterion":

> PC1. If one really knows that p while considering whether one does, then one is justified in believing that the sources of one's belief that p are at least minimally reliable.[7]

Given how it has been derived, this we must still view as a principle about the contents of any given consciousness in any given specious present. So, spelled out more fully, PC1 claims this: that if one consciously, occurrently knows something P, and at the same time considers whether one knows it, then one must be justified in believing occurrently that the sources of one's belief P are at least minimally reliable. Consciously, occurrently knowing something while in the arena of reflection requires that one actively defend one's belief against all entertained possibilities that one takes to be incompatible with one's knowing in so believing.

One knows a lot without knowing that one does so. One still knows a lot when asleep and even when entirely unconscious. And we want our reflections to apply to knowledge generally, not only to the highly restricted domain of what rises to consciousness at any given time. Fortunately, we can broaden our scope with little or no loss in plausibility. We need only focus, not just on someone's conscious beliefs and experiences at the target time, not just on what they actually manage to defend reflectively; we need rather to focus, more generally, on what they *would* be able to defend, no holds barred, were it cast in the arena, perhaps by a hypothetical skeptic.

It would not do, however, to suppose that someone already knows something just because if they started thinking about how to defend their belief, they would *then* come up with a fine proof. Someone who guesses the answer to a complex addition problem does not already know the answer just because, given a little time, he could do the sum in his head. If

he had not done the sum, if he had just been guessing, then he *acquires* his knowledge through reflection, and does not know beforehand. In some sense, at some level, if one already knows prereflectively, then the justifying reasoning must *already* be operative before one enters. When challenged in the arena, one simply reveals the support that one's belief already enjoyed pre-entry. What kind of prereflective position are we interested in? It is a position wherein one is justified in one's subconscious, dispositional beliefs, a position wherein one already, prereflectively, has the wherewithal to defend one's belief if exposed to reflection, and one's belief is already appropriately supported by the structure of reasons constituting that defense-at-the-ready. We are not just interested in the weaker position of someone who *would* be able to defend the belief, but only because its exposure to reflection would lead the subject to new arguments and reasonings that had never occurred to him, and that in any case had played no role in his acquisition or retention of the target belief.

Our most recent reflections in turn induce a second principle of the criterion:

> PC2. If one really knows that p then one is justified in believing (at least implicitly or dispositionally, if not consciously) that the sources of one's belief that p are at least minimally reliable (if the proposition that one's sources are thus reliable is within one's grasp).[8]

This principle is not restricted to beliefs entertained consciously; it is rather meant to apply more generally to implicit, subconscious, dispositional beliefs, and even to beliefs that one has while asleep or unconscious. (But it is implicitly restricted to propositions within S's grasp.)

In fact PC1 and PC2 are only two members of a whole family of "principles of the criterion," whose unifying thread is that they all concern the satisfaction of requirements for various degrees of knowledge. Thus certain levels of knowledge would be compatible with one's knowing only that the sources of one's belief are minimally reliable, but higher degrees would require that one know one's sources to be quite reliable, or highly reliable, and so on.

B. The Pyrrhonian Problematic

Sometimes a justified belief is justified because supported by reasons—reasons that the believer not only *could* have but *does* have. The fact that, given time, one could think of some good reasons for believing something

is not enough to make one justified in doing so. Again, someone who guesses on a sum could perhaps do the addition in his head; but, even supposing he *could* do it, that alone does not justify him in believing his guess before he actually does it. One's rationale for a belief cannot be successful if dependent on some arbitrary or otherwise unjustified component. Justifying beliefs need to be justified in turn. And now we have three possibilities. As we consider the reasons for one's belief, and the reasons, if any, for these reasons, and the reasons, if any, for these in turn, and so on, either (1) some ultimate reasons are justified noninferentially, are justified in some way that does not require the support of some ulterior reasons, or (2) there are no ultimate reasons: further reasons always justify one's reasons, at every level, no matter how remote the level, and these further reasons always go beyond any reason already invoked at earlier levels, or (3) there are no ultimate reasons: further reasons always justify one's reasons, at every level, but these further reasons need not go beyond reasons already invoked at earlier levels.

Possibility 1 corresponds to foundationalism. The foundations are constituted by the ultimate reasons that require no further supporting reasons in their own behalf. Possibility 2 is that of infinitism. Each supporting line of reasons extends infinitely to further reasons, ever-new reasons for the reasons at each level, no matter how remote that level may be from the justified conclusion. Possibility 3, finally, is that of the circle. One's justifying structure of reasons circles: some reason for a reason at a given level returns us to an earlier level.

C. Is Foundationalism a Myth?

According to conventional wisdom, foundationalism has been the option of choice in the history of philosophy. This, we are told, may be seen with special prominence in Aristotle among the ancients, and in Descartes among the moderns. According to this story, it is only with Hegel that persistent reflection on the ancient problematic yields a powerful defense of the circle. It took Hegel's philosophic genius to overcome the foundationalist inertia of the tradition and the immense influence of Descartes. Only Hegel returns to the ancient problematic and reveals the power of its antifoundationalist side, and the virtues of circularity.

Among analytic philosophers, it is Sellars who took the lead against foundations, with his attack on the "Myth of the Given." The attack targets not just a givenism of sensory experience, but a much more general

doctrine, one amounting to foundationalism of whatever stripe. Thus, Sellars's attack in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," focuses, not on experiential foundations via introspection, but on perceptual foundations via observation. The following is marshaled effectively in his critique of direct realism: "In order to be fully justified, perceptual belief requires background beliefs (assumptions) that in turn require justification."[9] In accepting the deliverances of one's senses one assumes that they are so constituted, and so adjusted to the relevant environment, that they would (tend to) get it right.

More recently, Laurence BonJour has generalized on Sellars's principle: "No belief B is fully justified simply because it satisfies some condition F such that beliefs satisfying F are probably true. The believer must *also* be aware, at some level, that B satisfies the condition."[10] This generalization, BonJour's Generalization, sets up a clash of intuitions. On one side are the epistemic internalists, who believe that justification requires justifying beliefs, and that no one can be really justified in a certain belief while unaware of its sources.

Foundationalism and its Myth of the Given were thus attacked famously by Sellars, in a way generalized by Bonjour. But the sort of problem raised is not unique to their critique. A main theme of Richard Rorty's attack on foundationalism is the alleged "confusion of causation with justification" that he attributes to Locke and others. Donald Davidson also adds his voice: "As Rorty has put it, 'nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence.' About this I am, as you see, in agreement with Rorty."[11] Just how damaging is that line of objection against experiential foundations?

Here intuitions clash. For externalists, a belief is justified by being related appropriately to its subject matter, perhaps causally or counterfactually, or by deriving from a reliable source that yields mostly true beliefs with great reliability. This need not come to the attention of the believer; it need only be in fact true, whether believed or not. On this side are arrayed Goldman, Nozick, Plantinga, and Unger, among others. Intuitions in this standoff have hardened over the years, and each camp tends to regard the other as just missing the point in some crucial respect.

The interesting thing for us is that BonJour's Generalization (of Sellars's insight) is a member of our family of Principles of the Criterion.[12] So it should be as plausible as the two simple principles from which this family derives: namely, Ascent and Closure. One reaction to this is to accept

the arguments of BonJour and Sellars and to reject foundationalism. But if we reject foundationalism, then we are still caught in the Pyrrhonian Problematic. What then is the way out?

Ironically, a way out is opened already by the foundationalist-in-chief of the received story, Descartes himself, whose real view of these matters is quite subtle, or so I will argue, and must be approached gradually.

D. Descartes' Way Out

Three commitments are standardly attributed to Descartes, not all of which could be held by anyone of middling intelligence.

The first doctrine is a rationalist foundationalism according to which "intuition and deduction are the most secure routes to knowledge, and the mind should admit no others." On this view, whatever one knows one must either intuit directly, through its immediate clarity and distinctness, or one must prove it deductively, on the basis of ultimate premises each of which is itself intuited as clear and distinct.

According to the second commitment, in order to attain really certain knowledge of anything whatsoever, one must first prove that there is a God who is no deceiver. Consider, for just one example, the following passage, from the last sentence of the fourth paragraph of the Third Meditation, where, speaking of the "metaphysical" doubt that he has raised, Descartes has this to say: "In order to be able altogether to remove it, I must inquire whether there is a God as soon as the occasion presents itself; and if I find that there is a God, I must also inquire whether he may be a deceiver; for without a knowledge of these two truths I do not see that I can ever be certain of anything."[13]

Descartes also apparently commits himself, third and finally, to the position that God's existence and nondeceiving nature must be demonstrated through appropriate reasoning (involving, among other lines of argument, the ontological and the cosmological).

Clearly, these three commitments cannot be combined coherently. But the second and third would be hard to defeat, given their textual support. This puts in doubt the long and widely held belief that Descartes was a foundationalist.[14]

On the other hand, the attribution of foundationalism to Descartes is not just arbitrary. There is textual evidence in its favor, including the passage above. Weightier evidence yet supports attributing to Descartes the second and third commitments, however, so that, if a foundationalist

at all, Descartes was no simple or flat-out foundationalist. His position must be subtle enough to sustain not only the first commitment, under some interpretation, but also the second and the third.

Consider a key passage in which Descartes claims epistemic advantage over the atheist:

> The fact that an atheist can be "clearly aware that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles" is something I do not dispute. But I maintain that this awareness of his [*cognitionem*] is not true knowledge [*scientia*], since no act of awareness that can be rendered doubtful seems fit to be called knowledge [*scientia*]. Now since we are supposing that this individual is an atheist, he cannot be certain that he is not being deceived on matters which seem to him to be very evident (as I fully explained). And although this doubt may not occur to him, it can still crop up if someone else raises the point or if he looks into the matter himself. So he will never be free of this doubt until he acknowledges that God exists.[15]

Here Descartes is not claiming only ex post facto advantage over the atheist. Take the moment when both are clearly and distinctly perceiving the fact that the three angles are equal to two right ones. *Even at that very moment*, according to Descartes, the atheist is at an epistemic disadvantage.

That, moreover, is not the only passage where Descartes claims or implies the specified sort of advantage. Here is another, from the last paragraph of the Fifth Meditation (and compare also the fourth paragraph from the end of that Meditation): "And so I very clearly recognize that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends alone on the knowledge of the true God, in so much that, before I knew Him, I could not have a perfect knowledge of any other thing." According to this, *cognitio* of the true God is required for *scientia* of anything whatever.

Descartes was well aware of the Pyrrhonian Problematic, as may be seen, for one example, in his "Search for Truth." Such skepticism suffused his intellectual milieu, and he knew its content and sources. Against this backdrop, a passage from Sextus is revealing: "Let us imagine that some people are looking for gold in a dark room full of treasures. . . . none of them will be persuaded that he has hit upon the gold even if he *has* in fact hit upon it. In the same way, the crowd of philosophers has come into the world, as into a vast house, in search of truth. But it is reasonable that the man who grasps the truth should doubt whether he has been successful."[16] No one is likely to disdain the good fortune of finding gold in the dark. On normal assumptions, one is of course better off for having done so. Better yet, however, more admirable, is getting the gold through one's own

efforts, where one succeeds through one's own deliberation and planning. Here success is not just luck in the dark; it crowns rather an enlightened pursuit of a desirable goal. In that passage Sextus suggests distinguishing similarly in epistemology. Here again it is more admirable to attain one's worthy objective through one's own thought and efforts than it is to be a passive recipient of brute luck. At a minimum it is better to proceed in the light of an adequate perspective on one's own cognitive doings.

If convinced by this Pyrrhonian thought, Descartes *would* make just the distinction he does make between *cognitio* and *scientia*. *Cognitio* is the attaining of the truth, which can happen through one or more layers of good luck, in the environment, in oneself, and in the adjustment between the two. One might of course luck into the truth through a mere guess that the fair dice will come up seven, and surely this does not yet qualify as *cognitio*. *Cognitio* requires at a minimum that one attain the truth by being appropriately constituted, and appropriately situated, to issue reliable judgments on the subject matter. So constituted and situated, one *would* be right on that question. Here of course are matters of degree: How reliable are one's operative faculties or virtues? Are they infallible? Nearly infallible? Very highly reliable? Etc. This has to do with how easily one might go wrong in thinking as one does through exercising the relevant faculties or virtues.

Scientia requires more. It is attained only through an adequate perspective on one's epistemic doings. Only if one can see how it is that one is acquiring or sustaining the belief in question does one attain *scientia*. What is more, one must see that way as reliable, as one that would tend to lead one aright, not astray. But this is just what is required by our Principles of the Criterion. According to this family of principles, various levels of knowledge will require various degrees of perceived reliability in the sources of the belief constitutive of the knowledge. In accepting Sextus's Pyrrhonian thought, therefore, Descartes is accepting the importance of satisfying a Principle of the Criterion, whereby one must believe one's source to be reliable. How reliable? This will depend on how high a level of knowledge is selected in the context.

Suppose Descartes accepts the Pyrrhonian Problematic, and accepts also Sextus's contrast between attainments in the dark and those that are enlightened. In that case he faces this question: Is enlightened knowledge possible for us? Can we attain an enlightened perspective on what we believe and on our ways of acquiring and sustaining those beliefs, one that reveals the sufficient reliability of those ways? This, I submit, is what sets up Descartes' epistemological project. He is trying to meet Sextus's demands,

to the extent that these are reasonable. Further features peculiar to Descartes' own project derive from his desire not just for reasonable and reliable belief but for absolutely certain and infallible knowledge. However, much of interest in his thought need not be tied to that desire.

In a bare sketch, here is how I see Descartes' epistemic project. First he meditates along, with the kind of epistemic justification and even "certainty" that might be found in an atheist mathematician's reasonings, one deprived of a worldview wherein the universe may be seen as epistemically propitious. Descartes' reasoning at that stage *can* be evaluated, of course, just as can an atheist mathematician's reasoning. Atheist mathematicians will differ in the worth of their mathematical reasonings. Absent an appropriate worldview, however, no such reasoning can rise above the level of *cognitio*. If we persist in such reasoning, nevertheless, enough pieces may eventually come together into a view of ourselves and our place in the universe that is sufficiently comprehensive and coherent to raise us above the level of mere *cognitio* and into the realm of higher, reflective, enlightened knowledge, or *scientia*. No circle vitiates this project.[17]

A mere thermometer reaction to one's environment cannot constitute real knowledge, regardless of whether that reaction is causally mediated by experience. It is not enough that one respond to seeing white and round objects in good light with a "belief" or "proto-belief" that one faces something white and round. Having asked oneself "Do I know that this is white and round?" or "Am I justified in taking this to be white and round?" suppose one has to answer "Definitely not" or even "Who knows? Maybe I do know, maybe I don't; maybe I'm justified, maybe I'm not." In that case one *automatically* falls short, one has attained only some lesser epistemic status, and not any "real, or enlightened, or reflective" knowledge. The latter requires some awareness of the status of one's belief, some ability to answer that one does know or that one is epistemically justified, and some ability to defend this through the reliability of one's relevant faculties when used in the relevant circumstances. But this leads to a threat of circle or regress, a main problematic, perhaps *the* main problematic of epistemology. Surprisingly, already in Descartes himself, in the founder of modern epistemology, we find a way beyond it.[18]

Descartes supernaturalized epistemology through his theological project. More recently Quine has proposed a naturalized epistemology through appeal to science, and Moore has appealed to common sense rather than theology or science. There are several ways to understand such naturalization or return to the plain. In conclusion, I would emphasize the availability of Descartes' strategy both to Quine and to Moore. After all,

just as the rationalist hoped to make his world safe for epistemology through a priori rational theology, so naturalists and champions of the plain can sustain a like hope through their richer inquiry. Each approach will encounter its own charge of circularity. There is much irony in the fact that this charge was vividly present already to Descartes, and that it is his epistemology that shows us the way beyond it.

Notes

I am pleased indeed to join in honoring Bob Fogelin, from whose important work on skepticism I have long profited. I have presented these ideas in many venues and am grateful for helpful formal comments by Laurence BonJour, Peter Klein, and Richard Fumerton (respectively at an APA symposium, the Chapel Hill Colloquium, and the Oberlin Colloquium).

1. A third idea will also figure eventually: namely, that the evaluation of a particular entity, such as an action or a belief, can be importantly relational. In a landscape, or a poem, or a conversation, at a certain point something may fit well or ill, and if the former, it is then relevantly "appropriate," or perhaps even "required." The object of evaluation is thus a particular item, but it is evaluated relative to its relevant wider context. And the wider context of evaluation may include possibility space, as when an archer hits the bull's eye with a shot that is not only accurate but also "skillful," which surely has counterfactual implications. A belief may similarly hit the mark of truth, not just by luck, for example, and may moreover fit well within the believer's wider body of beliefs. We may thus evaluate it as "epistemically justified," in one or another sense: "apt" perhaps (or reliably based, or counterfactually safe, etc.), or perhaps "rationally justified" (coherently fitting, and held in part on that basis).

2. "$J_S P$" thus stands for "S is justified in (actually) thinking that p" and not just for "S would be justified in thinking that p." The single arrow will represent the material conditional, the double arrow the necessary conditional. Here then are symbolic formulations of our two main principles. First, Ascent: $[K_s(P) \ \& \ C_s K_s(P)] \Rightarrow J_s K_s(P)$. Secondly, Closure: $[J_s(X) \ \& \ J_s(X \Rightarrow Y)] \Rightarrow J_s(Y)$.

3. The word "justification" is multiply ambiguous, I believe, even among epistemologists. Some might reject our idea that one *is* better justified epistemically in believing that p if one can see oneself as justified, and that one's belief, one's believing, is itself thereby better justified (in some relational way, as suggested in note 1). If so, I am inclined not so much to debate them as to switch terminology. Thus I might say that one is then "better off" epistemically in having that belief, or that one's belief is more reasonable or has a higher epistemic status, or the like.

4. Here I assume that anyone who consciously assents to the propositions that p and that, necessarily, if p then q, must occupy one of exactly three positions on the question whether q: assenting, dissenting, consciously suspending judgment. If this

assumption is incorrect, however, that would require only a minor revision to our principle—namely, specifying in the antecedent that the subject is to consciously consider the question whether q—along with corresponding adjustments elsewhere in our argument.

5. In symbols: $[K_s(P) \ \& \ C_sK_s(P) \ \& \ J_s(K_s(P) \rightarrow Q)] \Rightarrow J_s(Q)$.

6. So, for all or most S, we have it that, in symbols: $J_s(K_s(P) \rightarrow R_s(P))$, where "$R_s(P)$" abbreviates "The sources of S's belief that p are at least minimally reliable."

7. $[K_s(P) \ \& \ C_sK_s(P)] \Rightarrow J_sR_s(P)$.

8. $K_s(P) \rightarrow J_sR_s(P)$.

9. Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Robert Brandom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), section VIII, 68–79.

10. Lawrence BonJour, "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1978): 1–13, section II.

11. Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," in *Kant oder Hegel?*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), reprinted in Ernest LePore, *Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 310.

12. This means that it can be traced back to our two simple basic principles, Ascent and Closure, and that it has behind it the plausibility of these principles and of their supportive guiding ideas: (a) that knowledge is a matter of degree, and (b) that the epistemic level of one's knowledge is determined by how it connects with our objective of attaining the truth and avoiding error, and of doing so within a mind well enough integrated to attain not just truth but understanding, and thus the ability to answer the whys that voice our desire to understand.

13. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

14. A fuller treatment would need to consider also that, even if we could know *through* direct intuition that God exists and is no deceiver, it is unclear how we could move thence to remote conclusions absent auxiliary premises, knowledge of which would remain unexplained. And we would need to attend also to the passages that apparently recognize the importance of coherence in epistemology. At the end of the Meditations, for example, Descartes clearly takes coherence to be of crucial epistemic importance, which he also does in the passage in the *Principles* in which he compares the standing of his principles of natural science with the standing of a hypothesis that an otherwise undecipherable text is written in a one-off alphabet. Here there is no logical entailment from data to hypothesis, but only some sort of inference to an illuminating explanation with no visible rival (or the like).

15. This passage is from the Second Set of Replies as it appears in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, vol. 2, 101. Where this translation says that an atheist can be "clearly aware," Descartes' Latin is "clare cognoscere."

16. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII.52, in the Teubner text, ed. H. Mutschmann (Leipzig, 1914).

17. Support for the present account comes from the way in which Descartes uses *cognitio* and *scientia* as he moves through the Meditations, applying a distinction too often lost in translation. *Among* the pieces that need to come together in order to raise the belief that p above the level of *cognitio*, to the level of *scientia*, may well be found appropriate *cognitio that* one enjoys *cognitio* that p. I have heard the objection that comprehensiveness and coherence are matters of degree while it is very hard to see how to draw a line above which lie the degrees of comprehensiveness and coherence that suffice for knowledge. But compare a concept like that of being tall. That is presumably to be defined in some such way as this: being sufficiently taller than the average. Presumably someone just infinitesimally taller than the average is *not* tall. One has to be taller than the average by some margin, one has to be "sufficiently" taller than the average. But how do we define that margin? Is there, even in principle, some way to capture our *actual* concept of tallness by means of some such definition? There seems no way. Yet we do surely have and use a concept of tallness, do we not? Why can't we view epistemic justification similarly in terms of "sufficient" comprehensiveness and coherence?

18. Many others since Descartes have groped for a similar way, from Hegel through Sellars. Much work on epistemic circularity has also appeared of late, and some of it is discussed in my "Philosophical Scepticism and Epistemic Circularity," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 68 (1994): 268–90. In "How to Resolve the Pyrrhonian Problematic: A Lesson from Descartes," *Philosophical Studies* 85 (1997): 229–49, I argue more fully that Descartes shows us the way beyond that problematic, and in "Mythology of the Given," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14 (1997): 275–86, I argue for the relevance of that bi-level solution to the problematic of the given, which is present in analytic philosophy from its earliest years.

ROBERT J. FOGELIN

The Skeptics Are Coming! The Skeptics Are Coming!

> Philosophy would render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were not nature too strong for it.
>
> —David Hume, *Abstract*

When contemporary epistemologists refer to the skeptic, almost without exception—I'm an exception—the kind of skeptic they have in mind is a cartesian skeptic: that is, a promoter of skeptical arguments based on skeptical scenarios of the kind found in Descartes' *First Meditation*. (Since Descartes was not himself a skeptic, I spell "cartesian" with a lowercase "c.") Pyrrhonian skepticism, which predates cartesian skepticism by two millennia, gets, by comparison, little attention. This neglect of Pyrrhonian skepticism is illustrated by a recent anthology by DeRose and Warfield entitled *Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader*,[1] whose index contains only two references to Sextus Empiricus. (The index entry reads "Empiricus, Sextus," apparently on the assumption that "Empiricus" was Sextus's last name. This is reminiscent of C. D. Broad's index entry that read "Christ, J.")[2] Checking the text, we find that one of the references is a footnote in a piece by Robert Nozick, where Empiricus (him again) is referred to as one member in a long list of writers who have contributed to "the immense literature concerning skepticism." What Sextus's contribution might have been is not indicated. The other reference to Sextus is nothing more than a remark made in passing which, in very short compass, manages to get Sextus's position dead wrong. (Identifying this writer will be worth a footnote later on.)

Elsewhere I have reflected on the following question: What would happen if a traditional Pyrrhonist were allowed to participate in a three-way

discussion with foundationalists and coherentists? My conclusion was that the Pyrrhonist would win. Hands down. No contest. Or so it seems. Both the foundationalists and the coherentists undertook the task of showing that some suitably large and important region of our knowledge claims is capable of validation. They both thought that these knowledge claims could be defended by presenting *reasons* establishing their legitimacy. If that is what theory of knowledge is supposed to do, then, as it seems to me, the five Agrippan modes involving discrepancy, infinite regress, relativity, hypothesis (or arbitrary assumption), and circularity show that this cannot be done.[3]

But many of our New Epistemologists—I'll call them that—have foresworn this large-scale attempt at validation through reason-giving, either by severing the connection between knowledge and reason-giving altogether or by dispersing reason-giving into a plurality of procedures, giving no preeminence to one procedure over all others. Severing the connection with reason-giving is the way of externalism (early Alvin Goldman); dispersing reason-giving is the way of contextualism (perhaps the very late Wittgenstein). Hybrid theories employ both strategies, combining them in various proportions (Michael Williams, David Lewis, and Ernie Sosa). How, I now want to ask, would the Pyrrhonian deal with these New Epistemologists? You will have to wait for an answer. First I want to say some things about Pyrrhonian skepticism, contrasting it with cartesian skepticism. I also want to say a few things about what I call Neo-Pyrrhonism.

A central difference between cartesian skepticism and traditional Pyrrhonian skepticism is that cartesian skepticism, but not Pyrrhonian skepticism, deals in strong negative epistemic 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—from one animal to another, from one person to another, from one perspective to another, from one physiological state to another, etc.—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 Pyrrhonian who knows his business would accept the burden of establishing such a claim. Pyrrhonian skeptics are adept at avoiding burdens of proof. Since they are not out to prove that knowledge is impossible, they have no burden of proof

to bear. For Pyrrhonian skeptics, the claim that a certain kind of knowledge is impossible amounts to a form of negative dogmatism: a charge they brought against their ancient rivals, the Academic Skeptics. If time travel existed, they would bring it against cartesian skeptics as well.[4]

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 primary target of Pyrrhonian skepticism is dogmatic philosophy—with secondary sallies into other fields where similar dogmatizing is found. The attacks of the Pyrrhonian skeptic are directed against the dogmas of "Professors"—not the beliefs of common people pursuing the honest (or, for that matter, not so honest) business of daily life. The Pyrrhonian skeptic leaves common beliefs, unpretentiously held, alone.

I should acknowledge that this account of Pyrrhonian skepticism—in particular, the claim that it leaves common belief undisturbed—has been the subject of sharp controversy in the recent literature on Pyrrhonism. Borrowing the distinction from Galen, Jonathan Barnes contrasts two ways of interpreting late Pyrrhonist texts: as either *rustic* or *urbane*. Treated as rustic, the Pyrrhonist is pictured as setting aside subtlety and flatfootedly seeking suspension of belief on all matters whatsoever, including the practical beliefs concerning everyday life. This is the interpretation adopted by Jonathan Barnes, Miles Burnyeat, and a number of other distinguished Brits.[5] The rustic interpretation does have the charm of giving Pyrrhonian skepticism some of the zip of cartesian skepticism, and for this reason, I suppose, makes it seem more arresting. On the other side, it also opens the Pyrrhonian skeptic to the charge made by Burnyeat (and Hume before him) that Pyrrhonian skepticism, genuinely embraced, is unlivable, perhaps suicidal. If so, the professed Pyrrhonist can survive only by living in epistemic bad faith. Since, following Michael Frede,[6] I adopt the urbane interpretation of the text, this choice does not come up. So when I speak of Pyrrhonism, I mean Pyrrhonism urbanely understood. When I speak of neo-Pyrrhonism, I have in mind classical Pyrrhonism, urbanely

understood, updated, where necessary, to make it applicable to contemporary philosophical debates.

I am inclined to think that the ancient Pyrrhonists were trying to show (or exhibit) more than that the dogmatists' epistemological programs fail on their own terms. Beyond this, they were, I think, trying to show that pursuing such a program actually generates a radical skepticism rather than avoids it. I confess that I have found no text in the writings of Sextus that says just this, though Sextus, I am sure, would be pleased with this further critique of epistemic dogmatism. Hume, whom I take to be an urbane Pyrrhonian, explicitly makes this move in the *Treatise* when he tells us: "It is impossible, upon any system, to defend either our understanding or senses; and we but expose them further when we endeavour to justify them in that manner. As the sceptical doubt arises naturally from a profound and intense reflection on those subjects, it always encreases the further we carry our reflections, whether in opposition or conformity to it."[7] Since Hume held a rustic interpretation of ancient Pyrrhonism, he distanced himself from it in these words: "But a Pyrrhonian cannot expect, that his philosophy will have any constant influence on the mind: or if it had, that its influence would be beneficial to society. On the contrary, he must acknowledge, if he will acknowledge any thing, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence."[8] Taking it as rustic, Hume recommends a philosophical tonic containing "only a small tincture of Pyrrhonism."[9] If he had interpreted Pyrrhonism as urbane, he could have counseled a full quaff of the real stuff.

The notion that "skeptical doubt arises naturally from profound and intense reflection" finds a parallel expression in Wittgenstein, who, by my lights, is another urbane Pyrrhonian. These passages come from *On Certainty*: "481. When one hears Moore say, 'I know that that's a tree,' one suddenly understands those who think that that has by no means been settled. The matter strikes one all at once as being unclear and blurred. It is as if Moore had put it in the wrong light. . . . 482. It is as if 'I know' did not tolerate a metaphysical emphasis."[10] The suggestion here is that the epistemological enterprise, when relentlessly pursued, not only fails in its efforts, but also, Samson-like, brings down the entire edifice of knowledge around it. David Lewis, in his "Elusive Knowledge," recognizes this threat—though he thinks that shoring it up is possible.[11] I make a fuss over it in

Pyrrhonian Reflections—unlike Lewis, the situation strikes me as hopeless. I am inclined to think that this doctrine is at least implicit in the writings of ancient Pyrrhonists. But however matters stand with the traditional Pyrrhonists, the Samson principle—I'll call it that—is a central tenet of neo-Pyrrhonism, a standpoint adopted at least by Hume, Wittgenstein, and me. (Here I engage in *catacosmesis*. For those not fully up to speed on rhetorical terms, *catacosmesis* involves the ordering of words from the greatest to the least in dignity: e.g., "For God, for country, and for Yale").[12]

One final difference between cartesian skepticism and Pyrrhonian skepticism is that skeptical scenarios play a central role in cartesian skepticism but not in Pyrrhonian skepticism. Cartesian skeptics hold that we do not know something (that is, do not really know it) unless it is completely bulletproof against possible defeators, however remote. Skeptical scenarios are introduced to show that, in principle, this standard cannot be met—at least for a particular class of knowledge-claims, typically those concerning perceptual knowledge of the external world. Since the Pyrrhonian will suspend judgment concerning the appropriateness of this criterion for knowledge, he will not play the cartesian game directly. More deeply, since he is not trying to establish strong negative epistemic judgments, the Pyrrhonian has no special need for skeptical scenarios. The Pyrrhonian can, however, take pleasure in the confusion that besets epistemologists in their efforts to respond to the challenges to knowledge raised by skeptical scenarios. So in the spirit of neo-Pyrrhonism, let's have some fun.

There seem to be two main options for replying to the challenges of skeptical scenarios. The first is to argue that skeptical scenarios are conceptually incoherent, and, for this reason, the challenges they present are lacking in meaning, contentless, otiose—or something like that. They are, it is sometimes said, pseudo-challenges. This is the transcendental (sometimes verificationist) response to skeptical scenarios. This response faces hard going. First, transcendental/verificationist arguments are often pretty fishy.[13] Second, skeptical scenarios seem on their face to be perfectly intelligible; thus a heavy burden falls on anyone who wishes to persuade us otherwise.[14] There is a deeper worry. Suppose, for whatever reason, we acknowledge that, if we are brains in vats, then our words may not mean what we think they mean, or perhaps may not mean anything at all. If that is right, then the skeptic's doubt—so the argument sometimes goes—undercuts the very expressability of his doubts. It is hard to see, however, how this threat of semantic (instead of epistemic) nihilism provides solace. Perhaps we just *are* brains in vats and so deeply fuddled semantically that

no sense attaches to the skeptical scenarios we formulate—or to anything else either. Standard cartesian doubt pales in comparison with the threat of semantic nihilism. But I won't ask you to peer into that abyss here.

On the assumption that skeptical scenarios are at least intelligible, what response can be made to them? More specifically, what responses do our New Epistemologists make to them? Externalism/reliabilism in its many forms represents one popular approach. If our beliefs stand in the right sort of relationship to the things they are about (for example, if they reliably track the truth—and perhaps track it in the right sort of way), then we know them to be true. The important point is that a relationship of this kind can hold even if the person possessing the knowledge is not in a position to produce adequate reasons that show this. So the cartesian skeptic's claim that, for example, we cannot know things on the basis of sensory evidence is met with the response, "For all we know we do know such things." Notice that this is all that is needed to refute the *cartesian* skeptic's strong claim that we *cannot* know.[15] It has no tendency to refute Pyrrhonian skepticism, not even in its rustic form.

The contextualist line in its most straightforward form rests on the following idea: What you know or do not know is a function of the epistemic standards governing the context in which you are operating. For example, if the context is governed by cartesian standards, the possibility that one is a brain in a vat is a relevant defeator to the claim that you can, just by looking, come to know you have a hand. In contrast, in a non-epistemological setting you can usually make it known that you have a hand simply by making an appropriate Moorean gesture while at the same time saying, "Here is a hand."[16] So, for the contextualist, if the context is rigidly epistemological, then you do not know that you have hands; if the context is ordinary, or in Thompson Clarke's lingo, "plain," then you do know this—or at least can.[17] Moore's mistake was to make a plain response in a philosophical context. The skeptic's mistake is to demand a philosophical response in a plain context. Contextualist theories are usually more complex than this—they are often supplemented by an externalist component—but this gives the rough form that such theories take.

Our question now is this: How would a neo-Pyrrhonian, suitably briefed on these maneuvers, respond? As a way of approaching this question, we can imagine someone stumbling onto Descartes' *Meditations* and becoming sore perplexed. Finding the discussion of the deceiving spirit genuinely disturbing, he turns to more recent writings, only to encounter stories concerning brains in vats. Since he can think of no way of showing that he is not a brain in a vat, he succumbs, in Berkeley's phrase, to

a "forlorn skepticism" concerning the world around him. Since he earnestly seeks a way out of his perplexities, let's call him Ernest. We will imagine various representatives of the New Epistemology appearing before Ernest, much as the comforters appeared before Job. We will allow an externalist, a contextualist, and then a neo-Pyrrhonian to address him in turn.

We can begin with an externalist (or proto-externalist). When Ernest expresses his anxiety about not being justified in thinking that he has arms and legs because he can come up with no good reasons for thinking he is not a brain in a vat, the externalist comforter expresses no surprise and candidly admits that, with respect to producing reasons of this kind, he is in precisely the same boat (or vat) that Ernest is. Not to worry. The inability to produce justifying reasons does not show that either he or Ernest is lacking in *knowledge* concerning, say, the number of limbs they each possess. To suppose otherwise, he tells Ernest, is to be captive of an archaic internalist conception of knowledge, where the possession and command of justificatory reasons is held to be a necessary condition for knowing something. Emancipation occurs, he continues, through severing the connection between knowledge and justification. At first dazzled, upon reflection Ernest feels dissatisfied. The question he asked in the first place was whether anyone could supply him with good *reasons* for thinking that he is not a brain in a vat. In response, the externalist seems to change the subject by saying that the possession of good reasons is not a necessary condition for knowing something. Ernest might candidly admit that before encountering externalism he believed—naively it seems—that knowledge involves the possession of adequate reasons. Corrected on that point, his basic yearnings remain. Even if he grants that it is possible to know something without possessing good reasons justifying our claim to know, he is still looking for good reasons for believing he is not a brain in a vat. So far, at least, the externalist comforter has done nothing to help him in this regard. Of course, real externalists are not usually as flatfootedly committed to externalism as my proto-externalist is. They can, for example, combine their positions with some form of contextualism and then argue that we often do have good reasons to believe that our cognitive faculties are reliable. So let's turn to contextualism to see what aid it may provide.

At first sight, the contextualist (or proto-contextualist) seems to do better in satisfying Ernest's yearnings for reasons. The contextualist comforter assures Ernest that often both he and Ernest possess adequate, sometimes clearly statable, reasons for believing that they are not brains in vats. The contextualist comforter might argue as follows: "Given the

present state of technology, it is wholly unlikely that brains can be supported in vats in the way described in the skeptical scenario. Thus we know that we are not brains in vats just as we know that there are no antigravity machines. With this knowledge, the skeptical doubts that were supposed to flow from this hypothesis are nullified." (This argument actually—honestly—comes from Quine.) Ernest has qualms. "But even so," he replies, "if I am a brain in vat, couldn't my beliefs about the present state of technology be brain probe–induced falsehoods?" Let's suppose that the contextualist toughs it out and admits that yes, these beliefs could have been induced by electric stimulation—that is, he makes no move in the direction of declaring the skeptical hypothesis unintelligible or incoherent. Acknowledging the coherence of the skeptical hypothesis, the contextualist argues that taking this possibility seriously shifts the context, and in this new, more demanding, or at least different context, Ernest does not know, for, in this new context, his reasons are no longer adequate. So to Ernest's original question, "Are there adequate reasons for my believing that I am not a brain in a vat?" the answer is: "It all depends—it all depends on context."

The key move in the contextualist response to skepticism is to refuse to assign a privileged status to epistemological contexts. That is, the contextualist rejects the view that *strictly speaking* we do not know something unless it meets the demand that all possible defeators have been eliminated: a view, the contextualist can point out, that almost automatically generates strong skeptical conclusions. What the contextualist says instead is something like this: In the context of an informed understanding of present technology, we do know that we are not brains in vats, whereas in a context governed by traditional epistemological demands we do not. There is no contradiction here because the standards of relevance and rigor are different in the two cases.

"What about the fruitcakes?" This is Ernest's next question. He has noticed that the world is filled with people who hold wildly different views about the general disposition of the world around them. They seem to have only one thing in common: a deep intolerance for views other than their own. There is, for example, a brisk competition among various Pentecostals. Can they be said to know things—each in his or her own Pentecostal way? Will a thoroughgoing contextualist have to say yes? I do not know, for the contextualist, when pressed on this matter, tends to brush it aside, dismissing it as tedious and sophomoric.

I do not know of any contextualist who can deal adequately with Ernest's problem with the fruitcakes of this world. Keith DeRose's version

of contextualism is a case in point. His position is an elaboration of what he calls the "Basic Strategy": "According to the contextualist solution, . . . the sceptic's present denials that we know various things are perfectly compatible with our ordinary claims to know those very propositions. Once we realize this, we can see how both the skeptic's denials of knowledge and our ordinary attributions of knowledge can be correct."[18]

Now, for DeRose, responding to the skeptical challenge is a matter of finding some way to neutralize arguments of the following kind:

The Argument from Ignorance

1. I don't know that not-H.
2. If I don't know that not-H, then I don't know that O.

So,

C. I don't know O.

Specifically, DeRose takes H to be the skeptical hypothesis that I am a brain in vat and O the observationally based claim that I have hands.

DeRose notes something that others have noted before him: the fact that (1) and (2) validly imply (C) has no tendency by itself to establish the truth of (C). A valid inference is neutral with respect to *modus ponens* and *modus tollens*. DeRose thinks that this presents us with four options.

1. The Skeptical Option: accept both premises, and from them draw the strong skeptical conclusion (C).
2. Moore's Option: Argue that we are more certain of the falsehood of the conclusion than we are of the truth of the premises and leave it at that.
3. The anti-closure move: Deny (2).
4. The DeRose Ploy: Both affirm and deny (1) as needed.

(In an exercise of overkill, someone might deny both (1) and (2), but I will ignore this response.)

Roughly (very roughly), where Nozick (for example) used possible-world semantics as a basis for denying the closure principle expressed in the second premise,[19] DeRose invokes possible-world semantics in order to reject the first premise. I do not find either use of possible-world semantics persuasive because I do not see how appeals to possible worlds can, in general, provide nonarbitrary truth-conditions for subjunctive conditionals. That, however, is a complicated matter that I do not want to go into here. One thing worth noting, however, is that DeRose speaks as if there are just *two* sorts of contexts: the philosophical (with its "very high standards") and the ordinary (with its "more relaxed standards"), whereas

contexts can differ in the kinds of standards they employ and not simply in the stringency with which they are employed. The result is that a plurality of possible contexts can exist, each with its associated structure on possible worlds and each autonomously determining epistemic evaluations on its own terms. Pentecostals can avail themselves of possible-world semantics too. A contextualism of the DeRose variety seems to makes the fruitcake problem unsolvable.

So it seems that neither our externalist comforter nor our contextualist comforter will provide comfort for Ernest. If he is seeking *reasons* for thinking that he is not a brain in a vat, being told that knowledge is possible in the absence of justificatory reasons hardly helps. Even setting aside the problem of fruitcakes (but not forgetting it), the contextualist meets Ernest's demands for reasons but overdoes things by telling him that he both does and does not possess them. If the context is ordinary (or plain) then he does have adequate—or at least very good—reasons for believing that he is not a brain in a vat. If the context is epistemological, well, then he does not. But Ernest's present context is epistemological, so his conversation with the contextualist seems to reinforce, rather than resolve, his skeptical doubts.

What will the Pyrrhonian skeptic say to Ernest? Pretty much what was said in the last few paragraphs. If you epistemologize in earnest, then you will be led to skepticism. If you turn to epistemologists for help, they will provide none, perhaps make things worse—or so it seems.

But perhaps I have been too hard on the New Epistemologists. I have tended to treat them as closet Old Epistemologists maintaining the family business, though under straightened conditions. On that reading, they remain targets—though diminished targets—of Pyrrhonian attack. There is a more generous way of viewing our New Epistemologists: they are emerging neo-Pyrrhonians, and they simply have not faced up to this fact. The central concern of the Pyrrhonists was the claimed capacity of their dogmatic opponents to present adequate reasons in behalf of their dogmas as, following their own standards, they pretended to do. The central maneuver of Pyrrhonists was to challenge the dogmatists to produce such reasons. The externalists who sever the connection between knowledge and reason-giving justification should have no quarrel with this. The contextualists, for their part, simply reject the ideal of traditional epistemology by succumbing to the Pyrrhonian mode of relativity.

An image from my favorite philosophical novel, Samuel Beckett's *Watt*, illustrates what I have in mind. Beckett describes Watt's method of locomotion in these words:

> Watt's method of advancing due east, for example, was to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and at the same time to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and at the same time to fling out his leg as far as possible towards the south . . . and so on, over and over again, many many times, until he reached his destination, and could sit down.[20]

We can add a further element of absurdity. As described, by placing one foot at least slightly ahead of the other, Watt manages to move very slowly forward. But suppose we let his leg swing even a longer arc so that one foot comes down slightly in back of the other. (Though admittedly not easy, this stride is actually possible.) The result is that Watt, though apparently striving to move forward, is, instead, slowly backing up.

Now change the perspective and view this activity from the rear. We then get the image of someone seemingly making every effort to flee, but backing up instead. This is how the skeptics are coming: They are the New Epistemologists who, with what seem to be elaborate efforts to the contrary, are backing up—incremental step by incremental step—into skepticism: neo-Pyrrhonian skepticism.

Notes

1. Keith DeRose and Ted A. Warfield, eds., *Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

2. To my mortification, I recently noticed a similar entry in the index prepared for *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. We can, however, avoid embarrassment on this matter by exploiting ideas from Donald Davidson's "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 47 [1973–74]: 5–20). According to Davidson, rather than attributing inconceivable error or ignorance to someone, it is always preferable to find an interpretation of the person's words that brings them, as far as possible, into line with reasonable belief. This is easy enough in the present case. We interpret the word "Empiricus" to mean "Sextus," and interpret the word "Sextus" to mean "Empiricus." That still leaves the pesky comma, which we will interpret as meaning nothing at all. This, in miniature, shows how, by using the principle of charitable interpretation, we can always avoid attributing inexplicable error to another. But I digress, even before I get started.

3. I try to make a plausible case for this claim in part 2 of *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). The five modes attributed to Agrippa appear in Sextus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 164–77. See Benson Mates's translation in *The Skeptic Way* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 110–12.

4. Even though Sextus is perfectly clear in his commitment to a thoroughgoing noncommitalism, people get him wrong on this point—Christopher Hill, for example, in the DeRose/Warfield anthology cited earlier. In defending his own version of reliabilism, Hill attempts to embarrass a skeptical critic with the following maneuver: "Let us suppose that process reliabilism is true, and that the skeptic *does* have an obligation to consider this question. . . . Well, since questions of reliability are empirical questions, the sceptic would be under an obligation to appeal to empirical data. An appeal of this sort would of course be something of an embarrassment to the skeptic, holding as he does that no empirical beliefs are empirically justified. But, what is worse, it seems that it would be impossible for him to come up with empirical data of the required sort. [Then this!] Thus, pace Sextus Empiricus, it seems that it would be impossible to find empirical data that would establish that perceptual processes are globally unreliable" (125). This certainly seems to attribute to Sextus the view "that no empirical beliefs are justified," precisely the negative dogmatism that Sextus explicitly rejects.

5. See, for example, Jonathan Barnes, "The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist," in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, ed. E. J. Kenny and M. M. MacKenzie (1982), 2–29, and Myles Burnyeat, "Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism?" in *Doubt and Dogmatism*, ed. M. Schofield, M. F. Burnyeat, and J. Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 20–53.

6. See Michael Frede, "The Skeptic's Beliefs," in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 179–200.

7. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 218.

8. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 159.

9. Ibid., 161.

10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969).

11. See David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74.4 (1996): 549–67. There is not time to discuss this subtle and complex article here. I discuss it in detail in an essay titled "Two Diagnoses of Skepticism," in *The Skeptics: Contemporary Essays*, ed. Steven Luper (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 137–47.

12. I owe my arcane knowledge of *catacosmesis* to Richard A. Lanham's *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

13. Their fishiness is aired in Barry Stroud's classic article "Transcendental Arguments," *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968).

14. See Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Skepticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), particularly 149–55.

15. Indeed, if our second-order beliefs about what we know also track the truth, then, for all we know, we know that we know certain things. In principle,

nothing stops us from going all the way up the epistemic ladder of nesting knowings. Contrary to the cartesian skeptic's claim, for all we know (and for all he knows) we may know a heck of a lot.

16. This might be a useful thing to do, if, for example, you are trying to assure someone (perhaps yourself) that a feared amputation has not been performed. For Moore's argument, see "Proof of an External World," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25 (1939). It is reprinted in his *Philosophical Papers* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959).

17. See Thompson Clarke, "The Legacy of Skepticism," *Journal of Philosophy* 69 (1972): 764–69.

18. Keith DeRose, "Solving the Skeptical Problem," *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995): 5.

19. See Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), chap. 3, section 2.

20. Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: John Calder, 1963), 28.

9

BARRY STROUD

Contemporary Pyrrhonism

Writing under the title "Contemporary Pyrrhonism" turns out to be more difficult than it might seem. How many contemporary Pyrrhonists do you know? What do they believe?

I think all the authors in this volume might have said that we know at least one contemporary Pyrrhonist, and that we all know the same one. He is the author of *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*.[1] That is a book I greatly admire; I agree with most of it, I have learned a great deal from it, and I am very much in sympathy with the spirit and point of it.[2] The book sets out to explain and defend Pyrrhonism as a philosophy, and that philosophy seems to me exactly the kind of response I think we should make to what we all know by now as traditional epistemology. So I too, on those grounds, would identify Bob Fogelin as a contemporary Pyrrhonist.

But in a few other parts of that book, at what one hopes are only brief moments of weakness, the author appears to lose courage and to abandon what on his own account Pyrrhonism really amounts to. The weakness—if that is what it is—is understandable. It is probably not easy being a Pyrrhonist. But maybe it is not really weakness. Maybe he is willing to defend those puzzling parts of the book as well. Then is he really a Pyrrhonist? Or is Pyrrhonism something more than what he says it is in the parts of the book that I most admire? Then what is it? This begins to identify the quandary I find myself in. I think the best I can do is to explain it more fully.

Put bluntly, what I don't understand is why, having shown such insight and such good sense in responding in his Pyrrhonian way to the whole

enterprise of explaining and justifying our knowledge of the world in general without bringing any of our ordinary or scientific beliefs into doubt, and having given along the way an account of knowledge that is admirably free of all traces of relativism or contextualism, Fogelin nonetheless slips (or maybe even leaps) right back into endorsing a way of thinking that leads him to obviously false conclusions about what he and the rest of us know. And he apparently does so in the name of Pyrrhonism. This is what anyone concerned with contemporary Pyrrhonism must try to understand better.

Pyrrhonism as Fogelin first describes it—what he sometimes calls "updated Pyrrhonism"—is a form of *philosophical* skepticism. That is, it is a skeptical or negative response to something that arises *in philosophy*. What arises there is a concern with the possibility of human knowledge in general. That is the subject matter of "philosophical epistemology." It tries to account for human knowledge of the world in general, or at least for as much of it as can be accounted for in completely general terms. It is the attempt to explain how we know or have good reason to believe all or most of the things we think we know; to show that and how our beliefs about the world are in general justified or warranted or well supported on the basis of the grounds we have for holding them.

The updated Pyrrhonist holds that that attempt can never succeed. That is the skeptical or negative verdict. No arguments starting from the grounds that the philosophical epistemologist thinks we have for our beliefs can provide support for those beliefs without either circularity or infinite regress or arbitrary assumption. All proposed justifications will fall prey to one or the other of these ancient modes of Agrippa, and so will fail. That is what the Pyrrhonist philosopher argues. He does not mean that no reasonings at all can avoid those pitfalls. He simply invokes the modes of circularity, infinite regress, and the rest against the epistemological enterprise of showing how our beliefs in general are justified on the assumed basis. Avoidance of those pitfalls is a condition of success of that enterprise, and the Pyrrhonist argues only that that condition cannot be fulfilled within the terms of that enterprise.

This is just how the skeptics of antiquity argued against the Stoic theory of knowledge. Stoics held that knowledge is possible only because we sometimes have "kataleptic" or cognitive perceptions, which could not possibly be wrong. Skeptics argued that, given what a "kataleptic" perception is supposed to be, or what it would have to be to give knowledge in the way Stoics claimed, there are and could be no such perceptions. So on the Stoics' own grounds, knowledge is impossible. This is a conditional

claim; it is made only about or from within the Stoics' conception of knowledge. It does not imply that nobody knows anything. It does not imply that people should not believe the things they now believe. It does not say anything about the knowledge or beliefs of any actual human beings on earth, except this: *if* people know things only if they have "kataleptic" perceptions, *then* nobody knows anything.

The updated Pyrrhonist accordingly says that the philosophical problem of the justification of our beliefs in general cannot be solved. On the standards implicit in that project, everyone should, strictly speaking, withhold judgment on everything. "We know nothing (or almost nothing)" is the only reasonable conclusion from the traditional justificational project of philosophical epistemology.

That, I believe, is Pyrrhonian skepticism as Fogelin understands it. Now I, for one, believe that conditional proposition about the traditional epistemological project. Understood correctly, the project cannot succeed. So if that is Pyrrhonism, maybe there is at least one contemporary Pyrrhonist after all. If so, then I think there are two of us, because that is the proposition Fogelin argues for and accepts in the second half of *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification*. It is one of the many things in that book that I agree with him about. But maybe that belief alone is not enough to make one a Pyrrhonist.

Someone who arrives at that Pyrrhonist verdict about the familiar enterprise of traditional epistemology might be happy to see the end of that project. He could then turn with relief to other things—perhaps even to the quite distinct diagnostic question of how it could seem that there is such an epistemological problem, or what can make it look so pressing. That in itself could prove deeply interesting and illuminating, especially if, as I believe, there is a very strong tendency to continue to think in ways that generate that problem even among those who say they have no interest in epistemology at all. Only when someone came along with what looked like yet another way of showing how all our beliefs about the world in general really are justified after all would the Pyrrhonist have to go back to pointing out once again how the whole thing, even in this new form, cannot really get off the ground.

One thing a Pyrrhonist who has turned away from the traditional philosophical project could do is know things. Or at least nothing he had shown in his dialectical engagement with that project would imply that he cannot. So he could often say that he knows such-and-such and be right in what he says, just as he could think many other people are right. He could also take an interest in what he is saying when he and others say such

things. He could try to say what the word "know" means, or what people mean when they say something of the form "S knows that p." He could also try to describe the conditions under which people typically say such things. In fact, it is hard to see how he could say what it means without paying attention to the conditions under which people say it.

Discoveries of this kind about his linguistic community would not themselves actually imply that anybody knows anything—that statements of the form "S knows that p" are sometimes true. But that does not matter. A Pyrrhonist with semantic interests need not be trying to answer that question. Nor will what he discovers about how he and his fellow human beings behave give a satisfactory answer to the question raised by "philosophical epistemology." But he already believes that there is no satisfactorily positive answer to that question anyway. Although what he finds out about how the word "know" is used and what it means does not answer those questions at all, what he finds out could still be true, and he could know it to be true. Or at least there is nothing about Pyrrhonism or about being a Pyrrhonist that implies that he could not.

Bob Fogelin as a Pyrrhonist says what knowledge is. " 'S knows that *p*' means "S justifiably believes that *p* on grounds that establish the truth of *p*' " (94). That is what someone says of a person in saying that the person knows that p, whether the person in question is the speaker or someone else. Saying that someone knows something involves taking a stand oneself on the adequacy of the person's grounds for the belief. A claim to knowledge might be denied or shown to be false because the grounds do not really establish the truth of the belief, or because the belief was not justifiably arrived at, even though the person who makes the claim thinks both those conditions hold. Someone who has or later gets information that was not available to the person making the claim might know that for one or both of those reasons the knowledge-claim is false. This is what Fogelin thinks happens when we hear of cases like those familiar from Gettier in which we agree that the person in question does not know, even though he has a true belief which is supported in a certain way. Those examples do not count against Fogelin's definition of knowledge, since we also find either that the person did not justifiably arrive at the belief, or that his grounds do not in fact establish the truth of what he believes. The person does not know, but the definition of knowledge is so far sustained.

To say that the grounds of a person's belief *establish* the truth of that belief is not to say that the grounds imply that the belief is true. A speaker does not have to think that his grounds make it absolutely impossible for his belief to be false in order to think that they establish its truth. In saying

that they establish its truth he is making an epistemic claim or commitment, not a point about implication. It is a claim that, under certain circumstances, could be, and could be shown to be, wrong.

We all make knowledge-claims on such grounds without having considered each and every possibility which, if realized, would mean that we do not know what we claim to know. The same is true of assertion in general, not only of assertions of knowledge. We put forward something as true without considering every one of the possible ways in which it could have been false if it were false. This fact about the conditions under which people assert or claim to know things is also something that a Pyrrhonist can come to know by observing his fellow human beings. We say things in full recognition that we can be wrong in the things we say. Of course, we don't think we are wrong at the time we say them. But we say things, and believe them to be true, while acknowledging that we are fallible human beings. As far as I can see, an "updated Pyrrhonist" can know that we behave in these ways. And he, like the rest of us, engages in these very practices.

It is somewhere within this area that we now approach the point—the top of the slope, as it were—at which what looks like Fogelin's backsliding away from his Pyrrhonism begins. The Pyrrhonist leaves behind the philosophical problem of accounting for the possibility of our knowledge of the world in general. He sees that its failure presents no obstacle to the knowledge we all claim and possess in everyday life. But Fogelin thinks that if we reflect on how and under what circumstances we all make the knowledge-claims we do in everyday life, we will begin to get cold feet about our putative knowledge. He, any rate, gets cold feet. He finds himself inclined to say that he doesn't know some very ordinary, apparently unquestionable things that he would have said he was certain he knew before he began reflecting on what he calls our "epistemic practices." And he thinks all the rest of us can be brought to agree that, strictly speaking, we don't know such things either.

Now why does he think that? And is he being a Pyrrhonist in thinking it? Or does he abandon his Pyrrhonism to the extent to which he follows that inclination? These are the questions I find it difficult to answer.

One reason I find it hard to see why he thinks reflection on this aspect of our "epistemic practices" will tend to have this undermining effect is that I find it hard to determine what he thinks the reflection he has in mind actually amounts to. He thinks it can start from what looks like a "legitimate complaint" or question that someone he calls "the philosophical critic of our common ways of making epistemic judgements" could raise. Now first it is not clear who he thinks this character is. Is he the

traditional epistemologist whose justificatory project the Pyrrhonian believes can be shown to be doomed? Conceding that we cannot know on those traditional standards presumably leaves everyday knowledge and our "epistemic practices" untouched. Or is this philosophical observer of "our common ways of making epistemic judgements" simply the curious Pyrrhonian, musing on the human scene? If so, what is his worry? Or is this "philosophical critic" somebody else altogether? Is it Bob Fogelin? And if so, what is *his* worry?

The worry is said to start from the fact that we claim to know things without explicitly considering every one of the ways in which what we say could be false. But, and this is how Fogelin first puts the reflection, "How can we say that grounds *establish* the truth of a proposition while at the same time admitting that these grounds do not completely exclude the possibility that the proposition in question is false?" After all, the reflection continues, "If we recognize that a proposition might be false, don't we have *grounds for doubting* that proposition, and isn't having grounds for doubting some proposition incompatible with *knowing* it to be true?" (89).

Now let us concede, without going into it more carefully, that if we recognize that something we believe might be false, then we have some grounds for doubting that it is true. And let us concede that having grounds for doubting that a certain thing is true is incompatible with knowing it to be true. How does that amount to a difficulty for our saying that a person's grounds establish the truth of his belief without logically implying that it is true? There might be a difficulty if, in saying that the grounds for a belief establish its truth without completely excluding the possibility that the proposition is false, we were conceding that even given those grounds, the proposition *might* be false. But surely that is not correct. Someone who finds the truth of a belief to be *established* by its grounds—even if those grounds don't imply it—holds that the belief is true. He could not then hold that the belief *might* be false.

It certainly seems that Bob Fogelin is not making any such assumption. He carefully explains and defends the importance, and the importance of the special epistemic character, of the verdict that a person's grounds establish the truth of his belief, even though they don't imply it. That is the key to his whole account of knowledge. We can explain in a particular case how and why we think a specified set of grounds establishes the truth of something a person believes. We then think the truth of that belief has been established. Of course, we cannot explain the idea of "establishes the truth of" in non-epistemic terms that mention only the relations among the propositions believed; there is no definition or reduction of the idea in

neutral, nonwarrant vocabulary. To suppose that there must be would be to fall prey to something akin to G. E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy. That is what Fogelin thinks most "definition-of-knowledge epistemologists" have been suffering from since Gettier's challenge in 1963, if not earlier. In saying that the grounds establish the truth of a belief, one is taking a stand oneself on the adequacy of epistemic support for the belief one regards as true.

So I don't see how Fogelin could be tempted by the kind of reflection I have just considered. But I must say he *seems* to be tempted by it. Here is what he says:

> Normally we ignore these [remote] possibilities [which would render our assertion false], but if we dwell on them, our level of scrutiny will rise, and we will find ourselves unwilling to claim to know many things that we usually accept as items of knowledge. Do I, for example, know my own name? This seems to me to be as sure a piece of knowledge as I possess. But perhaps, through a mix-up at the hospital, I am a changeling. I'm really Herbert Ortcutt, and the person who is called "Ortcutt" is actually RJF. These things, after all, do happen. Given this possibility, do I know my own name? I'm inclined to say that I do not. . . . [And he thinks he is not alone]. . .When pressed in this way people . . . will acknowledge that strictly speaking—if you are going to be picky—given that they do not know they are not changelings, they do not know their own names. (93–94)

He says, "Given the possibility that there was a mix-up at the hospital, I am inclined to say that I do not know my own name." Now in what sense is that possibility "given"? Is it that his grounds for believing that his name is Bob Fogelin do not logically imply that there was no mix-up at the hospital, and so do not imply that that is his name? Well, first, I wonder whether that is really true. Is there *nothing* in his grounds that implies that there was no mix-up at the hospital? Isn't it likely that part of his grounds for believing that his name is Bob Fogelin is that he was given that name in the hospital and that he still had it (so to speak) when he got home? And doesn't that *imply* that there was no mix-up at the hospital? Or is it that his grounds for believing those grounds in turn do not imply them? Is even that true? Or is it rather that his *having* those grounds does not imply that there was no mix-up? But can we be sure that even that is so?

In any case, let us grant that there is nothing in his grounds that *implies* that there was no mix-up at the hospital. Then the possibility in question is a failure of implication of one thing by another. Given the truth of his grounds, it is still possible that there was a mix-up at the hospital. But when he said he knew his name is Bob Fogelin he was saying

that his grounds for that belief establish its truth, so how does the mere failure of implication work to undermine that epistemic judgment of his? Why is he inclined to say "Given that possibility, I don't know"?

This is not to challenge what he actually says about the rest of us. He says that, when pressed, people will acknowledge that, "given that they do not know that they are not changelings, they do not know their own names." And that is probably true. If they don't *know* that they are not changelings, then they don't know who they are, and they would probably admit it. But how is it to be shown that people do not *know* that they are not changelings? The fact that the truth of their belief that they are not changelings is not logically implied by their grounds for believing it does not show that they do not know it. On the Fogelin account of knowledge, when someone says that she knows that she is not a changeling, and knows what her name is, she says that her grounds establish the truth of what she believes. So what leads Bob Fogelin to withhold such an epistemic claim in his own case?

Now he could be relying on something here that nobody else knows, and that he is reluctant to reveal. He says that perhaps he is Herbert Ortcutt, and the man known all these years as "Ortcutt" is really Bob Fogelin. This name "Ortcutt" is immediately suspicious. We know that at least one of the Ortcutts is believed to go in for spying. That is Bernard J. Ortcutt, gray-haired pillar of the community sometimes seen in suspicious circumstances wearing a brown hat.[3] But Bernard J.'s subversive activities, however impressive, would be as nothing compared to the deception brother Herbert would have pulled off if Fogelin's, or rather Herbert Ortcutt's, speculation is right.

But no, I don't think Bob has some secret information that he is not at liberty to reveal. He simply reflects on the *possibility* of a mix-up. Even given all his grounds for believing that his name is Bob Fogelin, that possibility is apparently what inclines him to say that he doesn't know that that is his name.

Another way he puts the reflection is to say "it seems entirely natural to ask how grounds can establish the truth of something when at the same time there are undercutting possibilities that have not been eliminated" (94). This is meant to be a description of what we do—of our "epistemic practices." When we claim to know something "we *assert* something, thus committing ourselves to it without reservation, while at the same time leaving eliminable refuting possibilities uneliminated" (94).

But if I say that I know that the name of this man before us is Bob Fogelin—something I certainly do say, and without reservation—do I leave

"uneliminated" the possibility that there was a mix-up at the hospital and it is really Herbert Ortcutt instead? I think I do not. I say that I know the name of this man is Bob Fogelin, son of the parents of Bob Fogelin, so what I say is inconsistent with, and in that sense eliminates or rules out, a mix-up at the hospital. What I believe is established by my grounds eliminates that possibility as actual. "But what reason do you have to eliminate that possibility?" someone might ask. I say I have all the reasons that I have for believing that his name is Bob Fogelin. And those reasons, I judge, are enough to *establish* the truth of that. That is what I commit myself to in saying that I know his name is Bob Fogelin.

This might seem presumptuous or arrogant on my part. How can I claim to know that this man's name is Bob Fogelin when the man himself is inclined to say he doesn't know it? Don't I have to admit that I could be wrong about there having been no mix-up at the hospital? These things, after all, do happen, as Bob says. Well, yes, they do, but in saying I know his name I am saying or implying that no such thing happened in this case. I admit that I am not infallible. Someone who knows or has reason to believe something that I am not aware of might reasonably conclude that I am wrong—that my grounds do not establish that his name is Bob Fogelin after all. That is a possible development. The matter can be settled only by looking at that person's reasons for doubt. Similarly with my view about Bob Fogelin (or this man now before us). I think he is wrong to say that his grounds do not establish the truth that his name is Bob Fogelin. I think he does know. He is inclined to say he does not. The matter can be settled only by looking at his reasons for doubt. But that is just my problem: what are his reasons for doubt?

He finds himself unwilling to claim that he knows his own name when he "dwells" on possibilities like a mix-up at the hospital. What he thinks happens when we dwell on such possibilities is that "our level of scrutiny" of our claim to know "will rise, and we will find ourselves unwilling to claim to know many things that we usually accept as items of knowledge" (93). "Reflection on remote possibilities," he says, "can raise the level of scrutiny and thus lead us to withdraw epistemic commitment in a wholesale way" (94).

It is hard to see how reflection on a possibility can have this effect on our knowledge-claims, especially given Fogelin's own conception of knowledge. The possibility involved in this case is that of his name's not being Bob Fogelin (because of a mix-up at the hospital) even though our grounds for believing that that is his name are true. To dwell on that possibility would therefore be to dwell on a failure of implication. Is that

enough to raise the "level of scrutiny" of our knowledge-claim? I don't think so if, while we are dwelling on the fact that our grounds do not *imply* what we claim to know, we can also at the same time reflect on what our grounds *establish*. We will then find that the possibility we were dwelling on is not actual. What we think is established and so known is something that implies that there was no mix-up at the hospital. Of course, that is not all it implies. This man's name being Bob Fogelin also implies that even after the hospital those sneaky Ortcutts did not get into the Fogelin home and substitute their own baby Herbert, who was such a dead ringer for baby Bob that the parents never noticed. And of course it implies the non-actuality of many other such possibilities.

So I still don't know what reflections on possibilities can have such devastating undermining effects on our knowledge. But let me turn now to the question whether those reflections, whatever they are, are "Pyrrhonian" reflections. Fogelin says the reflections can "lead us to withdraw epistemic commitment in a wholesale way." So "the recognition that we make knowledge claims without [eliminating these defeators]," he says, "gives one as robust a skeptical challenge as one could like" (193). Is that challenge a "Pyrrhonian" skeptical challenge? It is said to reveal "the fragility of our common epistemic practices" (193). So I ask: is someone who notices that "fragility," and dwells on it, and so falls prey to a wholesale withdrawal of epistemic commitment from things he thought he knew in everyday life, really exhibiting the true spirit of Pyrrhonism?

It seems a far cry from the untroubled Pyrrhonist described at the beginning. That was someone who, having shown the impossibility of any positive answer to the traditional philosopher's question about knowledge in general, nonetheless remains unperturbed and calmly goes along claiming to know many things, and usually being right about it, and assessing both positively and negatively the everyday knowledge-claims of others in his community. But by the end of the book the Pyrrhonist is described as one who notices and reflects on the "fragility" of the practices he engages in and, as a "natural consequence," finds that he has "unleashed what amounts to an unmitigated skepticism" (195) about all of knowledge. The dilemma he is led to is simply "incapable of resolution" (203).

I think something has gone wrong here. What is at stake is not simply the question of a label—is this Pyrrhonism or not? What is at stake is whether reflection on human knowledge does or must leave us vulnerable to this kind of collapse. And if so, what kind of reflection does it take? Here is something on which I think I really do disagree with Fogelin.

He says that reflection on the conditions under which we make everyday knowledge-claims raises "the level of scrutiny" so that we are led to abandon those claims and to deny the claims of others. In order to be led into such doubts he thinks we do not need to invoke what he calls "skeptical scenarios." Those are "radical" or "globally dislocating" (193) or "systematically uneliminable" (91) possibilities, such as dreaming or total hallucination or perhaps a brain in a vat. Such possibilities are not needed because reflection on "the fact that our empirical claims are made in the face of unchecked, though checkable, defeators" (193) is enough to raise "as robust a skeptical challenge as one would like."

This is what I would deny. At least, I have been unable to identify any reflections on such possibilities that I think would have that sweeping undermining effect. Fogelin holds that "the theory of knowledge, in its traditional form, has been an attempt to find ways of establishing knowledge claims from a perspective where the level of scrutiny has been heightened by reflection alone" (99). I don't disagree with that, as it stands. Reflection alone can present us with a question about knowledge of the world in general. And I do think that by reflecting on our knowledge from within the traditional justificatory project, we do and must end up with total skepticism. That is what "Pyrrhonian skepticism" says, and that is what Fogelin argues for in the second half of his book. We all agree about that.

But I think the reflections that have that negative outcome in that project are not just reflections on the fact that we make knowledge-claims without checking every one of the possible ways in which what we say could be wrong. I think the reason "Pyrrhonian skepticism" is correct in its response to the traditional epistemological project is precisely because the threatening possibilities in that case *are* systematically or globally ineliminable. The reflections leading to that traditional problem rest on the idea that all knowledge of the world around us comes ultimately from perception, and that what we receive in perception can be seen to be limited in a certain systematic way. Once it is shown or granted that we could perceive everything we do even though the world around us were very different from what we believe it to be on the basis of all our perceptions, there is no way for anyone to get any reason to believe one thing rather than another about the world around us. This is where Pyrrhonian deployment of the modes of Agrippa comes into play.

Any attempt to go from what we get in perception to anything beyond it in the world around us will fall into circularity or regress or unjustified assumption. It will be circular because you have to appeal to something or

other beyond what is perceived in order to get any reason to believe something that goes beyond what is perceived. It will be regressive because whatever could be appealed to (something perceived) could do what is demanded of it only with the help of something else of the same kind (something else perceived), and so on without end. Or it will rest on an unjustified assumption if you just help yourself to something beyond the perceived data to support a conclusion about the world beyond. With only what falls on the side of perception to appeal to, there is no legitimate way to get beyond it. The systematic failure of all such attempts to transcend the available data is what the Pyrrhonian reflections reveal. On that point, as I said, I think the Pyrrhonist is completely right, and for the reasons he gives.

With knowledge-claims as understood in everyday life things are not the same. Take Fogelin's everyday claim to know his own name—before he began to get any doubts. Nothing the Pyrrhonian invokes to show that knowledge as the traditional epistemologist tries to explain it is impossible can be shown to stand in the way of that everyday knowledge. Fogelin mentions the possibility of a mix-up at the hospital, but that possibility can be shown not to be actual, and so eliminated. And that can be done without falling into any circularity, infinite regress, or unjustified assumption. Suppose that after all these years it is discovered that there was a security camera at work in the hospital, and that it was trained continuously on the young Fogelin from the time of birth until his discharge from the hospital. We can play the film and see that there was no switch. That would settle the question without circularity or regress: there was no mix-up at the hospital. But nothing could settle the traditional philosopher's question of which of several competing possiblities holds in the world around us, if it can be settled only by perception, and whatever anyone could perceive always falls short of any states of affairs of the world.

That is one difference between knowledge in everyday life and what the traditional epistemological project requires. Another difference is that if I claim here and now to know that this man's name is Bob Fogelin—as I do—and I am asked what reason I have for eliminating the possibility that there was a mix-up the hospital, I can reply—as I did—that I have all the reasons that I have for believing that his name is Bob Fogelin. Those grounds, I believe, establish that that is his name, and that in turn implies that there was no switch. The possibility is eliminated as inconsistent with something I know. That is how I know there was no switch.

But what looks like this same kind of move does not work within the traditional epistemological project. I do not successfully eliminate

the possibility that I am dreaming that there is a tomato before me by claiming that I know that the tomato I see is really there, so I know that I am not dreaming. I can *say* that that is something I know, and what I say *implies* that the dream possibility is not actual, but once I acknowledge that all my perceptions are restricted in the way the traditional problem depends on, I see that I have to take it back. The position I understand myself to be in gives me no more reason to believe that there is a tomato there than that there is not. But in the everyday case, if I think all my grounds establish the truth that this man's name is Bob Fogelin, and nothing has come along to reveal that those grounds are weaker than I thought, I can with the same reasons continue to claim to know that that is his name, and also claim to know anything else that I know follows from that.

That philosophical view of the limited resources of perception is at the heart of the traditional project. Any view that systematically restricts the kind of data available to us as grounds for knowledge carries with it that disastrous skeptical conclusion. That is what the Pyrrhonian use of the modes of Agrippa reveals, just as skeptics of antiquity exposed the disastrous consequences of the Stoic conception of perception and knowledge. But those consequences are disastrous only for those philosophies, only within a certain philosophical enterprise, and only with those restrictive views of perception. And restrictive views of what is available in any possible perception involve the use of what Fogelin calls "skeptical scenarios"—"globally" and "systematically ineliminable" general possibilities. The negative Pyrrhonian verdict can be a correct conditional proposition about any such epistemological enterprise without having any implications one way or the other for what we do, or should do, in everyday or scientific life.

So that is the problem I have found myself faced with. Is Bob Fogelin a contemporary Pyrrhonist or not? We know he is contemporary, but is he a Pyrrhonist? The question is whether, in those reflections that produce his inclination to say he doesn't know his own name, he is following only Pyrrhonian reflections. Or has he been seduced away from Pyrrhonism through not having rid himself completely of the kind of corrupting thoughts that keep alive the traditional concern with the possibility of human knowledge in general? There are distressing signs that that this might be so. He says he finds that "demands for philosophical modes of justification can spring quite naturally" from "reflection on our ordinary modes of justification." And this leaves him feeling "the need for something more" (203).

But where could "something more" be found? Observation and description of what we actually do, he thinks, would never be enough. "It is

possible to *describe* those circumstances under which we employ epistemic claims in a nontentative way,'' he says, but ''this . . . does not show that our epistemic practices are legitimate'' (199–200). That, apparently, is the worry he is left with. It is not a worry about some particular claim to know, or even about claims of a certain kind. It is a demand for justification of our ''epistemic practices'' in general.

To get to the bottom of Fogelin's dissatisfaction here we would need to understand better how someone with such an admirable nonreductive conception of knowledge, and someone with his philosophical feet always apparently so firmly planted on the ground, can nonetheless be lured away from the comforts of an unthreatening Pyrrhonism by some so-far-unexplained longing for legitimacy. It is a tribute to the work of Bob Fogelin that to make progress on this question about him would be to understand better the source of the disturbing and still-not-fully-understood appeal of traditional epistemology itself.

Notes

1. Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Page numbers alone in parentheses in the text refer to this book.

2. See my review in the *Journal of Philosophy* 92.12 (1995): 662–65.

3. See W. V. Quine, ''Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes,'' in *The Ways of Paradox* (New York: Random House, 1966), 185.

WALTER SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG

Classy Pyrrhonism

Fogelin's Pyrrhonian skepticism differs from Cartesian skepticism in three main ways.[1] First, whereas Cartesian skeptics claim that nobody knows or is justified in believing anything, Pyrrhonian skeptics make no such claims. Nor do they deny such claims. Pyrrhonists doubt enough to suspend belief about these philosophical claims, like all others (3–5). In this way, Pyrrhonian doubts are deep.

Second, although Cartesian skepticism extends to all beliefs, or at least to all contingent beliefs, urbane Pyrrhonists like Fogelin suspend philosophical beliefs but not "common beliefs of everyday life" (5–10). An urbane Pyrrhonist can believe that he has two hands and just kicked a stone. He can even claim to know for certain that it is really true (10, 88) that his name is RJF (93), as long as he uses these terms in common ways that presuppose nothing philosophical, not even a criterion of truth (7). So the scope of Pyrrhonian doubts is relatively narrow.

Third, whereas Cartesians raise "hyperbolic" doubts by means of "uneliminable" skeptical scenarios (91), most contemporary Pyrrhonists employ "unchecked, though checkable, defeators" (193). Fogelin does not dismiss uneliminable skeptical scenarios as meaningless (200), but he does claim that Pyrrhonian skeptics don't need to cite uneliminable defeaters, since common people never actually eliminate all of the defeaters that they could eliminate. Since eliminable defeaters do the job, it would be bad strategy to cite uneliminable defeaters, for they might seem subject to transcendental arguments that can't touch eliminable defeaters (193). By restricting their arguments to eliminable defeaters, Pyrrhonians keep their doubts stable.

Understood in this way, Pyrrhonian skepticism is attractive but also puzzling in some respects. Most importantly, although Pyrrhonists are supposed to avoid all philosophical commitments, Fogelin discusses "the Pyrrhonist's skeptical pronouncements" (200) and assigns them the Gricean status of meaningful and true, however odd. It is not clear exactly what these "skeptical pronouncements" are, but they seem to be denials of knowledge or justified belief. If so, and if they are odd in the way Fogelin says, then why aren't they philosophical? But if they are philosophical, then Pyrrhonists do not avoid all philosophical commitments after all.

Another puzzle arises outside philosophy when Fogelin says, "the Pyrrhonists, as I understand them, are not debarred from using such words as 'know,' 'certain,' 'real,' and 'true' " (10; cf. 88). Later he says, "in making knowledge claims, we always (or almost always) assert more than we have a right to assert" (94). But aren't we debarred from asserting beyond our rights? And how can Pyrrhonists claim knowledge yet remain skeptics?

These puzzles do not refute Pyrrhonism, but they do need to be solved. I will suggest that one way to resolve these dilemmas is to interpret Pyrrhonism in terms of contrast classes. This reinterpretation will, I hope, capture the main distinctive features of Pyrrhonism but avoid its puzzles.

Contrast Classes

I need to begin by explaining what I mean by contrast classes. Here's a simple example: In 2001, Allen Iverson became the shortest player so far to be named Most Valuable Player (MVP) in the National Basketball Association (NBA). So he is short for an MVP. But he is six feet tall. Let's suppose that nobody else in his family is that tall. Then Iverson is tall, not short, for his family. Now, if someone asks, "Is Iverson really short?" we should reject the question and refuse to answer either "Yes" or "No" without qualification.

A similar relativity to contrast classes occurs in reasons, including reasons for belief. In a slight variation on Dretske's famous example,[2] a father takes his daughter to the zoo and looks in a cage. His visual experience rules out the possibility of an antelope, but the same visual evidence does not rule out the possibility of a painted mule (cf. 199). Thus, this father has reason to believe that what he sees is a zebra rather than an antelope, but he has no reason to believe that it is a zebra rather than a painted mule. This is just one instance of the general point that a believer

can be justified in believing a claim as opposed to the other members of one contrast class without being justified in believing the same claim opposed to the other members of a different contrast class.

The point is *not* that the proposition that is believed must be qualified by a contrast class. The point is, instead, that *reasons* are relative to contrast classes, because different kinds of reasons rule out different alternatives. Sight from a distance might rule out the possibility of an antelope without ruling out the possibility of a painted mule, whereas closer inspection or a good bath would rule out that possibility of a painted mule without eliminating still other possibilities, such as a mutant mule that looks just like a zebra even up close.

These claims can be made more precise with a technical apparatus. This framework applies to other epistemic terms, but I will write about justified belief. Specifically, while Fogelin distinguishes two ways of being justified (17–21), I will focus on responsible epistemic performance rather than on adequate grounds, because Fogelin sees the former but not the latter as "relativized to a particular framework with a fixed level of scrutiny" (203).[3] This relativization involves justificatory procedures (89–90) and maybe also background beliefs in addition to contrast classes, but I will make explicit only the relativization to contrast classes, as follows:

> Someone, S, is justified in believing a proposition, P, out of a contrast class, C, when and only when S has grounds that rule out every other member of C but do not rule out P.

Some details are important: Members of C are propositions, which are simply potential belief contents.[4] For C to be a *contrast* class, its members must be contrary to each other.[5] The needed grounds might include any kind of "justificatory procedure" (89–90), which could use any kind of evidence or only an externally reliable method. Inductive grounds are covered, since grounds can rule out a member of C without entailing that it is false. No deductive chauvinism (21) here!

Contrast classes come in many sizes, but I need to distinguish only three classes that correspond to Fogelin's three levels of doubt (91):

> *The Unlimited Contrast Class* for P = all propositions contrary to P, including skeptical scenarios that are systematically uneliminable.
> *The Extreme Contrast Class* for P = all propositions contrary to P that could be eliminated in some way, even if doing so is not needed in order to meet normal standards.
> *The Everyday Contrast Class* for P = all propositions contrary to P that could be eliminated and need to be eliminated in order to meet normal standards.

Deceiving demons and brain-in-vat scenarios are systematically uneliminable, so they are included in the unlimited contrast class but not in the other two contrast classes. Holograms and painted mules are eliminable, so they fall in the extreme contrast class as well as the unlimited contrast class, but not in the everyday contrast class, assuming that normal standards do not require their elimination. In Dretske's example, antelopes and elephants are in the everyday contrast class as well as both other classes. Many more distinctions could be drawn, especially within the everyday contrast class, but these three contrast classes should be enough for now.

These different contrast classes are used in three different claims:

[1] The father is justified out of the everyday contrast class in believing that it is a zebra.
[2] The father is justified out of the extreme contrast class in believing that it is a zebra.
[3] The father is justified out of the unlimited contrast class in believing that it is a zebra.

[1] is true but [2] and [3] are false by the above definition in Dretske's example, because the father's evidence does rule out antelopes and the like, but does not rule out painted mules or deceiving demons.

Notice that [3] implies [2] which implies [1], but not conversely, because the unlimited contrast class properly includes the extreme contrast class, which properly includes the everyday contrast class. Also notice that the truth-value of [1]–[3] does *not* vary with the speaker's context. [3] is false if asserted in an everyday context, and [1] is true if asserted in a philosophy class, even if each of these assertions seems odd in that context (for reasons to be discussed). Finally, notice that a speaker who asserts [3] does *not* say that the unlimited contrast class is more appropriate than the others or that the father ought to eliminate all members of the unlimited contrast class before claiming to be justified (cf. 93). Claim [3] is non-normative insofar as it is neutral on the value of the contrast class that it uses.[6] The same goes for [1]–[2].

These technical locutions are not common language. Normal speakers usually call a belief justified (or not) without mentioning any contrast class, as in:

[4] The father is justified in believing that it is a zebra.

(Actual speakers are more likely to say something like "He's sure it's a zebra," but let's play along with the literature.) In many contexts, we can

understand such unqualified claims in the same way as we understand someone who says only "Iverson is short" while discussing MVPs. We know that the speaker has in mind other MVPs and is probably not thinking about Iverson's family, so we interpret the statement accordingly. Similarly, when the father claims to be sure that it is a zebra, we know that he has in mind antelopes rather than painted mules or deceiving demons, so we interpret his statement accordingly.

It is harder to say what unqualified sentences like [4] mean in the abstract outside of particular contexts. To get straight, we need to distinguish character from content, following Kaplan.[7] When I utter, "I am in Hanover," and you utter "I am in Hanover," our utterances have the same character but different contents, because my utterance is about me and yours is about you. Similarly, I suggest, if I am discussing MVPs and you are discussing Iverson's family, but we both say, "Iverson is short," then our utterances have the same character but different contents. The content of mine is something like "Iverson is shorter than most MVPs," whereas the content of yours is something like "Iverson is shorter than most members of his family."

The same dichotomy applies to justified belief. In Dretske's example, suppose that you and I both utter the unqualified sentence [4]. Add that I have considered the possibility of painted mules and holograms, and I would not utter [4] if I did not believe that the father has grounds that rule out painted mules and holograms, but I would dismiss deceiving demons and other uneliminable defeaters as irrelevant or ridiculous if someone brought them up (and I know all of this). In contrast, you have not thought of painted mules or holograms or anything beyond the everyday contrast class, and you would dismiss such remote possibilities as irrelevant or ridiculous if someone did raise them (and you know all of this). In these circumstances, our utterances have the same character but different contents. Roughly, part of the content of your utterance is [1], whereas part of the content of my utterance is [2]. The content of most real utterances like [4] is, admittedly, not this precise, so it might be better represented in terms of a class of classes or supervaluation. Nonetheless, the relativized claims [1]–[2] do help to capture that aspect of the content of common language that matters here.

This still does not tell us the character of [4]. Since the content of utterances of [4] varies in the way that it does, the character of [4] must be represented by something like an indexical or demonstrative. I will use the term "relevant," as an allusion to "relevant alternatives" theories, although I could substitute "pertinent," "appropriate," "proper," "apt,"

"suitable," "important," "crucial," "correct," or "legitimate." What matters is that to call a contrast class relevant (or appropriate) is to say that the believer needs to rule out (or at least be able to rule out) all other members of that class in order to be justified in believing one of its members.[8] Members of a relevant class are also called relevant. Since to call a class or its members relevant is to specify what a believer needs in order to be justified, the term "relevant" is normative, as it must be to capture the normative force of [4]. Using this terminology, the character of [4] can be represented roughly as:

[5] The father is justified out of the relevant contrast class in believing that it is a zebra.

Speakers who assert [5] are committing themselves to the claim that some contrast class (or set of contrast classes) is really relevant.

In my view, such real relevance is dubious at best, because nobody has found plausible rules that govern when a contrast class is relevant, and it is hard to see how any rules could handle certain problematic cases, such as when contexts cross.[9] Moreover, when someone utters [4], it seems impossible and unnecessary to spell out any complete set of alternative animals as the one and only relevant contrast class. Does the relevant class include animals that the father has never heard of? It is hard to see any good way to answer such natural questions.

Problems like these might make it seem better to use a less committal formulation like one of these:

[6] The father is justified, out of the contrast class that the father is treating as relevant, in believing that it is a zebra.
[7] The father is justified, out of the contrast class that I am (the speaker is) treating as relevant, in believing that it is a zebra.

Formulations [6]–[7] describe how a believer or speaker treats certain contrast classes as relevant. They do not prescribe treating those or any contrast classes as really relevant. Nor do they imply that any contrast class is really relevant. That is what makes them less committal.

Despite this attraction, [6]–[7] cannot give the character of [4] for reasons that Fogelin spells out (96). The basic reason is that a third party can coherently deny [4] while accepting [6] and [7] if that third party believes that a different contrast class is relevant. So neither [6] nor [7] is equivalent to [4].

In contrast, "Iverson is tall" might be analyzed as "Iverson is taller than most members of the contrast class that the speaker is considering."

Suppose Paul says, "Iverson is tall," while thinking about Iverson's family as a contrast class. Then Peter says, "No, he's not tall. He is the shortest MVP ever." Peter is not really denying what Paul said any more than if Peter says, "I am driving," and Paul responds, "No, I am not driving." In contrast, suppose I say, "The father is justified in believing that it is a zebra," and the father and I are using the same everyday contrast class. Then you respond, "No, he's not. The father can't rule out painted mules or deceiving demons." Here you *are* really denying what I said, since you and I disagree about which contrast class is relevant. That is why the notion of real relevance must be built into the analysis of [4] in order to capture the disagreements that people have when they assert and deny judgments like [4].

This brings us back to [5]. The reason for avoiding [5] was that it implied that some contrast class is really relevant, at least in a context. However, even if we give up on real relevance, as I do, we can still accept that [4] is equivalent to [5], and that to say [4] is to say [5]. Just as one can analyze "witch" as implying "woman with supernatural powers" without committing oneself to supernatural powers, so epistemologists who analyze [4] as [5] are not thereby committed to any contrast class being really relevant. They would become committed to real relevance if they went on to assert [4] or [5]. However, those who doubt that any contrast class is ever really relevant can accept [5] as an analysis of [4] as long as they never go on to claim anything with the form of [4] or [5].

Fogelin might seem to criticize such analyses when he writes, "even if we invoke justificatory procedures in making knowledge claims, our knowledge claims are not claims *about* these justificatory procedures" (97). In our case, the point might seem to be that speakers who assert [4] without qualification do not explicitly mention contrast classes, as [5] does. However, analyses often refer to things that are not mentioned explicitly in the analyzed sentence. Supernatural powers are not explicitly mentioned when someone asserts "Alice is a witch," but this assertion can still be analyzed as implying "Alice is a woman with supernatural powers." Since such analyses work, [4] could also be analyzed as [5], even though [4] does not explicitly mention contrast classes and [5] does. Moreover, Fogelin himself calls epistemic responsibility "relativized" (203) and says, "In typical settings, . . . the claim to know amounts to the claim of having adequate reasons, of the sort now demanded" (197). So I suspect that Fogelin does, can, and should accept something like [5] as the character of [4]. Anyway, I do.

Since [5] is the character of [4], [1]–[3] cannot give the whole content of [4]. [4]–[5] are normative, whereas [1]–[3] are not. One way to make

[1]–[3] normative is to add "and this contrast class is relevant" at the end of [1]–[3]. However, the resulting conjunction is false whenever one conjunct is false, so anyone who denies [2]–[3] would also have to deny the conjunction of [2]–[3] with "this contrast class is relevant." Pyrrhonists do not want to deny [4] even when the nonnormative part of its content is [2]–[3], so they cannot formulate the content of [4] as such a conjunction.

A better way to capture the content of [4] uses a notion of presupposition. If "The present king of France is bald" presupposes that there is a present king of France, then someone who doubts that presupposition would not assert "The present king of France is bald," but they wouldn't deny it either.[10] Pyrrhonists also neither assert nor deny [4], because they doubt its normative aspect, so they can represent the complete content of [4] as something like:

[1+] The father is justified out of the everyday contrast class in believing that it is a zebra, presupposing that this contrast class is relevant.
[2+] The father is justified out of the extreme contrast class in believing that it is a zebra, presupposing that this contrast class is relevant.
[3+] The father is justified out of the unlimited contrast class in believing that it is a zebra, presupposing that this contrast class is relevant.

Those who deny real relevance would not assert [1+]–[3+], but they could still assert the nonnormative part of that content, given in [1]–[3], and they could still analyze the content of [4] as [1+]–[3+].

This analysis of the content and character of [4] does not imply that anything is really relevant, so it would be misleading to call it a "relevant alternatives" view. A better description would be "neutral alternatives," since it is neutral about which, if any, contrast class is really relevant, even in a particular context. This description also highlights a feature that will be crucial: Since this analysis is neutral about relevance, it is also neutral about normative issues concerning which alternatives should or need to be ruled out. That normative neutrality will prove useful.

An Interpretation of Pyrrhonism

This technical apparatus will, I hope, help to clarify some of Fogelin's views that might have seemed mysterious or imprecise. First, what are "the Pyrrhonist's skeptical pronouncements" that "may be odd . . . yet . . . meaningful and perhaps true" (200)?

A minimal interpretation makes Pyrrhonists assert nothing. All they do is tell stories and ask dogmatists whether those stories are possible, eliminable, and eliminated. In Dretske's example, the Pyrrhonist asks, "Do you have any reason to believe that it is not a painted mule?" However, if Pyrrhonists only ask questions, they do not make any "skeptical *pronouncements*" (200; my emphasis). So Fogelin's Pyrrhonist must go further.

Maybe all Pyrrhonists add is, "Painted mules seem possible to me." However, Fogelin also says that the Pyrrhonist's skeptical pronouncements "may be odd" (200). There is nothing odd (in the relevant way) about a claim that something seems possible to me. It is also not odd to claim that a scenario is eliminable or uneliminated. Such claims are not irrelevant, if, as Fogelin says, they "bear directly on [the father's] knowledge claim" (199).

What *is* odd is for the Pyrrhonist to deny [2]. The denial of [2] is true, but it is still odd, at least when it occurs in contexts where ruling out the extreme contrast class is not required by "mutually recognized standards of adequacy" or "purposes and goals of the conversational exchange" (198). The relevant kind of oddness occurs when a speaker invokes standards that are not mutually recognized and do not serve conversational goals. To deny [2] is then like saying in late summer that a certain tomato is not bad for the winter. Such a denial of [2] is, thus, a skeptical pronouncement that is true but odd in just the way that Fogelin described.

What about its generalization? Consider

[G∼2] Nobody is justified out of the extreme contrast class in believing anything.

Fogelin never asserts [G∼2], but he comes close when he writes, "Given any empirical assertion, it is always possible—indeed always easy—to point to some uneliminated (though eliminable) possibility that can defeat this claim" (193; cf. 200). I don't see why Fogelin is so sure that this is always possible, but, if it is, then [G∼2] follows. Even when nobody actually mentions any uneliminated though eliminable defeater, an inability to eliminate all such defeaters is enough to make a believer not justified out of the extreme contrast class, on my definitions. Thus, if such defeaters are always available, nobody is ever justified out of this extreme contrast class.

It is not as clear whether [G∼2] is odd in the relevant way. Generalizations like [G∼2] are usually asserted only in philosophical discussions. There [G∼2] is not odd, since it uses only standards that are "mutually recognized" (198) in that context. Still, if [G∼2] were asserted in a nonphilosophical context, like a zoo, then it would be odd, because it would invoke standards that are not "mutually recognized" (198) there.

To this extent, [G∼2] does fit the pattern of "the Pyrrhonist's skeptical pronouncements" (200).

The same goes for [3] and the generalization of its denial:

[G∼3] Nobody is justified out of the unlimited contrast class in believing anything.

Here Fogelin is cagier, since he does not need to cite uneliminable possibilities, and they might seem questionable on transcendental grounds (193). Nonetheless, if uneliminable possibilities cannot be ruled out as meaningless (200), then a denial of a particular claim like [2] implies a denial of the parallel claim like [3], since the uneliminated possibilities in the extreme contrast class are in the unlimited contrast class. The generalized denial [G∼2] also implies [G∼3]. In addition, [G∼3] is supported by the universal applicability of some uneliminable defeaters, such as deceiving demons. And [G∼3] and the denial of [3] are odd in the same way as [G∼2] and the denial of [2].

It still might seem that Pyrrhonists would not deny [3], since Pyrrhonists "are not interested in putting forward philosophical claims" (10), but a denial of [3] would be a philosophical claim, because it would use the unlimited contrast class, which interests only philosophers. This objection also might apply to [2]. How can Pyrrhonists deny that they are doing philosophy if they make such skeptical pronouncements?

The answer is that [2], [3], and their denials and generalizations are normatively neutral. Pyrrhonists want to avoid making "a strong evaluative commitment" (98) and calling any epistemic practice "legitimate" (200), so Pyrrhonists "refuse to privilege the philosophical perspective that the dogmatic skeptics and their opponents share" (99). However, refusing to privilege does not mean refusing to recognize or use. The unlimited contrast class would be privileged if skeptics claimed that nobody is justified (without qualification) unless they are justified out of an unlimited contrast class. In contrast, nothing is privileged if Pyrrhonists say only that somebody (or everybody) is not justified out of an unlimited contrast class. Thus, Pyrrhonists can deny [3], and even assert [G∼3], without implying that the unlimited contrast class is privileged or valuable or legitimate. They can say, "Sure, the father is not justified out of the unlimited contrast class, but so what? Who cares?"

Neutral relativized claims like denials of [2] and [3] are made when Pyrrhonists "*hypothetically* enter the philosophical perspective" (99; my emphasis). Fogelin also implies such claims when he says, "At a particular level of scrutiny, there will be a fact of the matter (or facts of the matter)

that will settle the question whether something is known or not" (195, cf. 95). This holds not only at lower levels of scrutiny but also at the highest level of scrutiny, which uses the unlimited contrast class. That highest level would be questionable if uneliminable possibilities were "meaningless" or "inexpressible," but Fogelin sees "no good reason" (200) to think that. Consequently, Fogelin does not, need not, and should not shy away from making claims relativized to the unlimited contrast class, such as [G∼3] and the denial of [3]. This applies as well to the extreme contrast class and, hence, to [G∼2] and the denial of [2]. Consequently, [G∼2], [G∼3], and the denials of [2] and of [3] all fit among "the Pyrrhonist's skeptical pronouncements" (200).

In contrast, consider the unqualified claim [4] and the generalization of its denial:

[G∼4] Nobody is justified in believing anything.

I suggested that the character of [4] and [G∼4] are [5] and

[G∼5] Nobody is justified out of the relevant contrast class in believing anything.

The content of [4] is then something like [1+]–[3+], which presuppose that a certain contrast class is relevant. A contrast class is relevant when the believer needs to be able to rule out all other members of that contrast class in order to be justified in believing (cf. 93). Thus, [1+]–[3+], [5], and [G∼5] are all normative, as are their denials. Pyrrhonists refuse to make such normative claims on my interpretation, so [1+], [G∼5], and the denials of [2+]–[3+] and [5] are not among the Pyrrhonist's pronouncements. Neither are [G∼4] and the denial of [4], since they are also normative if their character is given by [G∼5] and the denial of [5]. The nonnormative part of the content of a particular denial of [4] still might be a denial of [3] or [2]. Then Pyrrhonists can agree to that much of its content. However, Pyrrhonists will not agree with any denial of [4] insofar as it privileges the perspective that it invokes. Similarly for assertions of [4].

This neutralist interpretation explains why Fogelin says, "in making knowledge claims, we always (or almost always) assert more than we have a right to assert" (94). He is not saying that we are always asserting something like [3] with the unlimited contrast class, or even [2] with the extreme contrast class. Then our assertions would be false, but Fogelin does not want to endorse the denial of our claim any more than our claim itself. To avoid both endorsements, this quotation must be referring just to unqualified claims like [4] and its denial. That simple form is "always (or

almost always)'' common language. When someone asserts something like [4] in an everyday context, the content of the assertion is something like [1+]. This content's nonnormative part, [1], is true. That explains why people make such assertions. Nonetheless, in asserting unqualified claims like [4], speakers also presuppose the relevance of their perspective (contrast class and justificatory procedure). That is what is more than they have a right to do.

Fogelin precedes this claim with a disclaimer: ''This is misleading in a way to be noted in a moment'' (94). The next section asks whether ''there is a fact of the matter about knowing'' (95–98, cf. 193–95). As I understand it, this issue concerns whether there is a correct or relevant contrast class in a given context. If so, by specifying that his view does not commit him to any fact of the matter about knowing, Fogelin is taking back the normative part of his claim that ''we always (or almost always) assert more than we have a right to assert'' (94). He does not want to imply that there is anything wrong (or right) about the perspective from which we make our common assertions. That would be normative. In referring to ''more than we have a right to assert,'' his point is only that we privilege one perspective when we assert claims like [4], and we have no basis for that normative aspect of our claims. Although this way of putting it sounds like a criticism, Fogelin insists that it is ''intended merely descriptively,'' which makes it ''misleading'' (99). His excuse is that ''it is difficult to find alternative expressions that are free from this difficulty'' (99). The alternative expressions that I propose are relativized expressions like [1]–[3], whose explicit reference to contrast classes make it clearer that they are merely descriptive and not normative.

This interpretation might seem to conflict with Fogelin's contention that Pyrrhonists ''are not debarred'' from claiming knowledge in everyday contexts (10, 88). He analyzes knowledge as implying justified belief (27–28). This contention and analysis together seem to imply that in everyday contexts Pyrrhonists ''are not debarred'' from making claims like [4]. These have a character like [5] and a content like [1+], so they are normative. However, on my interpretation, Pyrrhonists want to avoid all such normative claims. How can they avoid this while claiming to know in everyday contexts?

To solve this puzzle, we need to separate normative and nonnormative aspects of [4]. It helps to see the content of [4] as [1+], since [1+] has [1] as its nonnormative part. This part of its content is consistent with the Pyrrhonist's denials of [2] and [3], so the Pyrrhonist can and does accept that part, [1]. All the Pyrrhonist wants to avoid is the normative

presupposition of [4], which is made explicit by [1+]. They avoid this presupposition by making their everyday epistemic claims in a special way. Fogelin says that, when making everyday epistemic claims, "The Pyrrhonist undogmatically accepts the everyday epistemic practices of his culture" (195; cf. Sextus on 8). I take the qualification "undogmatically" to signal that Pyrrhonists use the everyday contrast class without presupposing that it is relevant or appropriate. Fogelin suggests this again when he adds, "The Pyrrhonist . . . does so without believing that these forms of life are justified" (195). Everyday people also do not believe that these forms of life are justified, since everyday people never even raise the question of whether everyday forms of life are justified. To that extent Pyrrhonists can enter into these forms of life in the same way as everyday people. The only difference is that Pyrrhonists are self-consciously undogmatic, whereas everyday people are "unreflectively" (195) undogmatic.

On this neutral interpretation, Pyrrhonists agree in part and disagree in part both with everyday people who assert [4] and with dogmatic skeptics who deny [4]. When an everyday person asserts [4], the content is [1+]. When a dogmatic skeptic denies [4], the content is the denial of [3+]. Pyrrhonists agree with both insofar as they accept [1] and deny [3]. Nonetheless, Pyrrhonists also disagree with both insofar as each privileges his own perspective, and presupposes its relevance, when asserting [4], whereas Pyrrhonists refuse to privilege either perspective or presuppose the relevance of either contrast class (99). As Sextus said, "no more this than that."[11] I simply add, "no *less* this than that." The everyday contrast class is no more relevant than the unlimited contrast class, but [1] is still no less true than the denial of [3].

Pyrrhonists also agree partly and disagree partly with contextualists. They agree in making justified belief relative to contrast classes and also in accepting [1] while denying [2] and [3]. However, contextualists go on to say that certain contrast classes are relevant in certain contexts but not in other contexts, and they assert and deny unqualified claims like [4]. On their view, if I am speaking in a philosophical context where the unlimited contrast class is relevant, for example, it would be improper for me to utter [4] even if my intention were only to assert the content [1] or [2]. Pyrrhonists avoid such normative claims about which contrast class is proper. To that extent, they disagree with this central feature of contextualism.

After giving up all normative projects in epistemology, what is left for Pyrrhonists to do? First, they can use philosophical arguments (3) to convince others to give up "the theory of knowledge, in its traditional form" (99), which is normative, possibly along with metaphysics and other

areas of philosophy. Of course, they cannot endorse those arguments (4), but they can use them as therapy. They can even say that philosophers ought to give up such views in order to gain tranquility, because that normative claim does not use the kind of epistemic norms that Pyrrhonists eschew.

A second project for Pyrrhonists is analysis. Pyrrhonists can analyze knowledge so as to resolve Gettier problems (27–28) and even analyze justified belief in terms of contrast classes "without making any commitments to substantive claims about what is and what is not known" (203). Analysis can be neutral.

A third project that Pyrrhonists can pursue is to describe what in fact happens to lead people to treat certain contrast classes as relevant and to make, deny, or withdraw epistemic claims. Pyrrhonists then resemble anthropologists of law who do not endorse any legal system but still describe how judges accept or reject evidence and burdens of proof in different legal systems. This Pyrrhonian project is philosophical insofar as Pyrrhonists concentrate on philosophers and philosophical arguments, as well as their effects on nonphilosophers (3).

Some tendencies seem widespread: "If we dwell on [remote defeating] possibilities, our level of scrutiny *will* rise, and we *will* find ourselves unwilling to claim to know many things that we usually accept as items of knowledge" (93, my emphasis). Here "we" must refer to "most philosophers," since everyday people and some philosophers remain unmoved by remote defeaters.[12] These pockets of tenacity do not undermine Pyrrhonism. Fogelin seems to acknowledge exceptions when he weakens his claim to what "*can* raise the level of scrutiny" (94; my emphasis). This variability motivates an interesting project of explaining why mere reflection affects some people more than others. That explanatory project is not normative, for no Pyrrhonist would claim that either group is correct or incorrect.

Even more variability arises because "the level of scrutiny . . . is fixed by the purposes and goals of the conversational exchange: more specifically by the standardness or nonstandardness of the setting, by the benefits of being right, by the costs of being wrong, by professional norms, and the like" (198; cf. 100 n. 3). Of course, Fogelin is not prescribing that speakers ought to follow the norms of their professions. He is not even prescribing that speakers epistemically ought to raise their level of scrutiny when the costs of being wrong are high. These would be normative claims of the kind that Pyrrhonists shun. All Fogelin is saying here is that such circumstances do in fact happen to lead many people to be more careful.

Fogelin might seem to give up neutrality in the ellipsis in this quotation. There he says, "the level of scrutiny or the *appropriate* level of adequacy is fixed by the purposes and goals" (198; my emphasis). This sure sounds normative. However, the word "or" provides a way out. If either one or the other is fixed, the other might not be fixed, so this sentence does not imply that the appropriate level of adequacy is fixed. But then why add this disjunct at all? Maybe so that this sentence could be accepted either by those (like contextualists) who think certain standards really are appropriate in certain contexts as well as by those (like Pyrrhonists) who take no stand on what is or is not appropriate. If this seems too tricky, then I would hold that Fogelin misstated his position in this one place and should instead have said that purposes fix the level that is "seen as appropriate" or "appropriate according to currently accepted standards." In any case, I doubt that Fogelin meant to claim that professional norms determine which level of adequacy is really appropriate.

Overall, then, "the Pyrrhonist's skeptical pronouncements" (200) do not include [G∼4], [G∼5], or a denial of [4], [5], [2+], or [3+]. Those claims make moves in a normative epistemic language game that Pyrrhonists refuse to play. Nonetheless, Pyrrhonists can still play a neutral epistemic language game with only relativized epistemic claims, so they can make skeptical pronouncements that include denials of particular claims like [2]–[3], as well as generalizations like [G∼2]–[G∼3]. These pronouncements are skeptical insofar as dogmatic skeptics agree with [G∼2]–[G∼3], but they are not philosophical insofar as they are normatively neutral. These pronouncements, despite being true, are odd in just the way that Fogelin describes. Thus, this neutralist interpretation retains the plausibility of both these skeptical pronouncements and Fogelin's comments about them. It also explains how Pyrrhonists may make everyday knowledge claims and how Pyrrhonism is related to its competitors, including contextualism and dogmatic Cartesian skepticism. What more could you want from an interpretation?

Why?

One more thing: We need to understand *why* Pyrrhonists want to avoid normative epistemic claims. The answer cannot be just that normative claims are subject to skeptical arguments, since nonnormative claims are, too. The answer cannot be that normative claims are metaphysically or semantically suspect, as some noncognitivists claim, since Pyrrhonists would not rely on

any such philosophical dogma. So why do Pyrrhonists eschew normative epistemology? Three main reasons are suggested by the tradition.

For Sextus, the goal of Pyrrhonism is *ataraxia* or tranquility (4). One thing that disrupts tranquility, according to Sextus, is normative or evaluative belief: "For those who hold the opinion that things are good or bad by nature are perpetually troubled. . . . But those who make no determination about what is good and bad by nature neither avoid nor pursue anything with intensity; and hence they are tranquil."[13] Normative epistemology involves such evaluative beliefs, so that might be one reason for Pyrrhonists to avoid it.

Controversy also disrupts tranquility in a different way. Although Pyrrhonists are mainly concerned with inner tranquility, a desire to avoid controversy seems to be part of why Pyrrhonists suspend belief in "Arts and Sciences" where they find no more agreement than among philosophers (4–5). In contrast, Sextus says that skeptics can accept appearances, because "no-one, presumably, will raise a controversy over whether an existing thing appears this way or that," and he later adds that a claim which is accepted by "all mankind" is "not a dogma," so skeptics may believe it.[14] Normative epistemology is controversial, and that might be another reason why Pyrrhonists avoid it.

Third, Fogelin says, "The point of Pyrrhonian skepticism is to reject all such moves that attempt to transcend—rather than improve or perfect—our common justificatory procedures" (89). A philosopher makes such a move when he or she "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" (88). Traditional epistemology seeks such transcendence.

Thus, there are three distinct reasons why Pyrrhonists might suspend belief about a claim: because it is normative, because it is controversial, or because it is philosophical. When all three apply or none apply, the choice is easy. However, when only some of these reasons apply, Pyrrhonists need to decide which of these reasons are adequate for suspension of belief. Pyrrhonists differ on this issue, so the views that I will express here might not be shared by other Pyrrhonists, including Fogelin.

Should Pyrrhonists avoid all controversies? No. Some controversies can be fun and instructive. Then I am happy to engage in controversy. So is Fogelin, for he criticizes many other philosophers in his book and elsewhere. Maybe these controversies disrupt tranquility, but other values are gained. We get enough tranquility up in Hanover.

Still, some controversies are silly. There is no point in disrupting tranquility by arguing about whether Iverson is really tall. Similarly, there is no way even in principle of resolving a controversy about whether the father in Dretske's example really is justified in believing that he sees a zebra. More generally, dogmatic skeptics assert [G∼4]–[G∼5], whereas foundationalists, coherentists, reliabilists, and contextualists deny [G∼4]–[G∼5]. This philosophical controversy also seems unresolvable in principle, if the Agrippa problem is unsolvable, as it seems to be, according to Fogelin (195), or if no contrast class is the relevant one for cross-context judgments, as I have argued.[15] Such unresolvable controversies disrupt tranquility for a long time with no compensating benefit, so I think that Pyrrhonists and others should avoid them.

Admittedly, the Pyrrhonist rejection of normative epistemology is itself controversial. Foundationalists, coherentists, reliabilists, and contextualists, as well as dogmatic skeptics, are not going to give up normative epistemology without a fight. However, that controversy might be worthwhile if normative epistemology leads to other controversies that needlessly disrupt tranquility and also block progress in understanding our epistemic position.

Like controversies, normative claims differ. I do not think that Pyrrhonists should avoid all normative claims. I teach ethics, after all. What we should avoid are only certain normative epistemic claims, which create senseless controversies. This includes claims about which contrast classes are relevant or appropriate epistemically. It is pointless to argue about whether everyday methods can be good enough without ruling out evil demons or holograms. Good enough for what?

In contrast, we need not suspend belief about claims like [1]–[3], which say only which claims are justified out of specified contrast classes. As I admitted, these claims are still normative in a way, for they tell us what we ought to believe within a limited set of alternatives. Such limited claims can create controversies, some of which might even be unresolvable. Nonetheless, those controversies do not seem senseless in the same way as disputes about which contrast class is relevant epistemically.

We also need not suspend belief about which contrast class is important instrumentally or practically. Imagine that a chemical plant manager discovers a new way in which deadly pollutants might seep into the groundwater, but then the manager does nothing to find out whether pollutants actually are leaking in that newly discovered way. At that later time the manager is not adequately justified in believing that there is no seepage, even if he was adequately justified in believing the same thing

before discovering the new possibility. Pyrrhonists need not deny this. What makes the larger contrast class (with the new possibility of seepage) relevant in this situation are pragmatic values, such as life and death, rather than epistemic values, such as truth and justification. The manager's evidence does not change when the new possibility is discovered. Thus, the manager is in the same epistemic situation both before and after that discovery. The difference lies only in whether a certain amount of evidence is enough from a practical point of view. Pyrrhonists need not, and should not, stop making practical assessments like these.

Critics might complain that it is often hard to distinguish practical from epistemic values. Granted. However, the difference is clear in many cases. When a father believes that his daughter is exceptionally capable, this belief can have great value for family life (or evolution), even if that belief is not justified by adequate evidence. More generally, when a belief makes someone (or everyone) happy, that is no evidence that it is true. This shows that practical values are distinct from epistemic values. Similarly, when using a certain contrast class serves practical goals in certain circumstances, that is no reason to see that contrast class as relevant in any epistemic way. Thus, Pyrrhonists can admit such practical relevance without admitting any kind of epistemic norm. When they reject normative epistemology, they need not and should not go on to reject all other kinds of norms.

Finally, Pyrrhonists need not repudiate all philosophy. Relativized claims like [1]–[3] and [G∼2]–[G∼3] are philosophical insofar as they transcend (and might replace) common modes of thinking (88), which are not explicitly relativized. Nonetheless, these claims are not normative in any way that is problematic. Nor are they controversial. Once these claims are identified and understood, dogmatic skeptics, contextualists, and other epistemologists should all agree in denying [2]–[3] and accepting [1] and the generalizations [G∼2]–[G∼3]. So there is no need to suspend such beliefs just because they are philosophical.

This explains why Pyrrhonists do and should suspend belief about normative epistemic claims, like [1+]–[3+], [4]–[5], and [G∼4]–[G∼5], but not about relativized epistemic claims like [1]–[3] and [G∼2]–[G∼3]. The former make a kind of normative claim that creates senseless controversy, but the latter do not. Thus, even if Pyrrhonists want to forgo or even end "the theory of knowledge, in its traditional form" (99), which is normative epistemology, they should not give up on other forms of philosophy, including this nonnormative way of doing epistemology with contrast classes.

Notes

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1. Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 192–93. All references in parentheses are to this source. When I refer to Pyrrhonism, my topic will be Fogelin's urbane neo-Pyrrhonism rather than historical Pyrrhonism, whether urbane or rustic. Cartesian skepticism is, of course, not Descartes' own view but rather the view that Descartes tried to refute and which Sextus called dogmatic skepticism.

2. Fred Dretske, "Epistemic Operators," *Journal of Philosophy* 67.24 (1970): 1015–16.

3. I do not see why Fogelin restricts relativization to the performance clause. We seem to need contrast classes in the establishment clause to answer his question, "How can we say that grounds *establish* the truth of a proposition while at the same time admitting that these grounds do not completely exclude the possibility that the proposition in question is false?" (89; cf. 90). Both clauses also must be relativized for Pyrrhonists to be able to claim knowledge in everyday contexts (10, 88), since knowledge requires grounds that establish truth (27–28).

4. My framework does not depend on any theory about the nature or identity conditions of propositions or belief contents. A proposition is whatever it is that can be believed. This loose use sidesteps metaphysical suspicions about propositions.

5. Without this qualification, absurdities arise, as Alexander Bird pointed out in "Scepticism and Contrast Classes," *Analysis* 61.2 (2001): 97–107. See my response, "What's in a Contrast Class?" *Analysis* 62.1 (2002): 75–84.

6. [1]–[3] might seem normative conditionally in much the same way as "This tomato is good for the winter." However, although this sentence could be used to recommend that tomato during the winter, an utterance of the same sentence during the late summer would not recommend it (even if the sentence referred to the same tomato in the same condition). Thus, this sentence is not essentially normative, even if it can be used to make recommendations in some circumstances. The same goes for [1]–[3]: They cannot be used to recommend belief without presupposing that the mentioned contrast class is appropriate or relevant, but [1]–[3] by themselves make no such normative claim about the mentioned contrast class. That is all I mean by calling them nonnormative.

7. David Kaplan, "Demonstratives," in *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 500–7. My use of Kaplan's distinction was suggested by, but remains distinct from,

that of Luis Valdés-Villanueva, "Contextualism and Levels of Scrutiny," *Philosophical Issues* 10 (2000): 78, who cites Keith DeRose, "Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52.4 (1992): 913–29. I am not endorsing Kaplan's account of the character or content of demonstratives. I am only using his distinction between the two kinds of meaning that he tried to analyze.

8. Compare Fogelin: "A legitimate doubt is one we should consider and remove before we make our knowledge claim" (93). My definition of relevance does not refer to knowledge-*claims*, because sometimes we should make knowledge-claims even when we do not know and we know that we do not know. Another difference is my parenthesis, which allows believers to be justified when they are *able* to rule out all other members of a contrast class, even if they do not actually bother to do so because of the exigencies of a particular situation.

9. See my "Moral Skepticism and Justification," in *Moral Knowledge? New Readings in Moral Epistemology*, ed. W. Sinnott-Armstrong and M. Timmons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 23; and "What's in a Contrast Class?"

10. Cf. P. F. Strawson, "On Referring," *Mind* 59 (1950): 320–44. I am not, of course, accepting Strawson's interpretation of "the." Nor am I saying that "The father is justified" is neither true nor false. My point is only that Strawson and Fogelin both refuse to either assert or deny claims whose presuppositions are rejected.

11. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), book 1, chapter 19, section 188.

12. As examples, Fogelin cites Moore, Austin, Quine, and Rosenberg in his "Replies" in *Philosophical Issues* 10 (2000): 88.

13. Sextus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, book 1, chapter 12, sections 27–28.

14. Sextus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, book 1, chapter 11, section 22, and chapter 29, section 210.

15. See note 9 above.

ROY SORENSEN

Commercial Applications of Skepticism

TO: Marketing Division, Ad Ignorantiam Enterprises

FROM: Roy Sorensen

SUBJECT: Robert Fogelin's Pyrrhonism

DATE: April 1, 1996

CC: Legal Wing, Knowledge Lab, Personnel Department

Thank you for the invitation to elaborate my preliminary proposal "The Skeptical Toolbox." I appreciate the feedback on this scheme to market techniques for cultivating ignorance. No doubt the project would have been incomprehensible had not so many of you been former Dartmouth philosophy students.

This report is also a consolidated response to three memoranda. The legal division requested a historical review as patent support. Engineering has solicited input on product development. Third, I am responding to a plea from the personnel department. Their headhunters have asked for more specific advice on how to recruit skeptics.

Origin of the Proposal

I was comfortably settled in my study. To my left rested Sextus Empiricus's ancient *Outlines of Pyrrhonism.*[1] To my right lay Robert Fogelin's

new *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification.*[2] I was immersed in skepticism as part of a course I was teaching: The Theory of Knowledge.

Ring! Without so much as a "How do you do?" the caller read three questions:

1. How have skeptics used dreams to challenge our knowledge of contingencies?
2. What are Agrippa's Five Modes Leading to the Suspension of Belief?
3. Who invented the fake barn example?
   (a) Alvin Goldman (b) Michael Williams (c) Carl Ginet (d) Hans Sluga

Then *click*! The phone went dead in my hand. Leaping lizards! These were questions from tomorrow's examination on skepticism!

I would have preferred not to have known about the security breach. Knowledge imposes duties. If I knew that the caller knew the test questions, I would be obliged to construct a new test. If I did not know, then I could get a good night's sleep.

Recognizing Unwelcome Knowledge

Others have suffered from unwelcome knowledge. During World War II, Germans offered Swiss art collectors masterpieces at low, low prices. Most Swiss collectors refused because they believed the art was stolen. The few who accepted the bargain basement masterpieces preferred not to know that the work was stolen. According to Swiss law at that time, you could keep stolen art after five years given that you had not realized that the art was stolen. After the war, the Swiss authorities forced some art historians and other experts on provenance to surrender the stolen art they had acquired. Some of these experts sued the Swiss government for compensation. The government prevailed by showing that the plaintiffs must have known that they were purchasing stolen art.

As observed by one of our company attorneys, the market for ignorance has recently expanded in the American legal community. Thanks to *Bronston v. United States*, perjury convictions in the United States now require that the witness *know* that his testimony was false. Merely believing that your testimony is false is not enough for perjury. If the witness could be relieved of his *knowledge*, the crime of perjury could be avoided. As a good corporate citizen Ad Ignorantiam Enterprises could combine crime-fighting with its responsibility to earn profits for shareholders.

During the night of the anonymous phone call, I could think only of *philosophers* who had spoken up for ignorance: Edmund Burke, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Later I learned that ignorance has diverse champions, including Samuel Clemens:

> I am thankful that the good God creates us all ignorant. I am glad that when we change His plans in this regard, we have to do it at our own risk. It is

> a gratification to me to know that I am ignorant of art, and ignorant also of surgery. Because people who understand art find nothing in pictures but blemishes, and surgeons and anatomists see no beautiful women in all their lives, but only a ghastly stack of bones with Latin names to them, and a network of nerves and muscles and tissues inflamed by disease. The very point in a picture that fascinates me with its beauty, is to the cultured artist a monstrous crime against the laws of coloring; and the very flush that charms me in a lovely face, is, to the critical surgeon, nothing but a sign hung out to advertise a decaying lung. Accursed be all such knowledge. I want none of it.[3]

Personally, I do not have anything against knowledge. Some of my best friends are knowledgeable.

Often, the situation is mixed. I am glad I do not know the job applicant because that helps me be impartial. But I am also glad that I *know* that I do not know him. Knowledge of my ignorance enables me to report to others that I am in a position to be impartial. I am also in a position to mount a good *ad ignorantiam* argument against hiring him: Since I never heard of this applicant, he cannot be distinguished and so probably lacks the talent needed for the job. Psychologists interested in metacognition and heuristics have spoken up for this widely despised pattern of argument. The recognition heuristic is "If one of two objects is recognized and the other is not, then infer that the recognized object has the higher value."[4] Does Munich or Dortmund have the higher population? Since you recognize only Munich, you pick Munich. Turkish students were presented with pairs of English soccer teams and asked which would win. The Turks knew little of English soccer but did recognize the names of big English cities. Since the teams tend to be named after their home cities, the Turks could apply the recognition heuristic. As a result, the Turks were almost as accurate as English fans. When the recognition validity of a cue is better than the knowledge validity, there is even a "less is more effect" in which those with *less* knowledge perform better.

I do not mean to overintellectualize the recognition heuristic by characterizing it as an *ad ignorantiam* argument. Even rats employ the recognition heuristic. They avoid being poisoned by being attracted to familiar food. But the implicit reasoning of the rat still has the form of an appeal to ignorance: I do not know that this food is good to eat so it is less likely to be as good to eat as what I have eaten in the past. This kind of argument is not fueled by ignorance alone. One must be able to sense one's ignorance. When ignorance is power, knowledge of that ignorance gives you more power.

Well, sometimes. Sometimes knowledge that you are ignorant is best avoided. I realize that physicians and nurses try to help patients with

placebos. When they treat me, I know that I am ignorant about whether they are engaging in therapeutic deception. This knowledge weakens the placebo effect. Here knowledge of my ignorance is bad for my health.

The reality of unwelcome knowledge is implicitly assumed by academic practices. University regulations forbid teachers from knowing the identities of students submitting teaching evaluations. Reason: Knowledge decreases candor. Many professors prefer not to know the identity of the students they are grading. Reason: Knowledge biases. Many researchers prefer that editors deprive them of knowledge of the referee. Reason: Well, it's complicated . . .

Ethicists are not blind to our interest in suppressing some forms of knowledge. Social contract theorists cast a "veil of ignorance" over the hypothetical first contractors. Ignorance is a key ingredient in their recipe for justice.

The disadvantages of knowledge are readily acknowledged outside academia. The fan watching a prerecorded football game does not want to know who won beforehand. Knowledge destroys suspense.

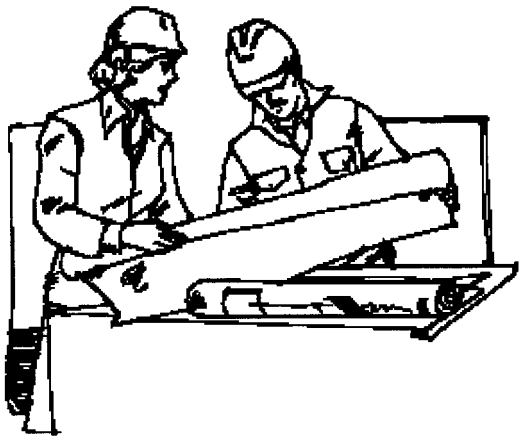
So far I have dwelt just on knowledge one would personally prefer not to possess. The market for keeping others ignorant is better known. People are forever penetrating and betraying our secrets and our privacy. Even philosophy has stories of trade secrets. The Pythagoreans tried to hush up the discovery that a square's diagonal is incommensurable with its sides. When Hiappasus of Metapontum divulged the secret, he was expelled by the Pythagoreans and then drowned at sea.

Notice that the Pythagoreans were not just distressed by the spread of a *belief* that a square's diagonal is incommensurable with its sides. They were upset by the spread of *knowledge* of this fact. An important Pythagorean tenet had been *disproved.*

In the early phase of libel law, truth was no defense. Indeed, the truth of your accusation put you in graver legal trouble. A true accusation is more damaging to a reputation than a false one. Worst of all would be dissemination of *proof.* True beliefs are difficult to dislodge, but knowledge is stickier still.

Ignorance maintenance is heavy labor for censors, adulterers, and priests hearing confessions. Folks in the Ignorance Industry need invisible ink, paper shredders, secret codes, vaults. The overhead is considerable.

Academics are stereotyped as being in the Knowledge Industry. But some of the best-paid professors are in the Ignorance Industry. A professor who improves encryption software is a professor who gets competitive salary offers from the private sector.



The Ignorance Industry has eloquent lobbyists: When knowledge is power, fairness demands equal knowledge. When equal knowledge cannot be achieved by increasing knowledge, it must be achieved by decreasing knowledge. For instance, in an auction with open bids, everybody knows what everybody else is bidding. But sometimes it is impractical to keep everyone informed. In this case, fairness demands sealed bids.

Those who are reluctant to concede the value of ignorance should at least concede that there are trade-offs. Knowledge interferes with knowledge. Those who cannot keep a secret are not told secrets; knowledge acquisition often requires knowledge suppression. Recognition of the trade-off is written into the methodology of controlled experiments. To control for expectation effects, one must keep the subjects partially ignorant. (In double-blind and triple-blind experiments, the partial ignorance extends to the experimenters and statisticians analyzing the experimental results.) These experiments are costly and inconvenient. Perhaps the skeptics could achieve the ignorance more economically.

Can Cartesian Skepticism Deliver Ignorance?

By reflex, I had already entertained the possibility that the anonymous phone call was just a bad dream. The dream hypothesis comes naturally to

people who suffer a sudden reversal. Human beings are wishful thinkers. They frequently nurse the hope that a terrible turn of events is all just a nightmare. Who of us has not yearned to have their troubles vanish by the simple act of waking up?

Sadly, this epistemic possibility did less damage to my knowledge than skepticism appears to predict. I tried to fan the dream hypothesis into an intellectually effective doubt. I hoped that an uneliminated alternative would relieve me of the knowledge that the caller knew the test questions: "Maybe the phone call was part of an anxiety dream. After all, test administration is stressful. Perhaps there was no phone call at all!"

The hopeful ember "Maybe it is a dream" could not ignite a knowledge-destroying flame of doubt. The problem was not that my attention drifted away from skeptical scenarios. After all, the examination was on skepticism itself. If I could not rid myself of knowledge about the security breach, I would be fogged in all night with evil demons, color inversions, and zombies.

David Lewis's "Elusive Knowledge" had cruelly raised my expectations about the potency of dream skepticism.[5] He suggests that merely mentioning the possibility that I am dreaming is sufficient to preserve ignorance. But I could not help but ignore the possibility.

Lewis allows that a stubborn interlocutor might not let the skeptic get away with raising the standards for applying "know." But I was eager to cooperate with the skeptic.

This was not the first time that I had been stuck with unwanted knowledge. When I am riding in trains, I often cannot stop myself from eavesdropping on the conversation of people in neighboring seats. Against my will, I have learned much about breast reduction, techniques for painting paneling, and the differences between American and Canadian football. I fear passengers next to me and have learned painfully much about whether knowledge is deductively closed.

Ernest Sosa has persuaded many epistemologists that knowledge requires the exercise of epistemic virtues.[6] This view is sorely tested by a ride on the Long Island Railroad. I try to keep ignorant of my neighbor's particulars by implementing every epistemic vice in Rene Descartes' *Rules for the Direction of the Mind.* I try jumping to conclusions, reasoning in circles, anything to shake off the swarm of new facts. But I emerge from the train infested with unwelcome knowledge.

Maybe I should have never taken Lewis's optimistic claim seriously. After all, I was in the business of testing students' *knowledge* of skeptical hypotheses. Ironically, this pedagogical tradition extends all the way back

to the ancient Greek skeptics themselves. They made a living of teaching students that they know nothing.

Why were the skeptical hypotheses failing to make me ignorant? My suspicion fell on the fanciful nature of skeptical hypotheses. There is an air of make-believe about classic skeptical counter-possibilities. They are cleverly designed to be uneliminable by any further investigation: brains in a vat, the whole universe popping into existence, and so on. Possibly my culture magnifies this air of unreality. Science fiction movies such as *The Matrix* and *Total Recall* have incorporated skeptical scenarios. This makes far-out hypotheses seem like games of pretend. They are hard to take seriously.

I predict the movie industry will continue to market Cartesian skepticism. These hypotheses are simple to understand and generate a large-scale intellectual effect. Cartesian skeptical hypotheses confer a cartoonlike freedom from terrestrial constraints. As these scenarios become as widely consumed as fairy tales, their aura of make-believe will intensify.

Here we see how one way of selling skepticism competes with another. Even if Cartesian skepticism could ensure ignorance, it is a blunt instrument, indiscriminately leveling all knowledge. I wanted a skeptical tool that would selectively shape knowledge. I did not want scorched earth. I wanted topiary.

Pyrrhonian Skepticism

Happily, I had just read chapter five of Robert Fogelin's *Pyrrhonian Reflections*. His section on doubts explains why such science fiction and fantasy is superfluous. Fogelin maintains that the evidence of ordinary knowers only eliminates a subset of eliminable counter-possibilities. The knower is entitled to ignore many counter-possibilities that are easy to check.

Fogelin illustrates his technique with knowledge of his own name. He starts out certain that he knows his name is Robert Fogelin. But as he dwells on the other possibility that he was switched at birth with another baby, he becomes unsure whether he knows his name is Robert Fogelin.

This mental exercise is a reverse thought experiment. A normal thought experiment purports to produce knowledge just by reflection on an experimental design.[7] Fogelin's auto-jittery purports to produce ignorance just by reflection on possible defeaters! Both thought experiment and auto-jittery are species of what Daniel Dennett dubs "cognitive autostimulation."[8]

Thought experiments are so appealing because they offer knowledge on the cheap. No materials need to be purchased. No long waits. And you can do it yourself. Ditto for auto-jittery. Long ago, Ad Ignorantiam Enterprises hired confidence manipulators. They trace their lineage to S. E. Asch and Stanley Milgram.[9] These social psychologists can make subjects ignorant with the help of stooges and confederates. But conspiracies are slow and labor intensive. If auto-jittery can be made practical, the payroll office can slash the huge support staff of the social psychologists.

I gave auto-jittery a test spin with my own name. It handled much as Fogelin described. I started out certain that my name is Roy Sorensen and deflated my confidence by dwelling on those eliminable defeaters.

According to Fogelin, when we dwell on uneliminated defeaters to knowledge-claims, we raise the level of scrutiny. We no longer feel free to ignore these possibilities. Hence we are apt to retract our knowledge-claim. Fogelin intends the explanation to be purely psychological. Fogelin is neutral about whether we *ought* to retreat.

Although my immediate goal during the night of the anonymous phone call was to reduce my own knowledge, I still remembered the other prize I sought: a tool that could reduce the knowledge of *others*. One way to induce the jitters in others is by introducing other possibilities. In cross-examination, the lawyer purports to present reasonable alternatives that cannot be ruled out by the witness. Since the prosecution has the burden of proof, the defense attorney plays the skeptic's role.

Like the Cartesian, Fogelin thinks that the jitters can also be stimulated by engaging in a work of fiction. Indeed, this is the basis for his bold attempt to solve the Gettier problem: "In the Gettier examples, we pictured Smith basing his knowledge claim on a batch of evidence that would normally justify the kind of claim Smith has made. We then supposed *ourselves* in the possession of some further evidence that degrades the evidential support on which Smith bases his belief. The wider set of beliefs we accept includes the evidential beliefs he accepts, but the evidential force of his beliefs is degraded in our wider framework."[10]

In a standard Gettier tale, the narrator tells of how a responsible believer manages to get it right even though he is ignorant of an important fact that would have given the responsible believer second thoughts. According to Fogelin, telling the tale raises the listener's standard of scrutiny by introducing a defeater that cannot be ignored.

The virtue of Fogelin's account is its conservative yet flexible simplicity. Fogelin does not get mired in complicated fourth-condition analyses. He does not reinvent the wheel by devising a brand-new account of knowledge. Nor does he take refuge in primitivism. He sticks with a mildly modified JTB type of analysis and tells a fresh story about what goes wrong with the Gettier cases.

Some of the engineers in the Knowledge Lab complained that Fogelin's solution is trivial:

> Fogelin is merely pointing out that if the Gettier victim had been apprised of the relevant information, then he would have concluded that he was in circumstances that objectively demanded greater caution. But all commentators agree that the Gettier cases involve epistemic regret (but not remorse) about how carefully one behaved in the circumstances. This is tame description, not an analysis.

I agree that Fogelin's account needs more detail. I think it can be interestingly developed as a simulation theory. The simulation theory of folk psychology states that we understand each other by hypothetically entering input beliefs and desires that we ascribe to each other. Since the computing is analog, we can get results without getting into the heavy theory that proponents of folk psychology attribute to everyone. Fogelin could say that we are simulating a more informed witness in Gettier vignettes. When we input the extra information, our standard of scrutiny automatically goes up and we output a verdict of ignorance.

In any case, Fogelin's account cannot be trivial because it has a controversial consequence; Fogelin's analysis should apply with equal force to

Gilbert Harman's social knowledge cases.[11] In one of Harman's scenarios, Jill reads about an assassination in the newspaper. She never sees televised reports that actually it was a bodyguard who was killed. As it turns out, this "correction" was fabricated by government officials trying to thwart a coup. Jill fails to know even though her chain of reasoning does not seem to contain the false step so common to Gettier situations.

In Harman's second scenario, you are informed that Donald is spending his summer in Italy. For reasons of his own, Donald wants you to believe he is in San Francisco. He has arranged to have a friend in San Francisco mail several of his letters so that they will bear a postmark from that city. You have been away for a few days and now are at the desk preparing to catch up on your correspondence. You hold Donald's unopened letter in your hand. Harman says that you do not know that Donald is in Italy.

Harman intended his social knowledge cases to be Gettier counterexamples. To make these cases conform to his solution to the Gettier problem, he argues that all of our reasoning contains a clause to the effect that there is no undermining evidence that one does not possess. The disappointing news for Harman is that few epistemologists accept this clause. The flattering news for Harman is that most epistemologists credit him with discovering a new kind of anomaly for the JTB analysis of knowledge—"social knowledge cases."

The causal theory of knowledge converges with JTB on the Harman cases. The assassination causes Jill to believe that the assassination occurred. The causal pathway is the common route of newspaper reporting—which normally does produce knowledge.

Unlike the impressive decisiveness of the Gettier cases, social knowledge cases occasion mixed intuitions of lower strength. William Lycan has tried to field test Harman's scenario by conducting some informal polls.[12] Lycan reports that a majority of his informants (both philosophers and nonphilosophers) disagree with Harman's verdict of ignorance. His poll gives solace to sympathizers with the causal theory and JTB.

Fogelin's solution might be mistaken, but it is not trivial. Fogelin's solution to the Gettier problem agrees with Harman's controversial verdict of ignorance while also giving an independent rationale for treating social knowledge cases as Gettier cases. If Fogelin is right, then the anomalies are more unified than most epistemologists believe.

Hypotheticals and Historical Processes

Robert Fogelin sure is circumspect! He does not assert that auto-jittery makes him ignorant. He does claim that it makes him doubtful and disinclined to attribute knowledge to himself. I would feel more comfortable if Fogelin could eliminate the hypothesis that this is a quasi-doubt, akin to the moviegoer's quasi-fear of the creature in *The Blob*.

However, even quasi-doubts might do for the predicament posed by the anonymous caller. My obligation to rewrite the skepticism examination would only be triggered by the *belief* that I knew someone else knew the contents of the test. Even if the obligation was simply based on knowledge, then at least I could turn myself into a well-meaning wrongdoer—one who believed that he was satisfying professional obligations.

So I gave it a whirl. I dwelt on various humdrum defeaters. For instance, I had not bothered to ask my wife whether she heard me snoring in my study. I did not request that the telephone company verify that I received a call. In addition to these easily eliminated defeaters, there were defeaters that were merely impractical to eliminate. The caller might have just *guessed* the first three questions. Or maybe I was misremembering the first three questions of the examination.

But I was only going through the motions. I would have been able to take them seriously if I actually investigated and started making discoveries that supported these hypotheses. For then it would be clear that I was not just playacting.

In New York, people frequently agree to meet under the arch of the Washington Square monument. When the other person fails to show, you start to review possible explanations. You try to recall an ambiguity in

the scheduling. You check your date book. You make some phone calls. With each fruitless check, new possibilities come to mind. You become impressed by the ziggurat of assumptions you erected when agreeing to meet a person at a certain time and place. But doubts about the assumptions seem to be psychologically effective only when you actually go through the process. You cannot get ignorance just by a mental tour of the ziggurat. Of course, you could get ignorance accidentally, say, by having your belief extinguished. Just jumping up and down sometimes alters what you know. But I am putting aside these arational paths to ignorance. The hypothesis is that there is a historical dimension to the rational acquisition of ignorance. You must actually suffer the disappointments to get the ignorance. The doubts are ineffective when entertained prematurely.

In short, a mental tour of uneliminated defeaters shows how I *could* lose knowledge. But hypothetical ignorance is not ignorance. Just as promises require the right kind of historical process to obligate us, doubts require the proper pedigree to undermine knowledge.

Pessimism Precedes Skepticism

Fogelin anticipates some resistance to the epistemic jitters. He claims only that *most* philosophers relinquish their knowledge-claims when they meditate on defeaters. He lists a few who do not: J. L. Austin, G. E. Moore, W. V. Quine, Jay Rosenberg. Philosophers of this temperament look into the maw of skepticism and refuse to blink. Tough guys! Fogelin generously characterizes these epistemic retentives as "blessed"!

Well, I am not tough minded. Indeed, it is my tenderness that makes my doubts feeble. If I took responsibility-relieving doubts seriously, I'd be open to the accusation of being self-deceived. My *fear* of wishful thinking stands in the way, not my courage in the face of skeptical challenge.

While in Berlin, I confessed this trepidation to the company psychiatrist, A. Schopenhauer. He proposed a diagnosis that I am obliged to pass along to the engineering department:

> Knowledge is generally presumed to be good. Students take pride in what they have learned. The ambition of professors is to produce new knowledge.
>
> Skeptics complain we have not obtained the prize. They kindle fear that we are just fooling ourselves about whether we have secured their love object. Their cautions need not be cruel. Skeptics frequently counsel us to face up to the hubris behind knowledge-claims.

> Epistemologists respond to the challenge by trying to push belief up the hill of knowledge. Skeptics pull downhill, taking advantage of gravity. Skeptics are aided by our defenses against wishful thinking and self-deception. Unless a belief can be shown to be knowledge, the epistemologist loses. Skeptics get the benefit of the doubt. Thus, when knowledge is welcome, skeptics enjoy a playing field that gives them the high ground.
>
> But the situation reverses when the knowledge is unwelcome—as with the anonymous phone call. Any fear about wishful thinking goes against the skeptic.

If Dr. Schopenhauer is correct, the contextualists have overestimated how closely conversational practices track skepticism. Conversationalists are more concerned about identifying opportunities and hazards. They often concentrate on one or the other by adopting a mood of optimism or a mood of pessimism, swinging back and forth for a complete survey. A skeptic can play upon pessimistic worries about wishful thinking. But since knowledge can be bad as well as good, his adversary can exploit the same defense mechanisms. One can raise the standard of scrutiny for claiming that we possess a good thing. But when that good thing is ignorance, raising the level of scrutiny *increases* how much knowledge we attribute to ourselves.

Everybody should be particularly worried about the recalcitrance of unwelcome knowledge. This is an important segment of the market. I hope auto-jittery can be adjusted to handle this problem before the launch date of the Skeptical Toolbox. I shall underscore this concern with a case study.

Peter Unger's Wishful Thinking

In *Ignorance*, Peter Unger argues that we know little or nothing.[13] Indeed, he says we have little or no justification for believing anything. After this book, Professor Unger's attention eventually alighted on ethics. Unger came to believe that affluent people, such as NYU faculty and most of their students, are obliged to donate heavily to famine relief organizations such as Oxfam.[14] Unger donated much himself and solicited donations from others. He began to wonder, aloud, whether he should give his ethics students an in-class opportunity for philanthropy. Colleagues in earshot raised a moral objection: students might donate to influence an ethics grade or to avoid a negative bias. Unger replied that he did not want to know who donated what. He assured us that his ignorance could be protected by a blind donation scheme. Some of his colleagues regarded

this as an inconsistent answer. Unless Peter Unger had changed his mind about the central thesis of *Ignorance*, he should believe that his ignorance was in no need of protection.

Unger would be consistent if he were merely trying to satisfy the scruples of others. But there is evidence he was not offering protection that he himself regarded as redundant. My office was near Unger's. After years of observation, I have some intelligence to pass along: When Peter Unger is having a sensitive conversation, he sometimes closes his office door and lowers his voice. He locks away confidential files. When administering student evaluations, he complies with the school policy that a student collect the evaluations and deliver them directly to the department's secretary.

Unger also tries to avoid some knowledge during his off hours. He cautions others not to give away the plot of a movie he plans to see. When choosing someone at random, he puts a hand over his eyes so that he may choose impartially.

And Unger often suspects others know more than they let on. When admiring the glamour model Kate Moss, Unger does not think that her beauty is enhanced by her ignorance of how beautiful she is. He suspects Kate Moss *knows* that she is gorgeous.

Unger might prefer that Kate Moss be charmingly innocent of her beauty. When scolded for blurting out secret information, Unger might like to think that the listener did not gain knowledge of the secret. But he gains no relief from *Ignorance*.

Local Skepticism

I mention Professor Unger because he is (at least officially in 1975) an example of a global skeptic. The personnel department seems to confuse global skeptics with local skeptics. Roughly, global skeptics are skeptical about everything while local skeptics are skeptical about a limited subject matter.

The confusion is natural because the business community has been long accustomed to hiring skeptical experts (who are just local skeptics). Sometimes these experts are hired because they streamline a process that had been previously encumbered by intellectual deadweight. For instance, proponents of the random-walk theory of the stock market think that profitable knowledge of future stock market prices is impossible. According to them, the lure of profits makes the market so efficient with respect to information that there is no point to researching the issue. Proponents of this theory were hired because they let pension fund managers bypass the counsel of stockbrokers. These skeptics have saved millions of dollars in brokerage fees and in transaction costs (because one follows a buy and hold strategy under this theory). More recently, skeptics about interviewing have been consulted. They deny that the interviewer knows any more about a job candidate's future as an employee than someone restricted to reading the candidate's dossier.

A second group of skeptical experts are employed to cancel the effect of other authorities. The legal community has kept a whole class of consultants employed by having each undo the work of another. Recently, another group of experts have specialized in neutralizing ordinary witnesses. I am thinking about psychologists who demonstrate that juries vastly overweight eyewitness testimony.

The Tobacco Manufacturers Standing Committee made extensive use of this technique. The eminent biologist and statistician R. A. Fisher cleverly objected to early evidence that smoking causes lung cancer.[15] He offered two counter-explanations of the data. First, cancer (or a precancerous state) could irritate a lung and thereby stimulate a desire for soothing tobacco smoke. Second, and more plausibly, Fisher proposed a common

cause scenario: perhaps there is a smoker's gene that caused both a desire to smoke and lung cancer. Fisher argued that since such hypotheses had not been eliminated, scientists did not know that smoking causes cancer. Hence, medical researchers should not frighten smokers with warnings. In 1956 Fisher accepted an invitation by the Tobacco Manufacturers Standing Committee to be their scientific consultant. Following Fisher's advice, tobacco attorneys conceded that there was a strong correlation between smoking and cancer. But since no one had eliminated the common cause hypothesis (or the more remote possibility that cancer caused smoking), they inferred that no one *knows* that smoking causes cancer. Given this ignorance, the manufacturers argued that they were legally permitted to sell cigarettes. In 1960 the first American suit for personal injury was filed. The tobacco companies prevailed with the help of Fisher's testimony. Other suits in the queue were dropped. The legal pressure abated for many years.

With the possible exception of the movie industry, businessmen have had little commerce with *global* skeptics. The head of our personnel department has even despaired of encountering any global skeptics: "This brand of skepticism is more lethal than Fisher's!" Such pessimism goes way back. Diogenes Laertius reports that since Pyrrho trusted no belief more than any other, he went "out of his way for nothing, taking no precaution, but facing all risks as they came, whether carts, precipices, dogs or what not."[16] Nevertheless, Pyrrho managed to reach age ninety because of the many students and friends who "used to follow close after him."

I think entrepreneurs already make good use of local skeptics. The point of my earlier memorandum was to harvest *global* skepticism. However, in light of the personnel department's difficulties and in light of my latest research, I now think we should widen the search to include *conditional* skeptics. Some of these fellow travelers are under the misapprehension that they are skeptics, so we should be wary of self-classifications. I shall illustrate my point by focusing on Robert Fogelin and his brand of Pyrrhonism.

Is Pyrrhonian Skepticism Skepticism?

"Pyrrhonian skepticism" is difficult to formulate. One reason is that Pyrrhonism resembles an attitudinal pattern I call global neutralism. Unlike a local neutralist who suspends judgment only for a limited domain of propositions, the global neutralist suspends judgment with respect to all propositions—even the proposition that he is a neutralist. Thus the global

neutralist cannot assert that he is a global neutralist. Since the global neutralist espouses no position, he has no position. He just has an unprincipled pattern of propositional attitudes that can be compactly summarized.

On the one hand, the global neutralist looks maximally open-minded because he has no beliefs. On the other hand, he seems dogmatic because he has a propositional attitude toward every proposition (suspension of belief) and because he never changes his mind in light of new evidence. His neutrality grossly conflicts with the probability calculus. The global neutralist is irrational.

The irrationality of the global neutralist is exceeded only by the trivialist. Graham Priest has presented the "trivialist" as a dual of the skeptic.[17] According to Priest, the trivialist believes everything while the skeptic believes nothing. Although Priest is not a trivialist, he thinks the trivialist has been neglected by epistemologists. Just as epistemologists learn from trying to refute skepticism, they can learn from trying to refute the trivialist.

Priest maintains that philosophers who try to refute the trivialist typically beg the question. But this campaign for dialectical fairness is misconceived. No one can beg the question against the trivialist.[18] It is impossible to beg the question against someone who agrees with the conjunction of your premises and also accepts your inference rules. True, he also disagrees with them. But that's his problem. Your argument cannot beg the question against the trivialist by virtue of *his* inconsistency.

I also think that it is impossible to beg the question against the global neutralist. To beg the question is to beg the question against someone who holds a position. Global neutralism is not a position. Obviously we can predict that the global neutralist will not accept the premises of any argument. But we can make the same prediction for someone in cryogenic suspension.

Sincere assertion requires belief. If suspension of judgment entailed neither believing nor disbelieving, then neutralism would lead to quietism. However, the suspension of judgment is actually a substantive propositional attitude. Saul Kripke dramatized this with a variant of his puzzling Pierre example.[19] Instead of believing and disbelieving that London is pretty, Pierre could believe it and suspend judgment about it. Inconsistency does not require a clash between beliefs.

Nathan Salmon points out that we can be of *three* minds.[20] Just assume that Pierre acquires Italian by direct assimilation and comes to believe that there is a third city, "Londra," distinct from the pretty "Londres" and the ugly "London." Since he has no specific information about Londra he suspends judgment as to whether it is pretty.

The inconsistent neutralist might characterize his beliefs as compulsive add-ons to his panoramic plain of neutrality. Since assertion requires a vast infrastructure of belief, the inconsistency of the global neutralist would be massive.

Fogelin looks like a global neutralist who is trying to work out this double-minded approach. He limits neutrality to philosophical contexts. In this setting, Fogelin refuses to affirm or deny that we have knowledge. Yet he still thinks he can engage in philosophical argumentation. Consider a passage from Sextus that Fogelin quotes with approval: "For, in regard to all the Skeptic expressions, we must grasp first the fact that we make no positive assertion respecting their absolute truth, since we say that they may be possibly be confuted by themselves, seeing that they themselves are included in the things to which their doubt applies, just as aperient drugs do not merely eliminate the humours from the body, but also expel themselves along with the humours" (1:206–7). Fogelin even says that "Pyrrhonism seems to have this peculiar feature: If true, it cannot be warrantedly asserted to be true" (10).

Yet Fogelin often seems to venture philosophical assertions. Sometimes he says that, for all we know, no one knows anything:

> Given our capacity to form nested epistemic claims (claims that we know that we know something), together with an externalist account of the truth relation, it certainly could be the case that we not only know things but also know that we know them. If we do know that we know certain things, then we will also know that skepticism is false. But on Lehrer's account of knowledge, this says no more than that, for all we know, we know skepticism is false. The Pyrronhian skeptic will grant this, merely noting, for his part, that for all we know skepticism is not false. (167)

A genuine skeptic cannot be as concessive as Fogelin suggests. One cannot qualify as a skeptic merely on the strength of holding that, for all we know, skepticism is correct. After all, an agnostic about God holds that, for all we know, theism is correct. But that does not make him a theist. You cannot be an X-ist simply by virtue of believing that X *might* be true.

Agnosticism about whether we have knowledge is too weak to constitute skepticism. And maybe Fogelin would also regard it as too strong. Fogelin thinks that our evidence can imply more than is available by reflection. This is partly because Fogelin is in partial agreement with externalism. I think Fogelin might also be willing to concede that our present evidence might have hidden logical consequences. Maybe some future deductive genius will discover that our ordinary evidence has the

extraordinary implication that we know pretty much what Lehrer supposes we know. Fogelin does not wish to rule out this possibility.

Fogelin is more forthcoming on other theses that might be mistaken as skepticism. He is skeptical about traditional epistemology. But Fogelin himself distinguishes skepticism about philosophy from philosophical skepticism (3). My father was skeptical about philosophy but thought he knew plenty. He was fond of quoting Samuel Clemens's reminiscence for my edification: "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."[21]

Actually, Fogelin is far less skeptical about epistemology than my father or an eliminativist about folk psychology such as Paul Churchland.[22] Fogelin personally contributes to classic epistemological projects such as defining "knows that," explaining the common thread behind the Gettier cases, and limning out the logic of knowledge (KK principle, closure, etc.). Much of his book reads like a standard tome on epistemology.

Fogelin rejects only global, revisionary epistemology.

> I hold that the theory of knowledge, in its traditional form, has been an attempt to find ways of establishing knowledge claims from a perspective where the level of scrutiny has been heightened by reflection alone. The dogmatic skeptic privileges this heightened perspective and then, skirting self-refutation, claims that nothing is known. The Pyrrhonists (as I have described them) resist both responses because they refuse to privilege the philosophical perspective that the dogmatic skeptics and their opponents share. When they hypothetically enter the philosophical perspective, they will be inclined to say that nothing is known. Here they simply report how things strike them. For the most part, however, they will occupy a normal perspective where skeptical scenarios and remote (and not so remote) defeaters are simply ignored. They will then speak and act in common, sensible ways. (99)

This paragraph is self-defeating. It is clearly in a philosophical context and starts with the classic assertion marker "I hold that"—yet it goes on to say that, as a Pyrrhonist, Fogelin should not make any assertions in a philosophical context.

Anyway, Fogelin frequently complains that epistemologists beg the question against the Pyrrhonist. The traditional epistemologist will undertake the project of meeting the skeptic's challenge. But when the going gets tough, the traditional epistemologist quietly abandons this dialectical goal and just presupposes that skepticism is false. Contrary to what is

advertised on the book-jacket blurb, this epistemologist does not even address the skeptic. Since the discussion includes only nonskeptics, our "bait and switch" epistemologist can appeal to the substantial assumptions common to all his competitors. His success is measured narrowly, as a comparison between fellow rejecters of skepticism. Given this narrowed field of contestants, the foundationalist is entitled to turn aside some objections on the grounds that the coherentist cannot reply any more effectively. But this was not the free-for-all initially touted.

Fogelin (141) says that this last-minute exclusion of the skeptic from the debate begs the question against the skeptic. But you can beg the question only against those you address. The fact that the epistemologist's argument would have been question-begging if it had been addressed to the skeptic does not convict him of actually begging the question. The real problem is boasting rather than begging. The traditional epistemologist advertises that he will take on all comers. But when high noon approaches, he duels only with those who adopt ground rules that have the effect of keeping the skeptic off the street.

Does the traditional epistemologist lose to the skeptic by forfeit? Does he lose to the skeptic if he would have lost? I do not think the answer is yes to either of these questions. But Fogelin does have a legitimate complaint about empty boasts. Epistemology is more dramatic when pictured as a confrontation with the Skeptic. But most of the progress in the theory of knowledge is through baby steps ventured in protected environments.

One of Fogelin's favorite spectacles is backfiring epistemology. Some foundationalist or coherentist or what have you sets out to repair or protect knowledge. But then *kablooie!* The epistemologist winds up saying things that imply we know nothing. The very effort to thwart skepticism produces it.

Fogelin is not commandeering self-destructive epistemology as an inadvertent gift to skepticism. He is akin to a fideist who wants to create room for faith by denying that there is evidence that God exists. When the fideist shows that an atheist's premises actually imply the existence of God, he does not mount it as a new proof that God exists. The fideist thinks there is just as much hubris in a proof for God's existence as in a disproof of God's existence. His interest in the arguments is focused on showing their systematic failure. The fideist is a conditional atheist and a conditional theist. But neither suffices to make him an atheist or a theist. Similarly, Fogelin's conditional skepticism does not suffice to make him a skeptic.

Conditional skepticism yields skepticism only if one affirms the antecedent. Since affirming the antecedent conversationally implies that

one knows the antecedent, these conditionals are "modus ponens resistant."[23] Fogelin does not deny the consequent of "If X, then nothing is known." But he does recoil from the *assertibility* of this consequent. Think of an argument for the conclusion that "The number of stars is even." Although the conclusion is just as likely as its negation, the argument is fishy because it is antecedently unlikely that we could ever be in a position to assert the conclusion.

Pyrrhonian skeptics often assume that they can make internal criticisms without committing themselves to anything. But an internal criticism involves the assertion of a conditional: If such and such a position is correct, then this and that absurd consequence follows. So I doubt that conditional skepticism is compatible with the nonassertive aspect of Pyrrhonian skepticism. Pyrrhonians are not supposed to make assertions when in a philosophical context. But the assertion of a conditional is an assertion. Many philosophical assertions are conditionals: Knowledge entails Belief, Ought implies Can, Rights imply Duties, and so on. Thus the hypothetical nature of the Pyrrhonian's remarks does not save him from the charge of being "dogmatic."

The Need for Secrecy

Many skeptical methods become ineffective when they are identified as such. Let me illustrate with Sextus Empiricus's method of equipollence. The idea is to promote neutrality by meeting each pro argument with a con argument of equal strength. Titration is important here. If you make the counterargument too strong, you'll be forced to balance it again with a counter-counterargument.

This method is reminiscent of Benjamin Franklin's advice to Joseph Priestly for simplifying complicated yes-no decisions.[24] Make two lists of reasons, Pro and Con. Go through the list looking for pros and cons of equal strength. They cancel out and so can be eliminated from the deliberation. When there are no reasons of equal weight, look for a pro that is balanced by two cons or two cons that are balanced by three pros, and so on.

Franklin does not say what to do if reasons are incommensurable. If all the pros have weights corresponding to a whole number, while one of the cons has a weight corresponding to an irrational number (say pi), then there will be no way to make each con equal any combination of pros. All balancing schemes are rendered incomplete by the Pythagorean secret leaked by Hiappasus of Metapontum.

The mathematical incompleteness of equipollence might not be a practical problem if reasons actually tended be commensurable. But if there are recalcitrant inequalities, then the method will leave us favoring the slightly more probable alternative. I cannot suspend judgment if I assign p a probability of .50000000001 and not-p a probability of .49999999999.

My main concern with Sextus's method of equipollence is its dependence on secrecy. This method is not effective if you are aware that it is in operation. Think of arguments as samples drawn from an urn. The samples are evidence. If you know that the samples are being drawn in a biased fashion, their value as evidence declines. When the bias is sufficiently severe, people are eventually entitled to ignore the counterarguments.

In the *Crito*, Socrates reiterated his theme that we should follow the argument wherever it leads. If the best argument tells you to drink hemlock, then bottoms up! Strangely, it is Sextus who opens the door to a breeze of moderation: "For just as we refuse our assent to the truth of the tricks performed by jugglers and know that they are deluding us, even if we do not know how they do it, so likewise we refuse to believe arguments which, though seemingly plausible, are false, even when we do not know how they are fallacious."[25]

We spontaneously apply this good sense when we know that others are merely balancing argument with counterargument. To be persuasive, equipollence must be applied secretly. Many methods of promoting ignorance have the same dependence on secrecy.

Despite my belief that Fogelin is only a conditional skeptic, I do think he should be discretely approached to work for Ad Ignorantiam Enterprises. Given the confidential nature of the project, we should discourage him from abruptly resigning his post at Dartmouth College. To avoid drawing attention to his new activities, he should instead be encouraged to gradually assume the role of a "retired" professor. No eyebrows would be raised if Fogelin, a charismatic lecturer and prominent scholar, traveled to Ad Ignorantiam divisions in university towns (Berkeley, Palo Alto, etc.). His colleagues would naturally assume he is merely giving lectures and conferring on matters of scholarship. Visits to our international posts in Florence and the Canary Islands could be explained as fellowships and other academic engagements.

As a company man, I would be willing to relocate to Hanover, New Hampshire, and perhaps even fill the post he is vacating at Dartmouth College.

Well, Robert Fogelin does have *big* shoes. Maybe I should fill just one of the shoes and keep a hand in Ad Ignorantiam Enterprises. Product

development could then continue—perhaps even in the form of conferences on Pyrrhonian skepticism.

Notes

1. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R. G. Bury (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1933).

2. Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). All references in parentheses are to this source.

3. Samuel Clemens, "Academy of Design," letter to the San Francisco Alta California, July 28, 1867.

4. Daniel G. Goldstein and Gerd Gigerenzer, "The Recognition Heuristic: How Ignorance Makes Smart," in *Simple Heuristics That Make Us Smart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37–58. Quote appears on p. 41.

5. David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74.4 (1996): 549–67.

6. Ernest Sosa, "Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue," *Knowledge in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 131–45.

7. Roy Sorensen, *Thought Experiments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). See p. 205.

8. Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 42.

9. S. E. Asch, "Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments," in *Groups, Leadership, and Men,* ed. H. Guetzhow (Pittsburgh, Penn.: Carnegie Press, 1951), 177–90; Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (London: Travistock, 1974).

10. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections*, pp. 26–27.

11. Gilbert Harman, *Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973). See pp. 143–44.

12. William Lycan, "Evidence One Does Not Possess," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 55 (1977): 114–26.

13. Peter Unger, *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

14. Peter Unger, *Living High and Letting Die* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

15. Joan Fisher Box, *R. A. Fisher, the Life of a Scientist* (New York: Wiley, 1978).

16. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2, trans. R. D. Hicks (London: William Heinmann Ltd, 1931). Quote appears on p. 475.

17. Graham Priest, "Could Everything Be True?" Paper presented at the Conference on Methods in Philosophy and the Sciences, the New School, New York City, December 1997.

18. Roy Sorensen, "An Empathic Theory of Circularity," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77.4 (1999): 498–509.

19. Saul Kripke, "A Puzzle about Belief," in *Meaning and Use*, ed. Avishi Margalit (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1976), 239–83.

20. Nathan Salmon, "Being of Two Minds: Belief with Doubt," *Nous* 29.1 (1995): 1–20.

21. This appears in a list of quotations that are misattributed to Mark Twain. See Geoffrey C. Ward, Dayton Duncan, and Ken Burns, *Mark Twain: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2001).

22. See Paul Churchland, *Scientific Realism and Plasticity of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

23. Roy Sorensen, "Dogmatism, Junk Knowledge, and Conditionals," *Philosophical Quarterly* 38 (1988): 433–54.

24. Benjamin Franklin, *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1772, 1987). See p. 878. Original letter to Joseph Priestly was written on September 19, 1772.

25. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, section 250.

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